

Islington United Church



LINK

Newsletter

The Place You Want to Be

*Mark Aitchison,
Senior Minister*



Most of us are familiar with the tradition of children's Christmas pageants during the Advent and Christmas season. We smile at little shepherds wrapped in bed sheets and burlap, at pint-sized angels with tinfoil halos waving to their parents in the congregation as they sing their glorias and alleluias. We appreciate their innocence. There is always a feeling that's hard to name when we walk into our sanctuary to see a lowly stable and some hay in the chancel and a six-year-old announcing to us that she is bringing good news of great joy!

There is a reason, beyond the cute photo opportunities, that we have children perform this yearly ritual. There is something important about having these smallest members of our community recreate the really big announcement.

Herod was certainly not among the "smallest" of his community; in fact, he was at the top of the heap. One can imagine that he was none too pleased about being out of the loop when strangers from another land

came looking for the king of the Jews – and they didn't mean *him*. How could it be that these foreigners had information – important political information – that he didn't have?

So Herod pulled together his advisors and mulled over this prophesy of one who would become ruler of the people. He grilled the magi for details and lied to them that he wanted to pay his respects to this special child too. Herod would not tolerate being out of the loop any longer; he wanted to be in control. And he wanted all this nonsense to stop.

Unfortunately for Herod these interesting strangers from another land were not the only ones who knew about the new king. According to Luke's account, a host of angels had declared the birth of the Messiah to a bunch of shepherders out in the fields. These folks weren't the most powerful or prominent people of their society. They were simply attending to their duty to keep the flocks safe when the message from on high was given to them. The shepherds, in turn, did not keep this

Continued on following page

This is Your Invitation to Holy Communion

Holy Communion will be celebrated Sunday, November 29 at both the 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. Services of Worship. We hope you will be able to share these very special services with us. As at other Communion Services, there will be Benevolent Offering envelopes in the pews to allow you to participate in our ministry of outreach to our community.

Name _____

Elder _____

District No. _____

Elder's Telephone _____

Elder's Email _____

The Place You Want to Be

Continued from page 1

news to themselves. How could they, after what they had seen and heard?

Herod could not stamp out the fire of this message. He could not control it. He could not manipulate it to his liking. Something new and powerful was breaking in, and breaking into the strangest places. Despite his efforts, he could not stop it and he could never anticipate that this child's reign would be greater than his throne, greater than wealth and greater than any boundary lines. A new kind of kingdom was coming; a kingdom where Herod's kind of power and influence would be diminished.

All this excitement and worry over a child ... a baby born into a bed of straw. The little children who announce the good news to us at our Family Service on Christmas Eve are appropriate messengers. They prepare us well for the new way of Jesus. They remind us that the forgotten, the weak, the vulnerable, and the stranger will play a big role in a new kingdom. They remind us of the unusual places and people God chooses to use in our story of salvation. They remind us that God's expectations often run counter to ours.

Statistics show that young families are often looking for a church to attend on Christmas Eve. Perhaps there is someone in your neighbourhood or family who would appreciate being invited to a service where Little Children share the Big News of Christmas. Please help us spread the news that there is a warm welcome at Islington United Church on Christmas Eve and every Sunday morning at 9:30 and 11:15.

The place you want to be.

See you in worship,
Mark Aitchison

Our 2009 Christmas Project

Together, Everything's Possible

Julie Smith

This Advent season at Islington United Church we continue our tradition of sharing our abundance with people in our community who have fewer resources. This year's project will focus on providing gifts to clients of the Mabelle Food Program, keeping our Emergency Food Pantry stocked, and providing Christmas morning gifts for 50 youth who are living at Youth Without Shelter in Etobicoke.

Our goal is to give all our food program clients a No Frills gift card that they can use to purchase groceries of their own choice during the holiday season. Each one- and two-person household would receive a \$20 card and households with three or more people would receive \$40. We would also like to give households with children a gift card for Zellers in the amount of \$25 or \$50, depending on the size of the family.

Our goal for Youth Without Shelter (YWS) is to provide individual toiletry bags along with a bath-size towel for all 50 youth. According to the YWS Director, these toiletry kits are the foundation of their Christmas giving

to the residents and they are really grateful to receive them each year. And while a towel does not seem like much of a gift, the youth love receiving our new fluffy donations – they don't want us to change our giving.

Our goal this Christmas is to collect enough cash donations to supplement our food bank program through another calendar year. We use your donations to purchase enough milk, bread and eggs (among other items) so that everyone who comes to the food program receives these necessary items. The food bank team has budgeted \$300 per month to make ends meet.

Our goal is to collect enough cash donations to continue providing our hospitality table at the Mabelle Food Program through another calendar year. The hospitality team has budgeted \$200 per month to prepare and serve hot soup, fresh bread, cheese, juice and fresh fruit at each program (that's twice each month). Most clients do not have the resources for any of these foods and after standing in line for up to four hours prior to our opening, they are hungry, thirsty and very grateful.

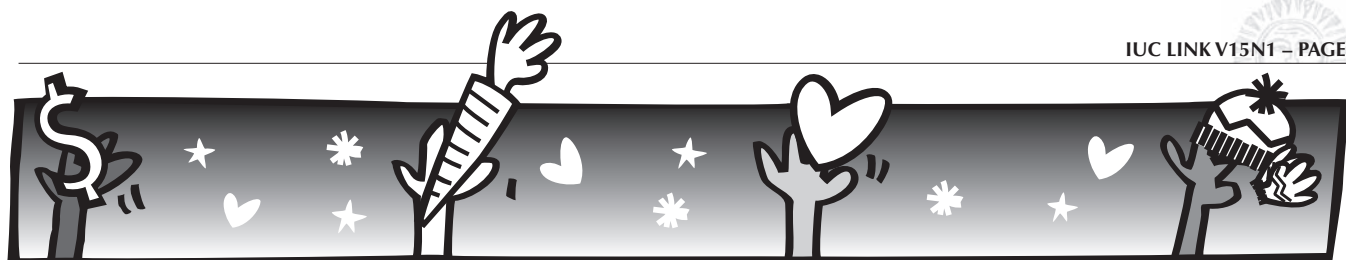
Islington – The Place You Want to Be!

*Linda Wheler,
Minister of Pastoral Care*

Can you remember your first day at Islington United Church? What was it that made you want to return? Was it the warm handshake and greeting you received when you entered the building or the smile from the person who sat beside you in church? Was it the beauty of the sanctuary, its cleanliness, the signage with clear direction to where you were going? Was it the worship and music, the people or the feeling you had in

sanctuary? Was it an invitation to coffee time along with interesting conversation or was it a warm welcome from one of the ministers?

It may have been one thing or it may have been many things that brought you back and continue to bring you back to this church home. It may be difficult to identify what made you feel welcome and what continues to bring you to worship in this place. At one time each one of us was new, and was drawn into a relationship with God and with one another in this place. Whether



Our goal is big and multi-faceted. In tough economic times and with so many organizations looking for donations we need everyone to work together. In November we got the children and youth of our congregation involved and encouraged them to find ways to help meet our goals. Together, we have come up with several ways you can choose to help:

1. You can make a cash donation using the Christmas Offering envelope on the insert in this newsletter. We will use the funds to purchase the gift cards for the Mabelle Food Program clients and then direct funds to the ongoing operation of the food program.

OR

2. Beginning on Sunday November 29, there will be white plastic bags hanging in the Sanctuary. The youth have prepared and tagged the bags with a “shopping list” of non-perishable foods which are in short supply at our food bank. You can choose to help by taking a bag, filling it and returning it on White Bag Sunday, December 13. Please note that all the white plastic bags will be recycled at the food bank for clients to use.

OR

3. The children of our congregation have contributed their time and talent by creating the 2010 KIDS FEEDING KIDS calendar. It will be launched on Sunday, November 29 and copies will be sold to raise funds and awareness of the ongoing need for

food in our community. You can choose to purchase a calendar knowing that all the funds raised will go to the ongoing operation of the food program.

OR

4. For those who are knitters, please continue to donate your wonderful hats, mitts and scarves as you have done for many years. We will be handing them out to our food program clients beginning in December. Our Mabelle neighbours really appreciate these warm, beautiful items when they don't have enough resources to afford new ones every year.

Kingsway Baptist Church, one of our partners in the Mabelle Food Program, joined us last year by filling some of our white bags and they will be offering their congregation the opportunity to share in this year's project. We thank them for their continued support and are grateful for the opportunity to work together.

So YES, our goal is big but with the youth preparing the bags, the children creating and selling their calendars, Kingsway Baptist collecting donations, and you contributing in whatever way you choose – TOGETHER, EVERYTHING'S POSSIBLE.

I wish you all the best of health, love and peace in your homes this Advent season and always.

Hugs and blessings,
Julie Smith

we were a child, youth or adult, at one point you were new or a visitor and through care and time found your place here. How can we as a faith family ensure that each person feels welcomed and that in time they too belong in this faith family knowing that they are supported in all of life by God through this community?

Our Church Council and Elders are asking this question and exploring the ministry of welcome and hospitality. How can we be a welcoming church and how do we help people enjoy a sense of belonging at Islington?

Being a welcoming faith community is more than the desire to add to our numbers. It is a genuine desire to invite individuals into a faithful relationship with God and one another. In Robert Schnase's book *Five Practices of Fruitful Conversation* he talks about the importance of radical hospitality. He writes, "Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ. It describes a genuine

love for others who are not yet part of the faith community." Schnase further challenges the reader to **radical** hospitality by exceeding expectations and going the extra mile, by welcoming the stranger "to the max."

As a faith community we seek to follow Christ's example of welcoming the stranger, inviting them to be part of this faith community as we seek to live out of God's grace and freely share that grace with one another. It is an important ministry of which we are all a part.

Just Imagine...

Carole Bennett,
Stewardship Administrator

The kingdom of God ... is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in the shade.

(Mark 4:31–32)

Just as Peter wrote in his first letter each of us has been blessed with God's many wonderful gifts – gifts to use in the service of others. (1 Peter 4:10)

The body of Christ at Islington is blessed with members and adherents of all ages who have shared their wonderful God-given gifts. Many give generously by participating in the life and work of this congregation – in full view or quietly behind the scenes. In meeting rooms, worship, study groups or outreach; by visiting, welcoming, teaching or listening, members and adherents find many vital ways to engage in the life and work of God's community here at Islington.

As we use those gifts in God's service we find expression for our faith and help to make visible the kingdom of God on earth. And even when we depart this life we can be a part of the future of this congregation – even a future that doesn't include us. Just imagine...

A **Planned Gift** is different from your regular offering which supports the current year's ministry. Planned Giving refers to a process of planning your charitable gifts to meet both your philanthropic goals and your family needs. The emphasis is placed on directing the gift to a ministry or purpose that will make a difference in God's world and, at the same time, on structuring the gift to maximize the tax and other financial benefits of the gift. Just imagine...

A Planned Gift may be either a current gift from assets such as cash or securities or a deferred gift such as a bequest, life insurance or an annuity. It comes first from the heart and is a way to create a **Legacy of Faith** that reflects the values by which you lead your life. For you, it is a way to respond to God in gratitude for all that God has given you. For Islington, your Planned Gift ensures that this congregation will be able to minister to future generations. Just imagine...

At the Annual Meeting in September the congregation approved a way to provide more choice for directing your Planned Gift to the ministries or programs that have special meaning for you. The congregation has created three new trust funds so that you can direct your Planned Gift of a bequest or life insurance or securities – whatever – to a purpose that is important to you. Just imagine...

The Discipleship Fund will finance ministries for the spiritual growth of this congregation in a manner that is consistent with the mission, vision and values of Islington United Church. The fund might be used as "seed money" to start new programs or ministries including funding staff, research, acquisition of resources, communication and related activities to help build up the body of Christ within the congregation. Potential projects might include: organizing a faith formation conference with speakers and leaders from beyond our own congregation; setting up a family-oriented vacation Bible camp; building a labyrinth for contemplative programs or ministries; sponsoring retreats for those wanting to discover or explore their faith; purchasing a large vehicle to bring people to worship. Just imagine...

The Good Neighbour Fund is a trust fund to help our congregation reach beyond our "walls" to develop and support social justice or other mission initiatives in our local community,

our city, Canada or the world. Here

are some possibilities: bursaries for our youth so that they can participate in mission trips in Canada or abroad; funding for "exposure" trips to M&S-funded projects; initiating a community outreach program right here in Islington. Just imagine...

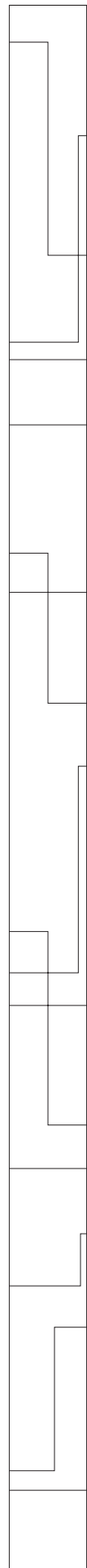
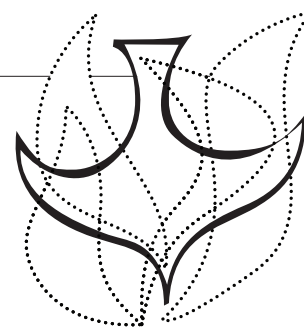
The Cornerstone Fund will be used to enhance the facilities of Islington United Church in a manner that is consistent with the mission, vision and values of Islington to ensure the congregation's long-term presence in the community. For example, projects funded with gifts in the Cornerstone Fund might include: the replacement or renovation of major components of the building to support existing or new ministries (e.g., a drop-in centre for the community); enhanced accessibility for those who are disabled; air-conditioning in the Sanctuary to encourage more participation in summer worship. Just imagine...

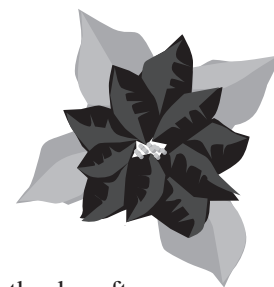
Making a Planned Gift to one or more of these funds enables you to pick the purposes that are close to your heart and to have an impact on the future of this congregation – your **Legacy of Faith**.

In 2009 Islington United Church received Planned Gifts from people wanting to leave such a **Legacy of Faith** by remembering this congregation and God's work in this community with a bequest in their will. We are grateful for bequests from the estates of Fergus Brown, Don Cade and Susan May Campbell.

During 2009 Islington United also received major gifts with gratitude from Claire Estlick, Ben and May Hutzel, Bente Simonsen, Julie Smith, and two anonymous donors. These gifts were directed to the general fund or designated ministries and programs.

We are also thankful for the gifts





Advent 2009

10 Tips for a Simpler, More Meaningful Christmas

we receive when a family requests that any **Memorial Gifts** be directed to Islington United Church or one of its special projects. This is often done in the newspaper obituary or other notices. We are grateful to the following families for encouraging Memorial Gifts to Islington United in memory of their loved one this year:

The family of Don Cade
 The family of Mae Grady
 The family of Pete Jackson
 The family of Richard Wilson

Others also choose to make a **Memorial Gift** to Islington that remembers the life of a loved one or a special person. These gifts celebrate the life and faith of the person and provide a meaningful remembrance for the bereaved. In 2009 we have received Memorial Gifts to honour the lives of the following people:

Joan Baily	Bob Hubbs
Bob Berry	John Irvine
Don Cade	Pete Jackson
Ruth Fleming	Marg Lindsay
Bill Fowler	Helen Siemms
Del Goughnour	Helen Whetstone
Kelly Grady	Richard Wilson
Mae Grady	B. Woolridge

Others have made **Celebration Gifts** in 2009 – recognizing a special occasion or milestone such as a child’s baptism, a special birthday or a milestone wedding anniversary with a lasting gift of faith. We are grateful for gifts honouring:

Ben and May Hutzel
 Dale Kucharczyk
 Janet Rogers
 Don and Pat Silverthorn
 Riley David Vuk

Legacy of Faith gifts today can ensure ministry at Islington for decades to come. Because it is invested wisely by the Board of Trustees, your gift can grow like the mustard seed to provide for the spiritual nurture of future generations. A gift can be directed to one or more of the new trust funds or to a specific purpose; the choice is yours or your family’s.

For a confidential discussion about making a bequest or other types of planned gifts, please contact Carole Bennett, Stewardship

- 1 Plan ahead. Instead of going on autopilot the day after [Halloween], hold a family meeting to decide what the group really wants to do and who’s going to do what.
- 2 If you need a symbol for giving (in addition to Jesus and the Three Wise Ones), learn about St. Nicholas. Santa Claus has been completely taken over by commerce.
- 3 Avoid debt. Refuse to be pressured by advertising to overspend.
- 4 Avoid stress. Give to yourself. Don’t assume that things have to be the same way they’ve always been.
- 5 Draw names rather than everyone giving something to everyone else in your giving circle. Set a ceiling for each recipient. Give children ONE thing they really want rather than so many gifts. If need be, pool funds.
- 6 Give appropriate gifts. Get to know the recipient. Give what they want to receive, not what you want to buy.
- 7 Give alternative gifts. Give 25% of what you spent last year to the needy ... individuals or groups locally, nationally or internationally [e.g., make a special donation to the Mission and Service Fund through Islington United Church].
 - Buy crafts and clothing from developing countries at alternative gift markets [e.g., Ten Thousand Villages], not from commercial importers, so the artisans receive a fair price for their work.
 - Give of yourself, not just “stuff” – a coupon book for future services (such as babysitting or an “enchanted evening”); something baked, sewn, handmade, composed, etc.; or a family service project such as working together at a soup kitchen [or the Mabelle Food Program or Homework Club].
- 8 Celebrate Advent for four weeks before Christmas. [Watch Islington’s weekly bulletin for daily ideas on celebrating the whole season – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany.]
- 9 Put the gifts under the tree shortly before opening them. Then take turns opening them around the tree, not all at once, so that each gift can be admired and each giver thanked.
- 10 Make changes slowly but persistently. Don’t try to change everything and everybody all at once. The resistance will make you feel defeated and lonely.

*Used with permission
 from Alternatives for Simple Living:
 1.800.821.6153
 www.SimpleLiving.org*



Islington United Church – The Place You Want to Be!

Elsa van Vliet,
Chair, Church Council

The above is a new “tag line” proposed by a group of Church Council members. It is one of several activities Church Council has been engaged in on your behalf during the transition “half year” of January to June 2009. It’s been a wonderful, busy and blessed time. As Chair of Church Council I am very grateful to the dedicated committee chairs and staff who form our Council. I am pleased to share with you highlights from Church Council.

We have just completed a six-month “half-year” transition period moving us to our **new annual fiscal year cycle of July 1–June 30**. We changed the fiscal year so that annual planning and budgeting activities can occur in the spring of each year (instead of during the busy Christmas season). It also aligns the financial year more closely with our Church program year of September to August.

In April and June of 2009, Council members participated in two **planning sessions** to develop a common understanding of **Congregational Development** – our previously agreed-to top priority from Project 20/20. Looking at Project 20/20 and our current assets/opportunities we collectively identified **six key mid-range priorities (two to three years)**. We agreed to revisit these annually as part of our ongoing multi-year planning and budgeting.

Building on our Mission, “*To be an open, friendly and caring church where people of all ages are invited to discover, explore and develop their spirituality in Christ’s name*,” the following Congregational Development Focus was created.

Congregational Development Focus

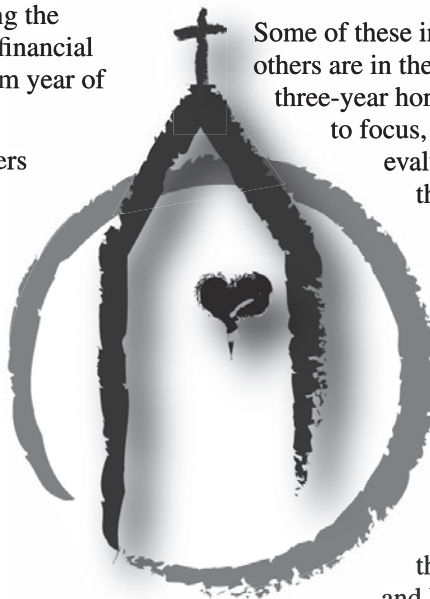
To promote a warm and welcoming environment that fosters a sense of belonging, with a focus on the spiritual growth and needs of our congregation and our community by:

- **Nurturing Christian spirituality**
- **Equipping ourselves and others to put faith into action**
- **Inviting and supporting newcomers**

The **Top Priorities** identified by Council for the next two to three years are:

- Establish a group known as “The Emerging Spirit Project” to **explore and develop new approaches for complementary worship opportunities**.
- Establish a leadership group to develop a **welcoming team**.
- Establish a new **support group(s) for people in transition** (e.g. medical, divorce, depression).
- Host **listening events** to discover the needs of our **surrounding community**.
- Sponsor an **awareness program** with the goal to motivate/create passion leading to a social justice group that will facilitate a **social justice program**.
- Develop a training and recruitment process for **Discovery Quest leaders**.

Some of these initiatives are already underway while others are in the early planning stages. With a two- to three-year horizon we hope to have adequate time to focus, plan, communicate, implement and evaluate. If you are interested in any of these areas, please speak with any member of Church Council. Your participation is always welcome.



While Council is focusing on these mid-term priorities, many wonderful programs, services and initiatives continue to flourish at IUC. For example, over the summer 56 youth in Grade 9 to age 19 and their leaders participated in the GO Project providing services to the communities of Islington, Ontario and Halifax, Nova Scotia (please see separate report on our website for details). As well, 35 children and youth leaders attended Vacation Bible Camp. This year’s program was run by four staff hired through the Presbytery and the theme was *Faith Quest’ 09*. From 9:00 a.m. to noon each day, children and their leaders entered into new imaginary worlds of four Bible stories: the Good Samaritan, David and Goliath, Moses’ flight, and the Walls of Jericho.

In closing, I am thankful for the ongoing commitment and dedication of our amazing laity and staff and their contributions to the life and work of our church. We are richly blessed with a wonderful variety of meaningful programs and services, a warm and welcoming faith family and many opportunities to worship and serve our risen Lord Jesus. May this Advent season be meaningful to you and yours as we wait for and worship our Lord.

LINK

is a regular newsletter
produced and distributed by

Islington United Church

25 Burnhamthorpe Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9A 1G9

416-239-1131
Fax 416-239-7421
office@islingtonunited.org
www.islingtonunited.org

Senior Minister
Mark Aitchison, ext. 23
mark@islingtonunited.org

Stewardship & Church Administrator
Carole Bennett, ext. 33
carole@islingtonunited.org

Minister of Music
John Derksen, ext. 26
john@islingtonunited.org

Children & Youth Program Associate
Lauren Hodgson, ext. 25
lauren@islingtonunited.org

Wedding & Baptism Coordinator
Margaret Leet, ext. 22
margaret@islingtonunited.org

Minister to Children & Youth
Michael Shewburg, ext. 31
michael@islingtonunited.org

Facilities Manager
Gil Watson, ext. 27
gil@islingtonunited.org

Minister of Pastoral Care
Linda Wheler, ext. 24
linda@islingtonunited.org

Editor
Carole Bennett

Layout
Leah Gryfe

Sunday Services

Sunday Morning Worship
9:30 & 11:15
(September to June)
10:00 a.m.
(July and August)

Taizé Worship
First Sunday monthly
7:30 p.m.
(October to June)

Healing Prayer
Second and fourth Sunday monthly
Following morning worship



Advent & Christmas Services at Islington United Church

ADVENT 1 – HOPE

Sunday, November 29

Morning “all-ages” Worship

9:30 & 11:15 a.m.*

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Light up the Night

(Celebrating Advent)

2:30 p.m. (skating)

4:00 p.m. (crafts)

5:00 p.m. (dinner)

6:00 p.m. (tree lighting
& carols)



ADVENT 2 – PEACE

Sunday, December 6

Morning Worship

9:30 & 11:15 a.m.*

Discovery Quest for kids

Taizé Worship

7:30 p.m.



ADVENT 3 – JOY

Sunday, December 13

Morning Worship

9:30 & 11:15 a.m.*

White Bag Sunday

Discovery Quest for kids

Christmas in Islington

3:00 p.m.*

A celebration of the season with music
for choirs, brass, organ and bells



BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

Wednesday, December 16

7:30 p.m.*

A reflective worship service
for those who are grieving.



ADVENT 4 – LOVE

Sunday, December 20

Morning Worship

9:30 & 11:15 a.m.*

Discovery Quest for kids

Soulstice

7:00 p.m.

Creative and energizing worship in the
Scout Hall. Join us for coffee and dessert
to sing, laugh, cry, dance. Free your soul.



CHRISTMAS EVE

Family Service

5:00 p.m.*

Children wishing to participate in the
Christmas story should
come in costume or come to the Chapel
prior to the service to find one.

Carols by Candlelight

7:00 & 9:00 p.m.*

Communion by Candlelight

11:00 p.m.



FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Sunday, December 27

Morning Worship

9:30 & 11:15 a.m.*

**infant and toddler care*