



Bala United Church

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Celebrating the life and work of our Church

Rev. Sue Woods, Minister



Minister's Chat

*On entering the house they saw the child with
Mary his mother;
and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then,
opening their treasure chests, they offered him
gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.*

- Matthew 2:11

What gifts from your treasure chest are you ready to offer in 2012? We each have within ourselves talents, gifts, and abilities. We may be born with a creative nature that enables us to draw or paint. We may be able to sing or play an instrument, to write, or compose. Our skill may lie in a facility with numbers and facts. Logic may be our strength or a hand-working skill, or we may have an ability to make people comfortable. There are many ways that our hidden gifts can make the world a more beautiful, safer, and better world for all. Daily use keeps these gifts bright and beautiful. Someone has said that what we are is God's gift to us; what we become is our gift to God. We cannot become that gift if we bury our coins in the ground or hide our silver in the drawer. Our gifts are made more beautiful through daily use and by offering them for God's honour.

A Prayer for Epiphany

Radiant One, every day is an epiphany in which I, too, can pay you homage. Every day I can kneel before you and open the treasure chest of my life. In there, I find unending gifts of every kind to offer you. Every day I bring my gratitude for you, my desire to grow more loving, my longing to be true. Every day I reach into that treasure chest and offer my trust that you are near, my hope for all your promise, my belief in what is unseen. Every day I offer my desire to live justly, my commitment to be generous, my struggle to be whole.

Divine Light, I give these gifts and so much more. The treasure chest is boundless. Each time I reach within I see you smiling at my gesture, for you, great Giver of Gifts, have placed each treasure there. You greet my gift with welcoming pleasure when it returns home to you.

Thank you for all that my treasure chest of life holds. I will look daily for my persistent star of recognition. May it stand boldly over the house of my heart where you dwell, so that I will be aware of your presence in this brand new year and pause to give you homage in all I do, say, and act.

Blessing for a year of strength and energy and in using your gifts,

Rev. Sue

Notes from Council Chair

At the time of writing only a light skiff of snow whitens the grass in front of our home. While very possibly a green Christmas is in the offing, there is an air of expectancy that one can almost touch—Christmas Eve, Christmas day!

So many of our congregation -- Members of Council, and Members at large--have contributed to Christmas preparations. These have included the setting up of Christmas trees, decorating of the Sanctuary, the serving of Council Christmas Dinner, and the painting of the Nativity scene. This afternoon Barb Bond and elves will set out the Christmas luminaries that will light a path to Christmas service. It is truly wonderful to be part of such an energetic and committed group of fine people who comprise Bala United Church.

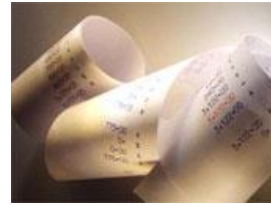
Basement Renewal will take a break until the New Year but I can report that recent inspections by Township of Muskoka Lakes staff have been followed with approvals for framing, plumbing rough-in, and electricity rough-in. Only a few 2 x 4's lie between now and foam insulation early in the New Year. The very considerate support we have received from Muskoka Lumber, electrician Ron Austin and Chris, and plumber Dennis Cubberly (of Fixtures) and crew cannot be overstated. We are blessed too that monetary support for the Renewal continues to build. Indeed Bob McGavin has paid for the four new windows installed by Muskoka Windows and Doors. Please know that no offering is too small to offset the basement project.

Let's celebrate, then, all aspects of preparation for Christmas and our Members' and community' involvement in our Church going forward. And let's remember how fortunate we are to have Rev Sue at the helm of our worship this week and all year long.

Marian and I look forward to Christmas Eve service at Bala United. At the point of your receiving this Newsletter, our hope is that you will have experienced a joyous Christmas in every sense and that, in time, you will find a "quiet centre" that will last all New Year.

Sincerely, Brian McDonald

ANNOUNCEMENTS:



It is with pleasure that we welcome Ian Croft as our new Church Treasurer. His strong business and accounting skills and winning personality will be a wonderful addition to our treasury and to Council.

Also, we are pleased to announce that Dave Hewitt from Port Carling United Church has agreed to become the Treasurer for Bala / Port Carling Pastoral Charge effective January 1, 2012.

Angels in the Basement

It was dinner hour and it was dark as I drove through Bala. The following day was the last Sunday in Advent and I was tired and eager to reach the cottage. As I crossed the bridge, there before me were 2 magnificent figures floodlit beside the church. Joseph and Mary holding baby Jesus, radiant in their piety, were there to greet all weary travelers-- a marvelous addition to the town.

In our December newsletter we learned that an outdoor Nativity scene was donated to the church by Don Graham in memory of his wife, Karen, whose father had been a minister at our church. Those figures sat in basement storage while discussion ensued during the fall as to how to proceed with their restoration.

"Elves in Santa's workshop?", "fairies in the garden?" We have angels in the basement! When you least expect it, angels may arrive unannounced, full of love, purpose, and creative energy.

Susan Hemming and Marian McDonald fit this description and were our angels. They worked together quietly amidst construction chaos, right alongside "Bob the Builder" angels who are currently restoring the basement.

desserts. The potluck dinner, as you can imagine, was unbelievably delicious!

During dinner Sheila Overbeek and ten models presented a fashion show highlighting the clothing line at Overboard in Bala.

Deb Tilson and Tori Wines entertained with beautiful Christmas music and song.

Throughout the evening a silent auction took place where \$580.45 was raised for the OPP West Muskoka Ministerial Food Drive.

A great time was enjoyed by everyone!

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CANADIAN TIRE

Thank you for placing your Canadian Tire coupons on the offering plate each Sunday. All proceeds are applied to the expenses of the United Church Camp, Big Canoe.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT BALA UNITED CHURCH



Rev Sue and Bill Niess led us in a Christmas story.



Silent Night.



John and Marg Vellinga's grand-daughters sang.



"And to all a good night!"