



Jubilation!

November 2025

Jubilation! is the newsletter of Jubilee United Church
40 Underhill Drive * 416-447-6846 * www.jubileeunited.ca
Editor: Elda Scott

Notes from Norm



I was sitting in a café the other day (the kind with many festive drinks and a little bit of plain coffee) when someone noticed my clerical collar (well, half-tucked in; I was going for that “minister, but not too minister” look). They nodded politely and said, “So, you must be busy this time of year. It’s your Super Bowl, right?” I laughed and told them, “Maybe, but I’m not sure I’m supposed to win anything.” They smiled, a bit awkwardly, and said, “I’m not religious myself, but I think Christmas still brings out the best in people.” I agreed, and that led to one of those conversations that start light and then takes a surprise turn - the kind where someone suddenly looks at you like you might have insider information about God.

At one point, they asked, “So, what’s the actual point of Christmas, anyway?” And I found myself saying something that surprised even me: “It’s not about being Christian. It’s about living faithfully in the world.” We’re not called to be “Christians”. At least, not the way the word so often gets used, like a membership card or a team jersey. We’re called to live faithfully in the world; to live in ways that make hope real and accessible; to make love and compassion feel safe, and to make forgiveness possible and feasible. We do that because we’ve seen something of the Holy, something we glimpse in the story of Jesus, in his teaching, his courage, and his refusal to let cynicism have the last word. We do it through shared stories, shared songs, shared community. And maybe, just maybe, through shared coffee (even the gingerbread latte kind).

So, what does that have to do with Christmas and Jubilee? Everything. Christmas isn’t just a story we remember; it’s an ongoing story that we are invited to join. A baby born in Bethlehem isn’t a bit of quaint religious trivia. It’s a declaration that God shows up not where the world is tidy and triumphant, but where life is messy, uncertain, and a bit drafty. God enters the world, not through palace doors, but through a manger, surrounded by people who were probably wondering how any of this made sense.

If you want to understand Christmas, look at who gets included: a young couple who had every reason to say “no” to the whole situation but somehow found the courage to say “yes”, rough-handed shepherds, who probably smelled like sheep but were the first to hear the news; foreigners who read the stars and took a wild detour because they sensed something sacred was happening somewhere unexpected. It’s a story about hope being born in the cracks of the ordinary.



And it’s still happening. At Jubilee, I see glimpses of that same story every day. I see it when people show up to make sure someone has a meal, or a welcome, or a listening ear. I see it in laughter that breaks out when it shouldn’t; the good kind of laughter that heals. I see it when someone walks in after years away and realizes it still feels like home.

This community isn’t perfect, but it’s real. And that’s what makes it holy. Faithful living doesn’t mean we all think the same or pray the same way or agree on everything. It means that, like those shepherds and magi, we find our way to the same place, drawn by hope, by curiosity, by something in the story that whispers, “Go and see.”

And when we go and see, we find that God is already there; not up in the clouds or locked behind stained glass, but here: in a basement apartment, at a refugee table, in a choir rehearsal, in a late-night text from someone who just needed to know they weren’t alone. That’s what Christmas is about. It’s not about defending a doctrine or winning a debate about whether the manger was historically accurate. (Spoiler: it might not have been. And that’s fine.). It’s about recognizing that this story tells the truth. Maybe not factual truth about dates and census records, but deeper truth about who God is and how love works. It tells us that the Holy doesn’t wait for the perfect moment; the Holy enters right in the middle of our confusion, our bureaucracy, our “no room at the inn.”

And, if that’s true (that God is that present, that vulnerable and that human), then faith isn’t about proving anything at all. It’s about revealing what’s already true: that love is stronger than fear, that compassion is more powerful than cynicism, and that every act of kindness has cosmic weight.

Christmas isn’t a test of belief; it’s an invitation to participation. So, this season, as we gather and sing and eat, light candles and throw socks, I hope we remember what we’re celebrating. Not a membership, but a mystery. Not a slogan, but a story - one that keeps unfolding in us and through us. Maybe we don’t need to “keep Christ in Christmas” so much as we need to keep Christmas in us; that ongoing willingness to believe that light still shines in the darkness, that joy is still possible, that God is still showing up in unexpected places... like a manger, or a church kitchen, or a crowded subway car, even over a gingerbread latte.

So, here’s my Christmas wish for us at Jubilee: that we continue to live as if the story is true. That hope is real, love is possible, and compassion is contagious. And, that when someone looks at us, they might just catch a glimpse of the Holy made human again.

Merry Christmas

Norm

Anne's Anecdotes

As the circle of the church year ends, and as we prepare to begin again with Advent, I am full of gratitude this autumn and looking forward with anticipation to December and the new year. I am grateful for many things, particularly the Path of the Wise Woman ministry, Jubilee Kids, our Godly Play leadership team, and Common Ground worship. God happens here at Jubilee and is moving in persistent hope and grace in and around us. I am grateful for the many ways that this good news is seen in our life and ministry together.

Path of the Wise Woman



Path of the Wise Woman has been part of our ministry at Jubilee since last November, thanks to Roz Espin's vision and facilitation. It has been a delight to work together with Roz to offer many afternoons and, most recently, a weekend retreat to women from our congregation and beyond. In our Path of the Wise



Woman workshops, Roz's gifted leadership invites us to explore and experience what it is to be fully grounded in our world, in our times, in ourselves and in the divine. It has been a wonderful year of discovery, and I am looking forward to many more events to come.

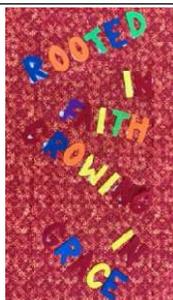
Upcoming Path of the Wise Woman Workshops:

Friday, November 21, 1-4pm, The Sacred Silence: Journeying Within, is a "mini silent retreat" where you will be invited to "go within", slow down and reconnect to your own natural rhythm during this sacred time of hibernation and dreaming.

Saturday, January 17, 1-4pm, The Power of our Emotions: Tending to our Inner Landscape is focused on how to navigate your emotional landscape with love, compassion and strength.

Saturday, February 21, 1-4pm, Looking Through the Eyes of Love: Real Love vs. Illusion is on learning to discern between the ego's idea of love vs. unconditional love.

Registration: To register or learn more about our upcoming workshops visit [the Path of the Wise Woman page on our website.](#)



Jubilee Kids While grown-ups at Jubilee were creating wonderful events and experiences in celebration of our 25th Anniversary, Jubilee Kids were steadily working away at a beautiful banner to celebrate and remember this special time. Here it is for the first time; we will dedicate it during worship on Sunday, November 23. Beside the banner is the wonderful green stole that the kids made for me to celebrate our Covenanting Service. Thank you, Jubilee Kids, for your handiwork and your presence with us.



Thank you to our leaders Haley Brown, Chanelle Christmas-LaFleur, Spencer Clinton, and Jessica McKendry. We are shaping our Questions Youth Group, deepening our Godly Play ministry and forming a third Sunday morning class for our younger kids. I am looking forward to doing so much with this brilliant, creative and caring team.

Common Ground Worship

Kye Andrews and I worked together to begin Common Ground worship, which happens at 7pm on the first Sunday of each month. It began with us and the spark of an idea from Rev. Norm, and I am excited that those who attend are becoming a part of shaping this service. Our Grove Band provides music, and many volunteers read, share their stories and even provide yummy baking. More than this, at Common Ground and throughout our ministries at Jubilee, we have groups of people eager to share their creativity and their ideas. I am so excited to witness the impact of this shared creative work and community building as Common Ground continues. Our coming dates are December 7, January 4, February 1, and March 1.

Music Ministry

Jeannie Wyse, Music Director

Here we are in the Christmas season already. Our choir continues to grow: Ashley Bull has joined our soprano section, Kareen Williams started with the altos and has now been welcomed by the tenors, and Kay Bergerson has come back to us after visiting family in Arizona. We had a busy fall and are now getting ready for our Christmas concert on November 29, featuring the fantastic Jackie Richardson as our guest soloist. And now, meet the...



Bass/Baritone Section



Ravaughn, Chris, John

Ravaughn Latchman has always had a love for music. Growing up in Jamaica, his dad played records on a Sunday afternoon - songs by Nat King Cole, Stevie Wonder and many other musical legends. After high school, he sang solos at his church, Nazareth Assembly Hall. He always dreamt of being part of an actual choir and singing *Seasons of Love*. Both dreams came true right here at Jubilee. Ravaughn joined Jubilee alongside his husband, André, in the fall of 2024 and wasted no time in joining the choir. He enjoys the variety in music and how Jeannie challenges everyone to do their best and take the next step.

Chris Wilson, our Lead Bass, is a professional performing artist, arts educator, independent artistic producer, and theatre-maker. Having worked professionally in musical theatre for 30+ years, his career has taken him coast to coast and included international opportunities. He was a founding member of the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, has sung with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, the Elora Festival Singers, and currently sings with the Elmer Iseler Singers. He currently works with the Toronto District School Board and loves singing with his cherished church choir community at Jubilee United as the bass section lead.

John Brooker was born and raised in the Willowdale area of north Toronto. He has sung in many United Church choirs for over 30 years, including Eglinton and Bayview, in the Amadeus Choir for 16 years, and, more recently, with Cantorel Sine Nomine, a chamber choir in Uxbridge. He also plays the piano and saxophone. John worked in advertising and television, including TSN, for many years. He is married to Noreen, who hails from P.E.I., and has two adult children and two grandchildren. He spent many summers in Muskoka with fond memories of Cleveland's House on Lake Rousseau, which was built by his grandfather Minett's family. His other grandfather was Bertram Brooker, artist and writer, and contemporary of the Group of Seven.



Ashley Bull grew up singing at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church - first in the children's choir and then the youth choir. She later spent nearly a decade as the soprano lead at Forest Grove United Church. She's also a makeup artist in film and television - her department won a Canadian Screen Award for Achievement in Makeup in 2020. Ashley loves cooking (especially for church potlucks!) and, fun fact, she's the only person who knows the secret ingredient in ginger ale, a recipe invented by her grandfather. She brings the same creative spark to the kitchen and the stage that she does to everything she loves.



Kathleen Bergerson was born and raised in Owen Sound. She has sung in choirs all her life, including at Richmond Hill and Northwest Barrie United. After moving back to Toronto, Kay attended Forest Grove United in search of a new congregation, only to discover that was their last service and they would be closing their doors. She feels so fortunate to have found Jubilee through the amalgamation and loves singing with everyone under Jeannie's watchful eye. Kay worked as a registered pediatric nurse at

Mount Sinai before moving into education and eventually becoming the director of HR, recruiting nurses from all over the globe to come to Canada. Now retired, Kay splits time living with her son in Toronto and her daughter in Arizona discovering the joys of being a snowbird.

Outreach and Mission & Service

Pam Lock

As we approach the season of Advent and the hectic weeks of preparing for Christmas, let us make time to reflect on the blessings that many of us have in our lives. And let us be mindful of the challenges that many of our local and global neighbours face.

How can we make a difference? We can offer prayers. We can volunteer with charitable organizations. As members of the United Church of Canada, we can donate funds to the Mission and Service Fund. Furthermore, we can support the national *GIFTS WITH VISION*. (See their full catalogue at [gifts with vision.ca](http://gifts-with-vision.ca). The gifts range from \$15 (supplies for a girls' school in Zambia) to \$50 (food security for Elders in Chinook Winds Regional Council) to \$100 (solar-powered water pumps in the Philippines). Mission and Service helps transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. Thanks to the people at Jubilee UC for your continuing support.

Christmas Memories

Shirley Criscione

Church was always an important part of our Christmas. Marie and then TJ (never Michael - he was too shy), were always part of the Christmas Eve family service at our church in West Hill. I can't remember the year that Marie was invited to sing "O Holy Night" at the end of the service, but I believe it would have been early high school. She sang it every year and she definitely sang it at Donminster and then for many years at Jubilee.



Lindy receiving the Fisher Price Village from Santa. This had been Marie's. Marie received it from Santa at about the same age.

Marie and Lindy singing together (although not "O Holy Night").



This dress was handmade by Marie's Nonna, Maria Criscione, for Marie. The embroidery was hand-done as well.

My dad, Robert Allen, started this tradition years ago. After you had emptied your stocking, you put it on your foot for a picture.



Rai and Anne-Mari Remmel



Estonian traditions are not much different from Canadian, except that we celebrate Christmas Eve as top priority and Christmas Day as second priority, and instead of turkey, we have pork roast.

As in most countries, there is considerable excitement building up to Christmas.

What will Santa bring? Have I been good enough? What have my parents bought for me? Waiting is unbearable. When our tree is up, we put the presents under it right away. Only Santa's presents appear on the 24th. Sometimes even Santa appears at our house. This is extremely wonderful, and scary. The children must recite a verse or sing a song before they get their gift.

One year, Rai and I came up with an idea to avoid peeking under wraps at gifts. We wrapped them carefully, but securely. As the boys got older, they decided they would get us back. On Christmas Eve, as we were ready to open gifts, I was presented with something wrapped in blue jeans material. A piece had been cut from the leg of their jeans and sewn across at both ends with my sewing machine. Well, now what?? Then Rai got his gift which was wrapped with pieces of wood nailed together. We had so much laughter and congratulated the boys on their ingenuity.

Now, as we get together with our extended family of 20, we don't get into these shenanigans. We do have a party game, however, with a theme. Everyone buys only one gift and gets a number. In turn, we choose a gift from under the tree. We all watch to see what it is before the next person chooses a gift and so on. We do have the choice to steal any of the opened gifts in exchange for our number and then they have to choose again or steal. But they cannot steal their gift back. Over the years we have discovered wine and cheese are highly coveted gifts.

The Benevolent Fund A Christmas Expression of Love



As Christmas draws near, we are surrounded by lights and carols that speak of hope and joy, yet we know that, for many, this season brings worry, loneliness, or struggle. In this time when the gap between abundance and need can feel especially wide, the Benevolent Fund continues its quiet, compassionate work.

This year, we've shared grocery cards with households stretched to the limit, helped cover utility bills so families could stay warm, and provided transportation for work or hospital visits. We've helped children into programs, ensured that students had school supplies, and eased the financial burdens that weigh heavily on so many.

These gifts may look small - a card, a bill, a ride - but they carry something sacred: dignity, peace of mind, and the assurance that no one is alone. The Benevolent Fund lets us respond when people fall through the cracks of other systems, quietly and compassionately. More than once, someone who once received help has later come back to give, transforming gratitude into generosity and grace into hope.

If you are moved to support the Benevolent Fund this Christmas, you can do so through the usual means (envelope, e-transfer, etc.), marking your gift "Benevolent Fund." Every dollar goes directly to help those in need, and every gift helps the light of love shine a little brighter in our community.

With deep thanks,
Norm

Jubilee United Church

Where Community & Compassion have been Meeting for 25 Years



Throughout October and early November, we have been celebrating the 25th anniversary of Jubilee United Church. Jubilee came to be through joining, not dividing, communities of faith. Rooted in a spirit of welcome, we're a place where people care for one another and for our wider neighbourhood. We believe that hope grows when people share food, music, and meaningful connection. While worship and faith formation remain central to who we are, Jubilee's purpose reaches far beyond Sunday morning. We're a community of neighbours who believe that love in action - feeding, teaching, welcoming, and listening - changes lives.

Celebrations began with a visit from Rev. Dr. Malcolm Sinclair (a former minister of founding church, Victoria Village United Church) as our guest preacher. As the month unfolded, we revealed a new anniversary banner that hangs proudly on the outside of Jubilee's building. We sang pop songs from the past 25 years. We published a comprehensive history of the Jubilee United Church out of five amalgamated congregations. We gathered for tea and a trivia contest, and an evening of jazz, delightful food and a fundraising auction. We revealed a new outdoor stone bench that incorporates the corner stones of our founding churches. All through the month, we heard stories from our community about what it is that brought them to Jubilee and what they cherish about Jubilee. We concluded the celebrations with the Ultimate Church Lunch, that included more jellied salads and colourful desserts than any of us have seen in decades!

It was an incredible month made possible by an anniversary task force that included Doris Doidge, Maguid Nashid, Sue Hawton, Jean Probyn, Pamela Lock, Barbara Rutherford, Kris McGillen, Pat Lansche and Liz Webster, a plethora of engaged and enthusiastic volunteers and sponsors, and the spirit that continues to be both generous and holy in our midst.

◆ *a Jubilee Christmas* ◆

with
Jackie Richardson
AND THE JUBILEE CHOIR

29TH OF NOV
AT 7:30PM
doors open at 7PM

GET YOUR TICKETS \$35

JUBILEE UNITED CHURCH
40 UNDERHILL DRIVE
NORTH YORK

ANNUAL EPIC COOKIE SALE AT INTERMISSION
PLUS LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

www.jubileeunited.ca/jubileechristmas

In Memoriam:
Helen Clark (October 25)
Marilyn Patterson, Marg May's sister
(November 1)



Wednesday, December 17th at 7pm
at Jubilee United Church

**A SERVICE OF LIGHT
IN THE SHADOWS**

Find peace and quiet comfort this season at Light in the Shadows, a gentle service for all the feelings, memories and emotions of the season. Come as you are to a sacred space where hope and warmth are kindled, even in the darkest nights.

A gentle 45 minute service of music, word, candles and prayer, led by the team who lead Common Ground

Upcoming Events

- November 21 (Friday)** *The Path of the Wise Woman* Workshop 1:00-4:00pm (\$25)
Registration required – call the church office or register online using the Jubilee website: jubileeunited.ca/path-of-the-wise-woman/
- November 24 (Monday)** Outreach Event: *The Bermuda Triangle of Aging* 1:00-2:30pm
Join us for a coffee and a presentation by Karen Henderson, founder of the Long-Term Care Planning Network. Explore the components at the corners of this triangle: wealth, cognitive/physical health, and social connectivity/support. Focus will be on the center of the triangle – what it is, why it is dangerous, why older people get caught there, and what they need to do to stay out of the triangle.
- November 24 (Monday)** Ulterior Worship 6:30-7:30pm
- November 25 (Tuesday)** Women’s Bible Study 12:15-1:15pm
- November 29 (Saturday)** *A Jubilee Christmas with Jackie Richardson* 7:30pm (\$35)
and the Jubilee Choir
Tickets available at the church office, after Sunday worship service, and online: [CLICK HERE](#)
- December 1 (Monday)** UCW meeting 12:00-2:30pm
- December 5 (Friday)** *Tinsel & Turkey* Christmas Dinner 6:30pm (\$25)*
Tickets available at the church office and after Sunday worship service
- December 7 (Sunday)** Common Ground worship service 7:00pm
- December 8 (Monday)** Ulterior Worship 6:30-7:30pm
- December 17 (Wednesday)** Service of Light in the Shadows 7:00pm
- December 14 (Sunday)** Definitely NOT Church 7:30pm
- December 21 (Sunday)** Christmas Pageant 10:30am
Carolling on the Labyrinth 7:00pm
- December 24 (Wednesday)** Service for Children 4:00pm
Christmas Eve Service 7:00pm
Quiet Communion Service 11:00pm
- December 28 (Sunday)** Pajama Sunday 10:30am

Tinsel and Turkey

The Jubilee Christmas Dinner



A Family-Friendly Festive Feast
Jubilee United Church

Friday, December 5 at 6:30pm

Tickets \$25/each, \$60 family

Cash Bar available
Tickets available at church office and Sundays after church
Celebrate the Season with your Jubilee Family

a Jubilee Christmas



with Jackie Richardson
AND THE BIBLE CHIRPS

29TH OF NOV

AT 7:30PM

doors open at 7PM

ANNUAL BIBLE CHIRPS
FALL FOR PRESENTERS

GET YOUR
TICKETS
\$35

JUBILEE UNITED CHURCH
40 UNDERHILL DRIVE
NORTH YORK

www.jubileeunitedchurch.org

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

AND SOCK THROWING!



Join us for an instant volunteer, impromptu Christmas Pageant and then, throw socks at your ministers!

Socks that will then be shared with those who need warmth

Sunday, December 21st
at 10:30am

Advent Invitations!

Christmas Eve

4pm Service for Children (but Everyone is welcome)

7pm - The Big Service - All the Bells and Whistles,

Angels and Shepherds!

11pm - The Quiet Service - Join us for intimate Communion



Christmas Day

Join us on-line at 8am



Carolling

on the Labyrinth

Sunday, December 21st at 7pm

Cooper, Anne & The Kids



MINISTRY FOR SHEPHERDS



Sunday, December 14th @ 7:30pm

Join us for a special service to honor our shepherds. We will be celebrating the shepherds who have served the church for many years. We will be celebrating the shepherds who have served the church for many years. We will be celebrating the shepherds who have served the church for many years.



Right after Christmas, it's Pajama Sunday

ROLL OUT OF BED JUST YOU ARE!
OR PUT ON AN UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER
AND JOIN US
COFFEE WILL BE READY AT 10AM

28 DEC | 10:30 AM

IT'S GOING TO BE INFORMAL @ JUBILEE



