



## THE ROCK GARDEN

An Alberni Valley United Church Newsletter—December, 2011



### ‘Silent Night Holy Night’

‘Silent Night Holy Night,’ who does not have a memory of this Christmas carol tugging at their heart or clutching at their throat!

‘Silent Night Holy Night,’ the carol that, no matter where you are Christmas Eve, at a church service, or around a Christmas tree with family and friends, or far away from home alone or with strangers, or in hospital or at hospice, it is the song that silences our night.

It silences our night with wonder, not because it is about God coming into a beautiful, still, calm, silent night; rather it silences our night because it is about hope erupting in places of hopelessness.

It silences our night because it is about God’s love entering the world in a way that the world has never seen before.

It silences our night because it is a story of Mary and Joseph, a poor couple with a difficult pregnancy to explain, and who made a long and arduous journey to Bethlehem. The government of that time had ordered the people to go to their home towns for census taking. This was an order that showed a total lack of concern for how their decisions impacted the poor.

The song silences our night because that first Christmas story was filled with hardship, uncertainty, and a fear that comes with knowing that at any time you are subject to the whims of a government that can uproot you from your home and send you into the dark unknown.

It silences our night, as in the Simon and Garfunkel rendition of ‘Silent Night’ with the 6 o’clock news broadcast running underneath the song; the earth is anything but peaceful.

This is all the more reason to sing of that silent holy night when love’s pure radiant beams of light streamed down.

It silences our night because hope embraces the earth.

This advent season, as you prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, I invite you to meditate on ‘Silent Night’ the Christmas carol that tugs at your heart and clutches at your throat.

Consider how this carol invites you to be God’s life giving radiance and hope.

Silent night, holy night

All is calm, all is bright

Round yon Virgin Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace

Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight

Glories stream from heaven afar

Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!

Christ, the Saviour is born

Christ, the Saviour is born

Silent night, holy night

Son of God, love's pure light

Radiant beams from Thy holy face

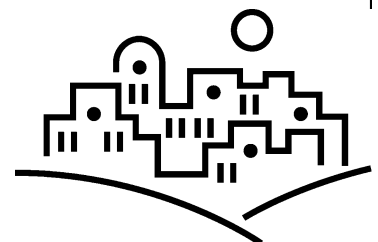
With the dawn of redeeming grace

Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth

Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth "

Wishing you hope, peace, joy and love this Advent and Christmas Season.

Minnie



Worship Events

December 10 ~ At 10:30 am we will be gathering together to decorate the Sanctuary Christmas Tree. Come join us trim the tree, and we will all go out for Hot Chocolate afterward.

December 11 ~ White Gift Sunday: please bring new, unwrapped gifts for those in need this Christmas.

There is also a mitten tree in the Narthex this year—please bring new mittens, gloves, toques and scarves to help spread warmth to adults and children in need.

If you would like to buy a Poinsettia for the Sanctuary this year, please bring your donation to the church before December 15. Thank-you!

December 18 ~ Christmas Cantata: Joy to the World, A Celebration of Carols .

December 20 ~ Labyrinth Walk:

At this time of year there are many celebrations of 'light.' During the long night of Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>. Everyone is invited to walk an indoor labyrinth at Alberni Valley United Church. Light sticks and battery operated candles will be provided. You are invited to come shine your light and walk the path of the labyrinth, an ancient spiritual practice. This labyrinth walk is a time to offer gratitude for the gifts and opportunities which you have received this year. It is also a time to remember the challenges of your life this year.

The labyrinth will be in the Church Hall and it will be available between 6 and 8 PM. There will be instructions about how to walk the labyrinth if this is your first experience. There will be hot mulled apple juice in the lounge. Come and celebrate light, joy, hope, and peace.

Christmas Eve Services:

7:00 pm Family Service ~ It's a Wonder

10:30 pm Candles, Carols and Communion Service

No Worship service on Christmas Day

Worship begins again on January 2 with a no tech old style service.

Miscellaneous

If you gas up at the Co-op in Port Alberni, and don't have your own Co-op number, please feel free to use AVUC's member number ~ 89433. Thank you.

If you would like to be a Communion Server, please let Carol Korven know and she will put you into the rotation. Thank you.

### A Message from the Treasurer

The Christmas season is almost upon us. Everyone is busy with activities in anticipation of visits from or to family members throughout this season. It is also the time of year where we are sometimes inundated with requests from charities for monetary help. **Your church** is no exception.

Some of you are aware that we have been trying to replenish a GIC we used to move our minister to Port Alberni. I have suggested that if we could call upon 50 people to designate an additional \$52 per year (\$1 per Sunday) that we would be able to achieve this goal in 5 years. To date we have replenished this Moving GIC by \$850. This challenge has been taken up by 17 of our members, so there is room for more to participate to achieve this goal.

Our finances continue to follow our budget lines. Our extra fundraising projects have done extremely well this year. However, we can not rely on our fundraising efforts to make up for short falls we have in regular envelope offering on a yearly basis. Our goal should always be to cover our employee wages and benefits with our regular envelope offering. With this in mind, I would like to ask for your help and consider giving an **extra Christmas donation** to your church. The church books will be kept open until January 15, 2012 for 2011 donations. Please make sure your cheques are dated December 31, 2011.

*I continue to encourage everyone to contribute to the church on a regular basis and consider joining our PAR way of giving. For further details on PAR please contact Carol Korven @ 723-5265. This definitely helps in allowing us to know on a regular monthly basis what revenue will be coming in rather than relying on Sunday offerings. Thanks to all who spend time connecting with our church family and to those who help keep our church a welcoming spiritual haven in "ship shape".*

*As this is my last year as your treasurer, I would like to thank all of you for your support during the last two years. I hope I have been able to make a difference in simplifying the financial reports for you and leaving the finances in a different but organized way for your new treasurer.*

*I would like to extend to all of you a very Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year!*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Paul McMillen*

### Pastoral Care & Catering

Your Pastoral Care /Catering Team would like to Thank all of you who have helped us in so many ways over this last year. We sincerely appreciate each and every one of you.

Our wish for your whole congregation is for a peaceful Christmas and a healthy and happy New year.

Judy Vatamaniuck

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### Property and Maintenance

The Property and Maintenance crew has been working to solve problems during the summer and fall. Thanks should go to the people who volunteered to paint the side boards of the breezeway (Gary and Carol Korven) and the steps at that lead into the middle play area. Thank you to Steve Vatamaniuck for doing the lawns all summer.

Thank you to all of you that help set up tables and chairs for each event. I am always pleased at the number of volunteers we get at the end of an event that pitch in to put away everything. I must also thank the people who have helped us when we have had unexpected floods in the basement. We have an old metal pipe buried in the floor that carries water from the kitchen and the furnace room to the sump pump reservoir. Periodically it gets plugged and the water backs up. It is not much fun cleaning up a flood in the basement. Were you aware that our sewage goes to the basement and then has to be pumped up to the city street level?

Thanks too should go to Jim Poll for helping me with the new mat on the breezeway. It looked so nice when we first put it down. We soon found out that it had to be tightened on a cool morning instead of a hot afternoon. Thanks to Steve and Paul on the other two attempts to tighten the material. We will give it another few months and then try again.

Currently we are reviewing our facility use contracts.

Thanks again to all of you who helped in the painting of the gym.

Merry Christmas

Bill Irwin

### Mission, Service and Outreach

2011 has been a busy year for the Mission, Service & Outreach Committee. We supported The Bread of Life by filling the blue basket every Sunday with food donations as well as making hamburger soup and cookies made with the assistance of the Sunday school children. In May we continued our congregation's support of post-secondary education for students with the presentation of a bursary to a Grade 12 student.

Other activities by the Committee include making a lasagne for a luncheon, assisting our Guyana school project, donating to a person in need, selling tickets for the PAGO Grannies, Syrian refugees and Japanese relief, as well as a congregational drive to aid the refugees in the Horn of Africa.

Plans are underway to prepare a meal for the Bread of Life in December, the White Gift Sunday, and to hold a congregational clothing drive.

God Bless, Sandra Simpson

## Jesus-The Light of the World!

Do you know why we decorate our trees and houses with lights at Christmas time? Well, it's to celebrate the coming of Jesus-the light of the world! We also exchange gifts as a way to celebrate too. Jesus is God's greatest gift to us! As Christian stewards we know that we are gifted every day! God gives us many gifts and we are to use and share those gifts to be like Jesus and to bring his light to others.

The Christmas tree below is decorated with many lights. In each light, fill in one of your God-given gifts that you can share to help bring the light of Jesus to others! Color the tree and lights with bright colors and even add more decorations, if you wish. Hang the tree some place where you will see it often to remind you to celebrate your gifts and the light of Jesus shining brightly in you!

