

Sunday Morning
Worship Time
Every Sunday
Starting at 10:30 am



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The St. Thomas Newsletter is published monthly except for July and August. Submissions are due by the 20th of the preceding month.

Send submissions to
pr@stthomasunited.ca

Minister's Message: Reverend Tracy Robertson

I have to admit that my favourite month of the year is October, but I'm biased, of course, because my birthday happens to be in October. It seems that I wanted it that way from inside the womb because I was, in fact, due in Mid-November but came early....in a snowstorm. No really, it's true!

Despite it being the Halloween month, I have never been very good at wearing masks. I wear my heart on my sleeve and my emotions are very close to the surface. It used to bother me A LOT when tears came with every emotion. Sad tears, frustrated tears, surprised tears, happy tears, and the ultimate worst: angry tears. All I wanted was to be able to express myself using my words instead of crying! Especially when I was angry, couldn't I just tell someone off without crying!. People thought I was overly emotional, but I've realized that my emotions are who I am and trying to suppress them was trying to be someone I wasn't. There was a year where I tried to bury my emotions so that they would stop getting in the way of my taking care of others, and to some extent that worked. I was able to shelve my emotions until a more appropriate time came to let them out. That has been helpful for sure. Not letting my emotions have their time kept me from being my authentic self. I tried to force myself to wear a mask; to change who I was at my core, which resulted in my not being my best.

How many of us force ourselves to be someone we're not? It could be our own wish or goal, but maybe it's also pressure from friends, family, or society. We often receive strong suggestions to wear masks to be accepted or to fit in or to know our place. If doing so holds us back from being our best selves, then stop doing it. I realized that suppressing my emotions was one thing in those moments I wanted and needed to be present to others, but not allowing myself to visit those suppressed ...

Continued...

emotions later was detrimental to my well being. I'm the kind of person who needs to acknowledge and honour those emotions to continue to be at my best. I am emotional and won't hide behind any masks or pretend not to be; and I have learned to embrace my emotional self and be proud and grateful for who God made me to be.

Have fun this Halloween and every other time really, because wearing a costume and playing a part is a great way to let our inner child and geek out. It helps us to remember to be playful and not to take life too seriously. If your masks and disguises are not honouring who you are and you're asked to hide your true self, then I'm telling you to take them off. You are precious and worthy and valued just as you are and being your best self means you are there for others because you're know your own value. Discipleship is servanthood. Learning from Jesus is learning to serve others, and we can only do that well when we're at our best. If you don't already know what your best is, have fun exploring what that is for you, and for those who are living their best life – carry on and celebrate that.

During this Thanksgiving month, I am grateful to all of you, no matter where you are on your journeys. I see you and you are loved.

Worship at St. Thomas - Cathy Rivard

This month the Stewardship Team will kick off our annual Stewardship Campaign on October 6. Reverend Tracy will continue with her sermon series entitled "Walking Together With Joy ... in Sharing, in Thanksgiving, in Giving, and in Receiving." Hope to see you Sundays.

Upcoming Services for October

October 6

"Walking Together With Joy ... in Sharing"
Stewardship Team
Mark 10:2-16

Music:
Adult Choir,
Kari Orosz.

October 13

"Walking Together With Joy ... in Thanksgiving" Rev Reverend Tracy
Scripture:
Mark 10:17-31

Music:
Children's Choir,
Adult Choir,
Kari Orosz.

October 20

"Walking Together With Joy ... in Giving"
(Reverend Tracy)
Scripture:
Mark 10:35-45

Music:
Youth Choir,
Adult Choir,
Kari Orosz.

October 27

"Walking Together With Joy ... in Receiving"
(Reverend Tracy)
Scripture:
Mark 10:46-52

Music:
Orchestra,
Kari Orosz.

ervespers

The Wise Women of St. Thomas

The Joy, or not, of CHANGE - Wanda Veer

"CHANGE", a word that can strike terror in our hearts. From a doctor: "you must CHANGE your ??? habits". From an employer: "we'll be making a CHANGE to ???". From a banker: "we need to CHANGE your mortgage rate or investment rates!" Most of us love our comfortable routines, occasionally consider options, then discard them. Nope, not for me. I like where I'm at and what I'm doing.

But CHANGE is forever with us. Weather, relationships, health, you name it... nothing is constant. Often, I find we are the "Well We Always Did It Like This People". But on further investigation, no we didn't always do it the same way. And if we did, the results were generally different. It is very difficult to recreate a successful event.

This summer was a year of great CHANGE, weird weather, a water crisis, political surprises, fires, droughts, etc. But we survived. We made some CHANGES and soldiered on.

When we do embrace CHANGE, the results can be liberating. During the summer, I am occasionally the truck driver pulling our 5th wheel. Not something I'm terribly keen on. I had a choice of which route to take from Irricana to Red Deer. I decided to take my chances on the back roads instead of the busy #2 Highway. It's hard to explain what a grand journey that was. I saw new country, kids enjoying their horses, new combines being delivered, and enormous fields of corn and sunflowers. Instead of feeling depleted and exhausted at the end of my journey, I felt a lightness and joy. So much world. So much to appreciate.

I've shared discussions with friends during the summer as well. Friends who went on new camping journeys. Friends who moved to a Care Center and LOVE it. Grandchildren who anticipate new schools and new programs. Scary, anxiety producing, then liberating! As Maureen mentions, there's a whole lot of examples in the Bible about folks being pushed, sometimes not so gently, out of their routines and comfort zones.

May your autumn and Thanksgiving include some Joy in the CHANGES that will occur.

Joy and Change - Ruthann Watson

I'm writing this in my cousins' home in Southern Manitoba. I haven't lived in a farming community for over half a century, when women rarely drove grain trucks much less sophisticated machinery like combines. Now it's a given, along with problem solving digital error codes, having a feel for humidity levels and tough straw, meal coordination, hockey practice schedules, and family and community obligations. These women have far more input into business decisions but also share more of the frustration and stress of rain during harvest, rail strikes, and trade disputes. Leaving something behind and moving into new territory is a mixed blessing. These younger generations of farm women are more confident and fearless. And that's something to be joyful about!

Wishing you all a joyous Thanksgiving

The Joy, or not, of CHANGE - Maureen Dodd

Yesterday, instead of working on this submission, (hanging head in shame), I played hooky and we rode our bikes from Banff to Johnston Canyon. What a glorious way to experience the joy of the season changing from Summer to Fall. It was a perfect day, and we are so blessed to have such beauty close to us.

I was also joyful that the bears were otherwise engaged, and I had no need to panic and spray myself with bear spray.

I wonder how joyful the disciples were when Jesus called them from their homes and fishing boats. Was Zebedee joyful when his two sons left him with the day's catch and took off to follow Jesus and change their lives? Or were they all thinking, like many of us when faced with a change, "Seriously? The timing couldn't be worse for this. I have things to do and appointments to keep. What a bad idea!"

Unfortunately, the brain loves negativity, and is quick to think things like, "Well, the leaves are turning. Winter will soon be here, and the city won't clear the streets, and my winter tires are bald." We let fear and negativity replace the joy of hot chocolate with marshmallows. We can't let ourselves see the positives in a change, and so rob ourselves of some joy.

Lots of people are sad when the golf courses close in the Fall. But my grandsons love it; running all the way up the fairway and rolling down the hill in the leaves. I tried it last year, despite the warnings of Spouse and two sons. It was so much fun!!! Best time I've ever had on a golf course, and I was so joyful once the dizziness stopped.

But for me, the most joy of change comes when I actually find change in my coats, purses and on the floor of the car. Hallelujah! And if it's toonies and loonies, I can take the grandsons for ice cream.

Have a joyful autumn!

AM Fun and Fitness - Barb Robertson

After a lazy summer, as we started back to "AM Fun and Fitness". We heard some creaking and moaning as we stretched and worked our core, and there was some gasping while we did cardio.

After a few weeks, we feel better and are ready to up the number of repetitions, build the muscles, increase our endurance, and generally make our body and mind feel better.

\$35 a month gets you classes most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Monday Zoom class: 9:00.

Wednesday In Person, (usually) 9:30.

Friday Zoom class: 9:00.

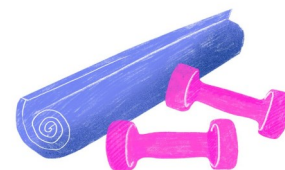
All the classes are subject to change.

Classes are cancelled for holidays.

Barb at: barbrobt@telus.net

Pam at: pmbazinet@shaw.ca

*St. Thomas United Church
A.M. Fun and Fitness Group*



St. Thomas Book Club - Rachel Murray

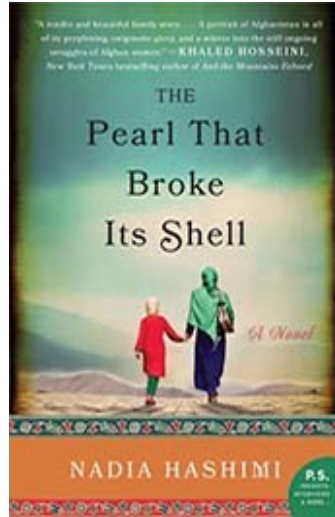
For more information contact Rachel at rachelmurray@shaw.ca

New members welcome!

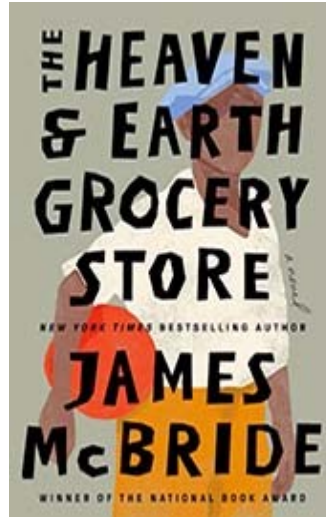
Meets every second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm on Zoom. This year's book choices are:



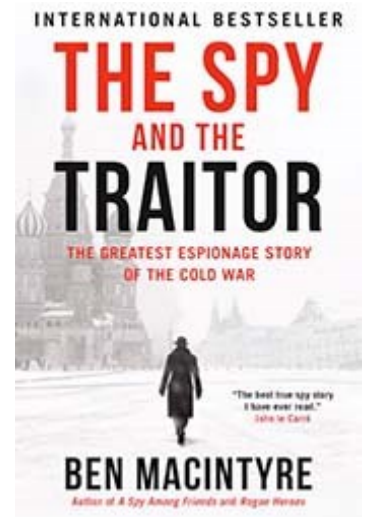
October



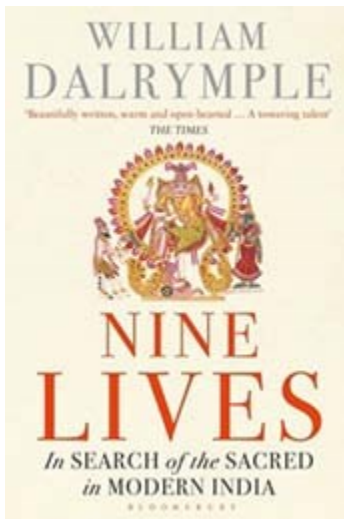
November



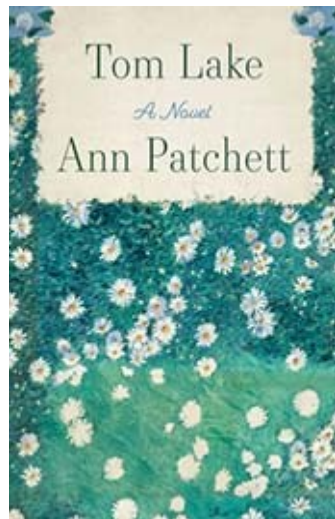
January



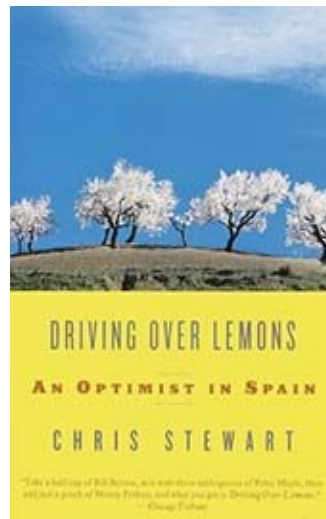
February




March



April



May



October is Library Month in **Canada.**
Visit the St. Thomas Library and find something to read this month!

Primetimers - Jan and Keith Campbell

We enjoyed our first Coffee and a Chat of the season on Thursday, September 19, 2024. Twenty people got to visit with their friends, plus we welcomed some newcomers to our group.

We are planning a trip to Rosebud Theatre on Saturday, October 19, 2024. That event is always a great time for all. Deadline to order your ticket is Sunday, October 6, 2024.

Jan Campbell 403-909-7402

Save the Date: Our Annual Christmas Dinner will be held in our Mountainview Hall Wednesday, December 4, 2024. More details to follow.

Please join us Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 10:00 am in our Narthex for "Coffee and a Chat". As is our tradition, we will be having a book exchange, bring some in and take out something new to read. Hope to see you then.

Gift Cards - Richard Taylor-Kerr

If you have never participated in our Grocery Gift card fundraising project, then please consider buying cards this fall. We buy cards in bulk at a discount and sell them to you at face value. We make about 5% on every card sold. It may not seem like a lot but it adds up fast. We have now fundraised \$5200 this year or about 65% of our goal of \$8000. Please help us to reach our target!

We have gift cards available in \$50s and \$100s for Safeway / Sobeys, Co-op, and Superstore. Payment is by e-transfer, cash or cheque (payable to St. Thomas United Church). Safeway / Sobeys' and Superstore cards can be used in any of their affiliated stores across Canada. Co-op cards can only be used in Calgary.

The best way to order cards is to e-mail fundraising@stthomasunited.ca Cards will be ready for you on the following Sunday. We can also make arrangements for pickup. Thanks for you for supporting this important fundraiser. Every purchase helps, no matter how small.

Pastoral Care - Richard Taylor-Kerr

Would you like to visit or call a senior from our congregation on a regular basis? If so we have some seniors who would appreciate a visit or a call. To let us know your interest please tick the "Visiting Program and Callers" box under the Pastoral Care Section on this fall's Stewardship form. We will contact you to let you know the details later this fall. The Hospitality team has been organizing "Tea to Go" over the past year. These have been organized in Senior residences and private homes. Several congregants who live in the general area of where the Tea is being held are invited. It is a great opportunity for people to socialize, especially those you don't get out on their own very often. Some of the Pastoral Care team have tagged along to assist with the gatherings. Starting this fall Pastoral Care will be alternating with the Hospitality team to organize the Teas. Let us know if you are interested in attending or perhaps "hosting" a tea in your home or at your Seniors residence.

If you know of someone who could use a spiritual lift, a visit, a phone call or some other kind of support – please do not hesitate to be in touch with any of us on the Pastoral Care committee. (pastoral-care@stthomasunited.ca) or our ministers. Richard Taylor-Kerr - Chair of Pastoral Care - on behalf of the Pastoral Care Committee: Marj Aucoin, Diane Latter, Jan Mingo, Cathy Olson, Louise Scott, Betty Thompson, and Heather Worton.

Fall Fling - Elaine Taylor-Kerr

PLEASE JOIN US, Saturday October 5, 2024, for this second annual family event. Come and enjoy a live band performing 60's, 70's and 80's music. Snacks will be provided and wine, beer, and pop will be available for purchase. Join us for an evening of fun and relaxation or hit the dance floor and shake a leg. Tickets priced at \$20 per adult, \$10 per child and \$50/family are available for purchase by contacting Jane in the office or by filling out the form in the following link: stthomasunited.ca/fall-fling-2024/ If at all possible, please purchase your tickets by October 3, 2024 so we can be sure to have enough food and beverage. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door. Family and friends are welcome! For more information contact Carol Rix (pgrix14@gmail.com) or Elaine Taylor-Kerr (taylor-kerr@shaw.ca).

JOIN US FOR OUR

FALL FLING

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5, 2024.
6:30 PM - 10:00 PM

COME AND ENJOY A LIVE BAND PERFORMING 60'S, 70'S AND 80'S MUSIC. SNACKS WILL BE PROVIDED AND WINE, BEER, AND POP WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE. JOIN US FOR AN EVENING OF FUN AND RELAXATION OR HIT THE DANCE FLOOR AND SHAKE A LEG.

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TICKETS PRICED AT \$20 PER ADULT, \$10 PER CHILD AND \$50/FAMILY WILL GO ON SALE IN SEPTEMBER. FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE WELCOME!

For more information contact Carol Rix (pgrix14@gmail.com) or Elaine Taylor-Kerr (taylor-kerr@shaw.ca).







Fall Yard Clean-up

Date: Saturday, October 19, 2024
weather permitting.
Back-up date is October 26
Time: 10:00 am to Noon






Youth News

Junior Youth Group

The Junior Youth group had their first fall event on [September 13, 2024](#). They had a lot of fun re-connecting after the summer, playing active games around the church and building towers out of red solo cups. All children in grades four, five, and six are welcome to join in.

We plan to offer both in-person and virtual events again this school year. We will also be continuing the collaboration with Symons Valley United for some of the in person events. If you know of a child who is in this age range his school year, who would be interested in joining in, and who isn't aren't already on the email distribution list, please email junior-youth@stthomasunited.ca to be added to the list.

The next in person events for the 2024/2025 season will be on [October 11, 2024](#), [November 8, 2024](#), and [December 6, 2024](#) at St. Thomas. The first virtual events of the season will be on [September 27, 2024](#), and [October 18, 2024](#). The [October](#) and [December](#) events will be at St. Thomas. The November event will be at Symons Valley United. The next virtual events will be on [October 18](#), [November 22, 2024](#), and [December 20, 2024](#).

Ev and Sam look forward to seeing you there!

Youth Group (Grades 7 to 12)

The Youth Leaders of the St. Thomas and Symons Valley United Churches are excited to invite you to Youth Group! Youth Group is for everyone who is in grades 7-12. Typically, we meet on Friday evenings or Sunday afternoons for our social event and at service on Sunday morning. The Youth Leaders will send out an email every Monday to let you know what activities will be taking place that week. Our social events typically last two hours and include activities such as charades, crafts, and movie nights. Sunday mornings are focused on faith discussion, learning more about various scriptures, or exploring social justice issues. Friends are always welcome to come to Friday activities and Sunday mornings. A Zoom link can be provided for Sunday mornings if you would like to join us virtually! If you are interested in joining us and aren't currently receiving our weekly emails, please reach out and send us an email at youth@stthomasunited.ca or call the church office to be added to our mail-out list!

This September marked the start of both the school year and our youth programming. We were thrilled to kick off the month by meeting the youth and hosting a variety of fun events and meaningful discussions. Throughout September, youth participated in activities such as a crazy baking night, ice cream sundaes, board games, and our first social outing: painting pottery! We also resumed our regular Sunday youth meetings, where we've spent time discussing our vision for the group, exploring The New Creed, and launching our first outreach project of the year: raising funds for the Terry Fox Foundation. We are excited to share that with the support of congregation members, friends, and family, the St. Thomas and Symons Valley Youth raised \$715 to support cancer research. Both youth groups also joined together for a walk on [September 15, 2024](#), in honor of the Terry Fox Foundation. We cannot wait for October!

Continued...

What is Happening this Month?

Here are the events we currently have planned for October. Our Sunday mornings will largely be spent continuing our discussion of the New Creed, but keep an eye out for our “Bites and Breakthroughs” event, a Thanksgiving service project, and Trunk or Treat! Please remember that this schedule is subject to change on short notice. Keep an eye out on your weekly emails for the most up-to-date information and as always, don’t hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions or concerns.

October 4, 2024: Join us at Symons Valley United Church from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm for a games night! Unlike our board games night, we invite youth to join us for church wide games.

October 11, 2024: We welcome youth to join us at St. Thomas United Church from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm for “Bites and Breakthroughs”, where we will be making sandwiches for and discussing our friends, our congregation, and those we are most thankful for.

October 18, 2024: In place of regular programming on Friday, we would like to invite youth to join us at St. Thomas United for Naked Faith. Naked Faith is an alternative worship experience aimed at youth and young adults, but open to all. The evening begins with dinner at 6:00 pm, with the service starting at 7:00 pm. Youth are welcome to stay for games after. For more information on Naked Faith, see below.

October 19, 2024: Youth are invited to join the Symons Valley congregation for Messy Church on Saturday evening.

October 25, 2024: Youth are invited to join the St. Thomas congregation for Messy Church on Friday evening, with youth events to follow and our first “Senior High Stay Late” of the season. All youth, grades 10-12, are welcome to stay this Friday for an additional hour of programming dedicated to connecting with peers, engaging in deeper discussions, and enjoying extended activities just for senior high students.

Other Programming for Youth and Young Adults

Calgary Queer Church

Calgary Queer Church is a community of people who are passionate about leading a spiritual life. We are an inclusive space where faith and identity can be reconciled. If it's your first time or you've come every time, you are welcome in the space and encouraged to check it out! Everyone is welcome at Calgary Queer Church. You can find more information about upcoming

services on their website at <http://www.calgaryqueerchurch.com/> or on Facebook by searching Calgary Queer Church.

Naked Faith

Naked Faith will be at St. Thomas United Church on October 18, 2024. Naked Faith is an alternative worship experience aimed at youth and young adults, but open to all. The evening begins with dinner at 6 pm, with the service starting at 7:00 pm. Youth are welcome to stay for games after and young adults go out to a pub. All are welcome!

Continued...

Dirty Theology

Dirty Theology is hosted by Fish Creek Shared Ministries, a United Church ministry in the Calgary area and usually occurs on the 1st Sunday of the month. It is a Christian program, but very open and intended for all young adults across Calgary and beyond, from any or no faith tradition. It is the beautiful space you've all been waiting for, where adult conversations meet Christianity, no holds barred. It's a space for young adults to build connections, get real and dig deep into the lived reality of our faith and our lives - the good, the bad and the ugly. Our favourite topics are taboo topics, and we love exploring questions, without needing answers.

Young Adult Pub Night

Pub night usually occurs on the 4th Sunday of the month at the Southland Bull and Finch pub. For more information, visit the Regional Youth and Young Adult page contact Brenda McKellar at (403)-850-7874 or contact the youth leaders for more information!




We Are
 Symons Valley United Church
 Looking For A New Youth Leader

We are currently looking for enthusiastic and energetic people to join the youth leader team. The people in this role will be key to the continuation and growth of the shared youth program at St. Thomas and Symons Valley United Churches. Responsibilities will include planning and running social activities and Sunday morning youth classes as well as communicating with other staff members and committee members to ensure the success of this program.

Apply for this position at:
youth-advisory@stthomasunited.ca

Alzheimer's Walk & Run 2024

Our Leo's Angels are at it again this year for the Alzheimer's Walk & Run 2024 on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 13, 2024. Our team, made up of family, friends, and St. Thomas members, is running or walking 1 or 5 km to raise money and awareness of all types of dementia. We have benefited so much from the free resources of our Alzheimer Society of Calgary.

As most of you know, my Leo was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia 5 years ago, followed by Vascular Dementia 2 years ago. Considering the length and breadth of our journey, he is doing very well. Of course there are changes and challenges but one thing for sure is that our goal together has never changed – educate, teach, learn. Our family is not silent but many are. Don't be afraid to ask me questions. Treat persons living with dementia with kindness, respect, and humour. It is so important that those living with dementia are treated as people – it is still Leo inside, just a bit different. Did you know that we participated in a pilot golf program this summer and Leo was given an award of excellence as the humour specialist. He's still got it.

If you would like to join or donate to our team, we are called Leo's Angels 2024 Alzheimer Calgary Walk & Run: Search for a Participant or Team - Alzheimer Society of Calgary
https://www.alzheimerwalkrun.ca/site/TR?fr_id=1170&pg=entry

Thank you so much and pray for great weather on that day!! Marj Aucoin

CACG - Karen Kavanagh

Calgary Alliance for the Common Good – Discernment Assembly

It was an amazing Discernment Assembly on September 16 with over 160 people attending! The people in attendance from St. Thomas voted as a group on which of the four issues we thought were the most important to our congregation. All four campaigns were very close with the amount of support they received. The two campaigns that had the most people committed to be on the Research Action Teams were Good Jobs and Mental Health. It was decided that Affordable Housing campaign would have a group that worked with other organizations to support them in their work and inform the Alliance of any actions that need the help of our membership. The people interested in the Environment work of the Alliance will work with the Climate Hub and Alberta Environment Network, which are both member organizations with the Alliance. The CACG has also committed to having Truth and Reconciliation be a part of all the work we do.

The Alliance had a rally for the Green Line at City Hall on September 16 with over 100 people attending and broad media coverage. Going forward we will keep a close eye on the decisions that are made by the City and Province to ensure support for the best possible outcome for the people of Calgary.

If you are interested in joining any of the Research Action Teams or finding out more information about the work of the Alliance please contact Karen Kavanagh at karenkavanagh80@gmail.com.

Faith Formation - Gayle Wilderman

This summer St. Thomas was very active with Caravan. Nineteen youngsters did crafts, went on nature walks, thought about being kind, taking care of our world, and just having fun. Parents were informed much earlier this year as to dates and costs and that really helped with their summer planning. Next year, we may be able to have Caravans in each month if we have that much interest.

Ashley is going to update you on the Sunday School activities. Lots of fun and good learning activities planned. If you want to volunteer to help or even take over a class, we will help set you up. Just let Ashley Dressler or Gayle Wilderman know and we will help you get set up.

Another Messy Church is planned, this time for **October 25, 2024**. As I've said before, it's not really messy, just different. We have always encouraged families to come and it is great when anyone who doesn't have kids participates because then you get to know the younguns' and see some of the things they are learning. This one is planned for 5:00 pm until 8:00 pm, but you can leave earlier to comply with bedtimes.

We always start with a meal, then break for a lesson from Reverend Marion with participation from the kids, then a do a craft. The juniors and youth are usually there participating and helping. The theme is going to go along with what we are learning at Foothills and St. Thomas: Walking Together in Joy, Food, and Sharing and Receiving.

Reverend Marion and Reverend Tracy are running confirmation classes again. If you are interested, please let them know. They are hoping to start in October.

Continued...

Parents, please take note that St. Thomas is bringing back Parents Day Out. If you want to Christmas shop, go for coffee or lunch, or just have a little time to your self, you can drop your child off at St. Thomas between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm on Saturday, November 30, 2024. There may be a Teddy Bear Sleepover that night as well.

The library is set up again with new carpet. Please head on up there and take out a book!

Committee Members: Gayle Wilderman Reverend Marion Martin, Sheila Campbell, Ashley Dressler, Myrna Malanik, Sharon Ramraj-Thompson, Marie Valett.



The poster features a white central area with a decorative border of red, green, and pink geometric shapes. At the top, the church name is written in a green, arched font. Below it is a small quilt icon. The main title 'FALL FAIR AND SALE 2024' is in large red letters. Two pink phrases, 'UNIQUE AND HANDMADE GIFTS' and 'FAIR TRADE COFFEE', are positioned on either side of a horizontal line. Below the line, the event details are listed in red text. A second horizontal line is followed by six icons: a coffee cup, a colorful quilt, a jar of jam, a jar of preserves, a pair of mittens, and a red thread with a needle. At the bottom, two columns of text describe the use of proceeds and food donations.

St. Thomas United Church

FALL FAIR AND SALE 2024

UNIQUE AND HANDMADE GIFTS FAIR TRADE COFFEE

ST. THOMAS UNITED CHURCH
100 HAWKWOOD BLVD NW
NOVEMBER 9: 10:00AM - 3:00PM
NOVEMBER 10: 11:30AM - 1:30 PM

Proceeds go to St. Thomas United Church and Activity Groups

Food donations gratefully accepted for the Veteran's Food Bank.

REPORT FROM TREASURER – GREG HYATT

Operating Fund

Operating Fund donations year-to-date to August 31 are down about \$6,000 or 3% versus the comparable period last year. They are down by a similar amount versus total donations for the comparable period in 2019 – the last full year before the pandemic. The result is that, on an inflation-adjusted basis, 2024 Operating Fund donations significantly lag our donations five years ago.

Year-to-date facility usage income, on the other hand, is up \$9,000 from the comparable period last year. This is due to a combination of new third-party users of our facility, a key user no longer benefiting from pandemic-related discounts, and inflation adjustments.

Operating Expenses year-to-date are up about \$10,000 from the comparable period last year. This is due primarily to a combination of United Church-mandated inflationary salary increases for our ministers and increased snow-clearing costs due to last winter's heavy snowfalls.

We had budgeted for a \$13,000 Operating Fund deficit for 2024. I am currently projecting a full year Operating Fund deficit of between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

We have been fully staffed throughout both 2023 and 2024. Reverend Marion joined us (as well as Foothills United Church on a 50/50 shared basis) on October 1, 2022, while we added a part-time Marketing & Communications Coordinator in Autumn 2022 and a part-time Sunday School Coordinator in January 2023. The primary focus of these two part-time positions is on the growth of our congregation, which is so important for the long-term viability of St. Thomas.

Why is growth of our congregation so important? We are all getting older. We've had some significant donors pass away or relocate to other communities, while retirement and other factors has led to reduced financial capacity for others. To offset this, we need to have new families joining our congregation. We are starting to see this happen with the increase in the number of children at Sunday services versus a few years ago. As we move forward to 2025 and beyond, we expect to be financially challenged in generating sufficient Operating Fund revenues to cover this Fund's expenses. With inflation having moderated significantly, our growth in expenses should moderate accordingly. However, our total annual donations continue to be challenged by the factors noted above. Our congregation's continuing growth is paramount to our continued financial viability.

Building and Memorial Funds

We currently have \$160,000 in our Building Fund and Memorial Fund combined to pay for capital costs and major repairs. With our facility now 35 years old, these reserves are very necessary. To illustrate, we used \$20,000 from the Building Fund to replace the upstairs carpets this summer and would like to replace the sanctuary's carpets next summer. Our Building & Property Committee budgets carefully for expenditures from these funds. However, potential unplanned expenses, such as being unable to secure replacement parts for our 20+ year old furnaces and having to suddenly replace them with modern, energy-efficient furnaces, could draw these funds down substantially.

In closing, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of you who continue to generously contribute to St. Thomas throughout these very challenging times.

And don't forget to purchase your grocery gift cards! That is our biggest fundraiser, and we all need groceries – why not have St. Thomas benefit from the significant discounts at which we buy these cards?

Music News - Elaine Taylor-Kerr

All of the musical groups are looking forward to another year of making music together. New members, regardless of skill level, are always welcome in all groups.

Upcoming Special Music Presentations and Events:

December 1, 2024: Maple Leaf Brass will provide the music for this service.

December 8, 2024: Children's and Youth Choirs' Christmas Musical.

December 15, 2024: Cocoa and Carols following the service – a chance to enjoy singing some of your favorite Christmas Carols.

December 24, 2024: 8:00 pm service – Adult Choir Canata will be the message for this Christmas Eve service.

Group	Practice Time	Ages	Contact
Children's Choir	Thursdays 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	ECS – Grade 6	Kate Power childrens-choir@stthomasunited.ca
Youth Choir	Wednesdays 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm	Grade 6 – University	Barb Robertson barbrob@telus.net
Adult Choir	Thursdays 7:15 pm – 9:30 pm		Pam Bazinet pmbazinet@shaw.ca
Orchestra	Mondays 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm		Dick Worton dworton@telusplanet.net
Strummers	Thursdays 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm		Ron French rondifrench@telus.net
Strummers Outreach	Tuesdays 1:00 pm - 3:00pm		George Zirotf gzirotf@shaw.ca

Adult Choir

We started back to singing on **Thursday, September 5, 2024** and worked very diligently to learn our first anthem for **Sunday September 8, 2024**. The amazing choir pulled it off in grand style.

Our annual Choir Advance was held on **Saturday, September 14, 2024**. This year we were privileged to use the new community hall at Ghost Lake thanks to the generosity of Corinne and Barrie Smith. They have hosted us for many, many years in their house. As always, we took a look at our new music and enjoyed lots of snacks during they day at the community centre. When all the work was done, we shared a delicious BBQ back at the Smith's house.

Now we are busy working on new music for the fall, including our Christmas cantata *The Road to Bethlehem*.

Everyone is welcome in our choir. Pop in sometime and try it out . All you need is a love of singing. You do not need to know how to read music. We are delighted to welcome three new members so far this fall.

Pam Bazinet pmbazinet@shaw.ca

Youth Choir

The youth choir is already working on the Christmas play *A Christmas Yarn*. It is about a company that makes ugly Christmas sweaters. We are looking for actors, singers, and ugly sweaters. Do you know any youth who like to sing, or act, or do you have an ugly sweater that you would like to share with us?

We practice Wednesdays at 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm with a few workshops on Sundays. It is a great opportunity for young people to get some acting experience and have fun.

Another hit with the kids is our snack treats and pizza lunches, although I know they also enjoy getting together to sing.

For further information please contact Barb Robertson at barbrob@telus.net.

Children's Choir

Children's choir is off to a great start! We are excited to welcome new faces as we prepare for our Christmas play, and songs for Remembrance Day and Thanksgiving. If you know any kids in kindergarten to grade six who'd like to participate, we rehearse on Thursdays at the church from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and singing in Sunday services about once per month.

Kate Power childrens-choir@stthomasunited.ca

Orchestra

The Orchestra began rehearsals on **Monday, September 9, 2024**. We are thrilled to welcome two new members to our group. The Orchestra is looking forward to another great year of sharing our music with the St Thomas family. We are always eager to accept new members. We rehearse Monday evenings from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Players of any level are welcome.

Dick Worton dworton@telusplanet.net

Strummers

The Strummers will be practicing on Thursday evenings at 6:00 pm in the Library. They are practicing for both church services and outreach concerts. A subset of the group also practice on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm to learn extra music for their outreach program. They plan to sing for worship services and at various seniors' residences.

New members are always welcome. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact Ron French. rondifrench@telus.net

Other Opportunities for Soloists and Instrumentalists

If you would like to share your talents as a singer or instrumentalist during the Offering time, as a Prelude or Postlude, or when one of our regular groups is not available to provide an Anthem, there are lots of opportunities to do so. This invitation is open to people of all skill levels. It would be particularly fun to have some children sing or play the piano or another instrument, for example. If you are interested send an email to music-team@stthomasunited.ca or talk to Elaine Taylor-Kerr.