



Christmas 2011

Volume 36, Issue 2



# Out on a Limb

## Vicar's Voice

Christmas is a time of great joy. There is a sense in worship that visitors come with the expectation of carols and reliving childhood memories. There is the assumption that the ministry staff will be upbeat and celebrative.

As one Christmas song pleads, "we need a little Christmas right this very minute." The angels sing of God's glory, yet we live -- like Jesus' family -- in a world of darkness. The mood of Christmas parallels the proclamation of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20. We are looking for joy in a time of personal and global uncertainty. Though Canada is considered financially stable, some people are out of work. Others wonder if their jobs will remain and carry them into retirement. Some have cut back on their giving, including their donations to the church. Still for others

it will be a less bright Christmas as a result of personal loss -- separation, divorce, estrangement, or the death of a loved one.

As the carol proclaims, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight." The Christmas readings mirror these misgivings. Mary and Joseph are citizens of an occupied territory. Taxes are levied to support the government. Mary and Joseph must journey to Bethlehem to pay duty. To add insult to injury, the

only shelter they can find for the birth of their child is a stable.

The angelic voices deliver the good news, first to shepherds "living in the fields," enduring the elements without a roof over their heads. There is nothing romantic about the life of the shepherd. It is lonely, harsh, and unappreciated. Their job is necessary for society. In the most unlikely place, the ethereal voices ring out. There is an equality of revelation, described in Luke, in which God gives glad tidings in the least expected places.

There is no complacency in Luke's version of Jesus' birth. This is good news. Most of us will find ourselves on the receiving end of this good news - **God with us**, in the most unlikely and sometimes painful places; maybe in a hospital or long term care facility. Make no mistake, this is the world in which the Christ-child comes -- the world of grieving spouses, homeless families, frightened immigrants -- a world of care and uncertainty. This is precisely where "we need a little Christmas" -- not a good-time God, but an all-season spirituality, grounded in a love that embraces the dark night and the joyful dawn.

Rev. Cynthia R. Stretton  
Minister, Worship and Pastoral Care

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*Light a candle  
for Hope, for  
Peace, for Joy,  
for Love in our  
community and  
in our world.*



## *From the Editor's IPad*

Applewood United Church has published this newsletter for 35 years. I hope to carry on the tradition while bringing something new and different to the page.

The goal is to provide a little manna for your journey, tell stories from and about our Applewood family, and inspire us all to change a little piece of our world. I am joined in this endeavour by my Editorial Board and by all the writers and photographers who have contributed to this issue and those who will contribute in the future. This newsletter is ours.

The new name is *Out on a Limb*. The theme of trees and apples is obvious but it also defines the life and

work of the church in the 21st century. To go out on a limb is to put yourself in an isolated or disadvantaged position in support of someone or something. We do this every day. For us, the limb is strong and the fruit is worth the risk.

We are printing in colour for those who are paper-bound. Rainbows are the promise of tomorrow and if the newsletter is compact and relevant we can continue this service. If you have ideas, news items, stories or pictures I would love to hear from you.

Louise Gilroy, Editor: *Out on a Limb* (join me!)

## *Introducing...the Manders*

Fraser and Ruth Manders have been loyal and dedicated members of Applewood for 55 years. They worshipped first in the portable building that stood on our present parking lot. They find the camaraderie in the congregation one of Applewood's most endearing qualities. Fraser and Ruth remember fondly the many Saturday evenings with the once thriving Couples Club, which one night featured a member's craft display and an upholstery demonstration by the minister, Gerry Brown. The musical productions of "Bethlehem" and "Egypt", written and produced by our then minister, Walter Murray and musical director

Daniel Rubinoff, were highlights never to be forgotten. The productions involved well over 100 members of the congregation, creating a real bond of fellowship.

Fraser and Ruth both grew up in Toronto and met at the University of Toronto, Ruth studying physical education and Fraser, history. After teachers college they taught school, Ruth in Kitchener and Fraser in Aylmer. They married in 1951. While still in Aylmer, Fraser coached the East Elgin District High School to the Western Ontario Basketball Championship. Ruth retired from teaching to raise their five children, Susan, Cathy, Margaret, Charles and Heather. The three youngest were delivered by Dr. Reg Perkin. They moved to Mississauga in 1955 where Fraser taught at T.L. Kennedy, Gordon Graydon, Lorne Park and was Principal at Streetsville and Applewood Heights.

After retirement, Fraser was, for a time, a facilitator for the Academy of Life Long Learning at the University of Toronto, a weekly study group.

Ruth and Fraser both enjoyed camping, especially with their children for many years and covered Canada coast to coast. One standout memory they both mentioned were BEARS!!!! They are world travellers and only regret that those days seem to be past. They share a great interest in photography and reading (Ruth--adventure mysteries; Fraser--history). Ruth enjoys gymnastics and sudoku. Fraser has been an active Rotarian for 44 years. A great delight for both is spending time with their 14 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

Interview and story by the dynamic mother/daughter team of Marion Carroll and Cathy Campbell with special thanks to Fraser and Ruth Manders, the first of many families to be introduced on these pages.

**"Ruth and Fraser  
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**Vol. 36 Issue 2**

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**Out on a Limb** is published five times a year, by Applewood United Church  
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Unsolicited contributions are accepted and will be published at the discretion of the Editorial Board.

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## *The Labyrinth – a new look at an ancient symbol by Anne Moore*

Can you imagine a place where you could take a break from the daily grind, from the hectic pace of life in our modern culture? Would you love to find somewhere to slow down and live in the moment – even if it's only for a short time? There is such a place – it's called a labyrinth. This is an ancient symbol which has been around for over 3500 years and is found in many cultures.

Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress, then assistant Dean at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, introduced/re-introduced the labyrinth to North Americans in the early 1990s. She was instrumental in having two labyrinths built at the cathedral and in helping people to understand their meaning as a spiritual practice. Since then she has trained many people to facilitate the experience for others. I was lucky enough to attend one of her sessions recently at Five Oaks. I had walked the labyrinth many times so I was excited to learn more. Lauren is passionate about the value of the labyrinth in today's

society and loves to share her knowledge and wisdom so that others can benefit.

The labyrinth is not a maze, there is one path in to the centre and the same path out, and it allows us to focus on our inner selves since all we have to do is walk. It is also a metaphor for our spiritual journey and daily lives.

We can take our questions, our concerns and our worries in with us and open ourselves to the spirit's movement in this quiet and calm space. I am looking forward to being able to share this with you in the near future. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Applewood could have such a calm and sacred space which we could share with our community!



*Labyrinth in Kayenta, Utah.  
Photo: Louise Gilroy*

## *Applewood Social News*

Congratulations to first-time grandparents, Len and Sue Vantol. Granddaughter **Madelyn Michelle**, daughter of Sherri and Mike Pincoe, was born on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

On Friday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, at the home of Bob and Jane McCleary, the wedding of **Kevin and Susan McCleary** was joyfully celebrated. Rev. Cynthia officiated.

The wedding of **Richard Martin**, son of Bob and Beth Martin, and **Michelle Hacker** was joyously celebrated on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Rev. Cynthia officiating.

If you have a milestone you would like to share with the Applewood community, speak to one of *Out on a Limb's* Social Mavens, Sophie Cook and Shirley Webb.

## *Soul Food by Susan Eccles*

The first Soul Food dinner was held at Carolyn's home in October and it was an amazing success! Five families shared a sumptuous feast of Cajun dishes thanks to the culinary talents of husband Jay! We had great conversation and time spent with people we often can just offer a quick smile or hello to on a busy Sunday morning. This concept, introduced by Carolyn, enables us to build a community with other Applewood families at times other than the traditional Sunday morning. Even when we are not able to be in the pews we do want and need to find other ways to show our kids

that we care about our faith. We all hope this is part of that journey.

Each of the four families have planned a future dinner, bringing new groups of parents and their children together to open new friendships and strengthen connections. Thanks to Carolyn for offering new ways of sharing our faith as families.



*Soul Food...  
Families  
in communion.*

## *Finding a Christmas that's more than shopping and stress*

Resetting our hearts to seek the sparkle of Spirit requires some intention in these crazy consumer times. Young or old, here are some simple steps you can start right now.

1. Google 'Luke 2', or find a bible or children's book – read the story out loud and silently. Ponder it.
2. After supper, go look at Christmas lights. Make a thermos of hot chocolate for the car. Read that Luke 2 story at bedtime together.
3. Let your dollars reflect your heart. Give experiences, edible treats, or time together. Shop local, green and fair trade. Save some for charitable giving.

4. Imagine the story behind people's frowns and frustration. Everyone, especially the grumpiest, need some peace & hope.

5. Choose a Christmas buddy – an angel or a star or a reindeer? Whenever you see 'your buddy' – at a store or on a card, etc, smile and know God loves you.

Wishing you a Christmas sparkle to shine through this chilly season.

*Carolyn Smith,  
Minister, Christian Development and Pastoral Care*

## *Advent Worship*

**Sunday December 11—10:30 a.m. "Kindle the Flame"**  
**Sunday December 18—10:30 a.m. Musical Christmas Story**  
**Saturday December 24—Celebrate the Spirit of Christmas**  
 7 p.m. Family Service / 10 p.m. Candlelight Communion.  
**Sunday December 25—10:30 a.m. Christmas Day**

## *Making a Difference at Christmas by Marg Boutnikoff*

For many years, women and their children have received presents of caring from the people at Applewood United. Our support for Interim Place's Survivors of Abuse program and Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel/Halton's Christmas parties is much appreciated. Although we do not know these women personally, our gifts show that the community cares at a time when life is uncertain.

For women with family starting over again the challenges are overwhelming. Our gifts of money for grocery and clothing certificates eases the burden for these families, especially at Christmas. It is not a lot, but it means a decent meal for the Christmas dinner and some warm clothing for the winter months ahead.

For the women of Ellen and Marjorie Amos Houses run by the Elizabeth Fry Society, our small gifts for themselves and their children bring some needed hope for a better future. Elizabeth Fry helps these women with social etiquette and management skills, while they transfer from incarceration to life on their own. Most of these women have never had families to guide and comfort them, so the caring environment at the two homes holds promise for their futures. The many dozens of homemade cookies for all the Christmas parties is a delicious bonus.

Applewood United Church, a generous congregation, is making a difference in our community!

## *The Last Word*

As the Season of Advent is upon us once again, let me wish all of you and your families a wonderful holiday season. Although this time of year can often overwhelm with so many things to do, let us remember the needs of others. And, let us not forget the reason why we celebrate Christmas - that babe in a manger so long ago, who gave everything.

Blessings to You and Yours,  
Scott Perkin, General Chair