

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

Humour. I've been pondering this lately because humour has gotten me through a lot. As we enter the coldest and snowiest months of the year, I wondered if I could find humour in it. Like the time I made fun of my dog for slipping on the ice and karma kicked in immediately causing me to fall and break my wrist. Or the time I was going down the stairs and my dog came down, got in front of me, and caused me to twist my entire leg the wrong way around and break my foot. Wait. Maybe the problem are my dogs. Nah, that can't be right. OK, forget humour in winter.

I've collected sayings over the years from TV, movies, books, conversations. When I feel like I need a fill-up on humour, I read through them. Here are a few that I hope you love too:

You may challenge that assumption at your convenience

Every sentence you speak is worse than the last one

I don't know what that means so it doesn't hurt my feelings

I was hoping for a battle of wits, but you seem unarmed

They tried to bury me but they didn't realize I was a seed

Once you start lying to me, there's gonna be a river between us with no bridge to cross

I got through by God's grace and Band-Aids

Sharing burdens halves them and sharing the joy doubles it

And with that statement, you've just lost the right to talk to me

Excuses are: Tools of incompetence that build monuments of nothingness

Prejudice is an emotional commitment to ignorance

What I know for sure is the journey is everything; learn to love revision

Don't yuck my yum

Continued...

You are a library of confusion

I try to disappoint people at a rate that they can handle

Don't try to win over the haters; you're not the jackass whisperer

You've exhausted my dialogue

If there ever comes a time I've got rabies, you're high on my biting list

Merciful Moses in Egypt

Christ on a cracker

Worship at St. Thomas - Cathy Rivard

Upcoming Services for January, 2026.

January 4

Epiphany - (Wise Ones)

Reverend Tracy
Scripture:
Matthew 2:1-11

Music:
Adult Choir, George Ziroff - Cello solo, Kari Orosz.

January 11

Baptism of Jesus

Reverend Tracy
Scripture:
Matthew 3:13-17

Children's Choir, Orchestra, Kari Orosz .

January 18

Mental Health

Reverend Tracy
Scripture:
John 1:35-42

Music:
Strummers, Youth Choir, Banner MacDonald and Wanda Veer .

January 25

The Mission of God's Servant

Reverend Marion
Scripture:
Isaiah 49:1-7

Music:
Adult Choir, John Robertson, Kari Orosz.

Gift Cards - Richard Taylor-Kerr

Thank you to all who purchased gift cards in 2025! Sales in the last three months were extremely good, and we blew past our goal of \$8000. Total fundraised for the year was \$9,773.25!. There was over \$180,000 worth of cards purchased in 2025.

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. Thank you for supporting this important fundraiser. Every purchase helps, no matter how small.

The Wise Women of St. Thomas United Church

Thoughts on Aging - Maureen Dodd

I've been worried about being put on an ice floe in my dotage ever since I read Ruthann's article. I hate the cold. I'd fall a lot, too, like Bambi, on the ice. I better start being nicer to my kids.

My grandson recently asked me, "Why do the Grandpas always tell me how old they are, and the Grandmas always lie?" To which I responded, "Because crones are no longer revered for their experience and wisdom, so there's no benefit in telling you how old I am." Crones have been replaced by AI and Google, which don't have to be humoured or taken to the liquor store, or the hairdresser every week.

Our perspective on age does change through the years. As kids, we are proud to say we are 'six and a half,' and look forward to birthdays and the perks of growing older. As time goes on we are a little less enthusiastic about the perks of, say, a driver's license, medical, and an aging infrastructure; our own and our homes.

My mother and her contemporaries thought there was no greater sin than not acting your age. This was an arbitrary measure of behaviour, but for sure, if you were six and didn't act your age, you got a good scolding, or at least a pointed glare. If you were sixty and didn't act your age, there would be muttered asides about 'mutton dressed up to be lamb.'

No matter how old you are, resolve in 2026 to find the joy and wisdom in any age and in the bounty of blessings we have been given.

Proverbs mentions aging in Chapter 16, with the observation that "Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life." So, the Wise Women, none of whom are amazingly gray-haired, have resolved to continue enjoying our un-righteous lives in 2026, since it seems to be working for us.

Aging – Care – Joy? - Wanda Veer

We have long searched for the Fountain of Youth. Retailers have made Billions of Dollars promoting anti-aging techniques. Diets, creams, vitamins, exercise routines, injections, holiday bliss; you name it! But, for me, as 79 creeps very close, I'm not sure about the joys of remaining youthful forever. I enjoy my fond memories of successes, failures, and glitches. I enjoy my knowledge acquired from same. I enjoy watching the younger generations manage all the same hurdles and exhilaration that I did. Disappointments, satisfactions, sudden surprises; it's all there in our life journey.

Ruthann made some good points about "letting go" of our, and past, generational expectations, of our "human" organizations. Every charity group that I know of, those who were bursting with members in my younger days, are struggling to find young'uns to carry on their work. Is this bad? Probably not. Perhaps we should celebrate the successes of those energetic folks and let the cards unfold as they will. We cannot hold on to "what was and ever shall be." And of course, that will include a remaking of our United Church. From my perspective, the church is in very good hands with the younger generation. They will make correct decisions that work for them.

Continued...

Because I was lucky enough to know my grandmothers and one grandfather very well, I often think of how they aged. They had worked hard as pioneers in Eastern Alberta and followed the "everything in moderation" rule of thumb. They lived to be 92, 87, 84. No gym membership, no Botox treatments, a bit of colour rinse in their hair, but lots of time allotted to the pleasures of family and friends. They aged gracefully; not expecting to look and act like someone in their 20's or 30's. They gave out good advice to us. Did I take their advice? Rarely. After all, what did they know? They were old. They couldn't possibly have had the same feelings, desires, dreams, and hopes that I did!

And so, we face a new year. Will it be new and exciting? Will the world settle into peaceful coexistence? Will leaders become folks we admire? Who knows? But dig out all your lessons from the past. They are a good steppingstone to whatever comes your way in 2026. It's OK to grow older. I have many friends who did not.

May 2026 fill your heart and souls with treasured memories and new joys.

Announcements - Ruthann Watson

I'm not a Boomer. I'm a "Jones": one of those born between 1954 and 1965. While our former babysitters were reminiscing about Woodstock and anti-war protests, we were inundated with hours of coverage of the Watergate hearings. Also, disco does not, and never did, suck. And anyway, the guy who didn't trust anyone over 30 is now 82. So, young'uns, I do understand the frustration of living in the shadow of a large, influential generation.

A few observations before we're put out onto ice floes:

Aging mainline church congregations are a given and statistically this trend is unlikely to reverse, perhaps for decades. One of the tasks of our church communities will be to support each other as time marches on. Given the greying of our congregations, we won't necessarily be able to count on "young people" to do this. If Grandma is 90, her children could be 65 or 70. Her grandchildren could be 45-50. Her great-grandchildren could be 25-30. It's not a sandwich generation; it's a BLT with a side of avocado toast.

How do our congregations stay "young at heart" and truly alive? For us oldies, it's to let go and accept that all of us exist in a fragment of God's time, to trust that our world may change but it's still God's world. Accept that the days of overflowing sanctuaries and Sunday School classes are over for now, savour our memories and cherish old and new friendships. We can offer reassurance and perspective along with casseroles and hugs. We can acknowledge that those on the pointy end of the inverted population triangle are going to face significant challenges, caring for us being one of them. And remember, our parents survived the transition from "The West, A Nest, and You" to "Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll."

For those younger, please ask us about the past so that you can understand why certain decisions and practices came about. Evaluate and separate the wheat from the chaff. Bite your tongue and listen to our tedious stories. Or record them. And keep in mind that one day, some young whipper-snapper will ask, "Why did you get all those tattoos?"

Wishing you joy in 2026!

Hospitality - Wanda Veer

Welcome to 2026. Our first exciting Fundraising Event is the Chili Cook Off. We have 7 cooks vying for top prize here. Please note these details:

Chili Cook Off. Saturday, January 24, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 per person. Children 12 & under are free. Tickets are available now. Space is limited. Beverages will be available for purchase.

Your ticket includes chili tastings, buns, dessert buffet, entertainment, and voting privileges. This is a great way to be warm in our chilly month of January. Please join us.

We continue to ask for folks to help with coffee and goodies set up on Sunday mornings. It's not a hard job, but it does get tiresome doing it every single Sunday. Please step forward. We will help.

Chili Cook Off Contest

STUC Fundraiser;

Saturday, January 24, 2026

5:30-8:00 pm

Come and enjoy an evening of food, friends, fun and entertainment. Judge who has created the best chili at St Thomas United Church!

Tickets are \$25 for adults and teens, children under 12 are free
Event includes: Snacks, amazing chili tastings, buns, and an impressive dessert buffet.
Beer, wine, and pop will be available for purchase.
Entertainment.
Voting privileges.
Prizes to be awarded to the best cooks.
Get your tickets early - Limited seating!






Foothills United Thrift Store: Elaine Taylor-Kerr

Clothing Donations

Foothills United collects used clothing for their sales. They are in need of donations of gently used clothing. Donations can be dropped off at Foothills United between 9:00 am and noon Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday but please call the office ahead if you are coming at 403-288-5632. If you have clothing to donate but are unable to get to Foothills, please contact Elaine Taylor-Kerr.

Volunteer Opportunities

Foothills United runs a Thrift Store as part of the outreach to the community and as a fundraiser, open from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm on the first and third Thursday of the month plus one Saturday of the month. They could really use more volunteers to help with the sales. For more information or to volunteer, please contact either Reverend Marion or Elaine Taylor-Kerr.

Pastoral Care - Richard Taylor-Kerr

The past year was a busy one for Pastoral Care committee.

Some recent highlights:

- In December we joined Foothills United at St. Thomas for the Hope and Light Christmas Service. The St. Thomas Strummers supplied music.
- About 35 Christmas boxes were put together and delivered to various people within the congregation before Christmas.
- Approximately 85 cards were sent out throughout 2025, not including the cards sent with the Christmas bags.

Look for us during the Minute for STUC at the January 11 service. We will be talking about all the things the Pastoral Care team does. This includes home and hospital visits, phone calls, emergency food support, sending out cards, funeral receptions, Tea-to-Go, benevolent fund, inspiring educational programs; and giving out prayer shawls, baptismal shawls, and quilts.

We can all do Pastoral Care within our daily lives. Connect with people, let them know that they are not alone. Know what it means to have Open Hands, Open Hearts, Open Minds.

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. You can contact us at: pastoral-care@stthomasunited.ca, or contact 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.

November 2025 Birthdays



Youth News

Junior Youth Group

The children continue to have a lot of fun together getting to know each other, doing some crafts and playing active games.

The Junior Youth Group is an energetic group of children in grades four, five, and six. We plan to have monthly in-person events this school year. We will also be continuing the collaboration with Symons Valley for some joint events. If you know of a child who will be in this age range this school year who would be interested in joining in and who isn't already on the email distribution list, please email junior-youth@stthomasunited.ca to be added to the list.

The next event will be held on [January 9, 2026](#), at Symons Valley United Church: 38 Kincora Rise NW. The February event will be on [February 6, 2026](#), at St. Thomas United Church. Sam and Elaine look forward to seeing you there!

Youth Group (Grades 7 to 12)

All youth from St. Thomas and Symons Valley United Church grades 7-12 are welcome to join our youth group. We usually meet all together on Fridays 7:00 - 9:00 pm, and at our respective churches on Sunday mornings following Children's Time during the service. Youth are always welcome to bring their friends. Leaders send out weekly emails at the start of each week to remind youth of upcoming events, announcements, and plan changes, if necessary. Each youth, if desired, will also receive monthly check-ins over email. For those with questions, or those wanting to get connected, feel free to reach out to us over email at youth@stthomasunited.ca. Alternatively, you can call the office and request to be added to our mail-out list.

What is Happening this Month?

Here are the events we currently have planned for January.

Friday Nights

[Friday, January 2, 2026](#): No Youth Group!

As both youth, and our staff are on Holidays there will be no youth group this week!

[Friday, January 9, 2026](#): Wide Games.

We welcome youth back in the new year with wide games at Symons Valley! Unfortunately this will also be Jonah's last Friday with us. So, we will also be wishing him a farewell.

[Friday, January 16, 2026](#): Naked Faith:

This month's service is down south at Southwood United Church. Naked Faith is a monthly alternative worship service designed for youth and young adults, but all are welcome. Dinner will be provided starting at 6:00 pm, and the service will follow shortly after. Finally, youth are invited to play games until 10:30 pm. This will also be our final day to submit items for our outreach project.

Continued...

Friday, January 23, 2026: Movie Night.

This week we will be staying inside with a relaxed movie night. The movie will be chosen by the youth group during prior discussions. At the moment we intend to go to a cinema.

Friday, January 30, 2026: Messy Church.

St. Thomas hosts periodic fun and chaotic intergenerational events. Supper will be provided, and after the event youth grades 10 - 12 are invited to stay longer for Sr. High Stay Late!

Sunday Mornings

Sunday, January 4, 2026: Planning for the New Year.

To kick off and celebrate the new year the youth will be reflecting on both personal goals, and goals for the youth group. We will also begin discussing upcoming plans for events. As members of the community, it is important to meaningfully contribute in ways that represent our interests and encourage us to grow.

Sunday, January 11, 2026: Epiphany, Jesus' Baptism.

Adopting a more faith-oriented lens; we will be discussing both symbolic meanings of the Epiphany in the United Church, and how it is understood under a personal lens.

Sunday, January 18, 2026: Blue Monday.

As a group, we will be centering our discussion on 'Blue Monday', which is the third Monday in January. This is often socially considered 'the most depressing day of the year'. With the holidays over, we are left with slippery roads, dark mornings, and Calgary weather.

Sunday, January 25, 2026: What is Happening on the 31st?

Partnering with Fish Creek Shared Ministries, youth leaders, Calgary Young Adult Council, and youth, aged 16+ accompanied individually with a parent, will be handing out everything we have been collecting for the past few months downtown. So on this Sunday, we will be discussing it.

What to look out for:

Dungeons & Dragons: As our Dungeons & Dragons night was extremely well received, we are pleased to announce our youth group will be starting a Dungeons and Dragons beginner campaign! Since we are still preparing, our first session will be in February. However, for youth that want to create or use their own characters, we encourage them to do so this month. If assistance is needed, we would love to have the time to do so. We will mostly be using rules for character creation from the 2014 edition, as this is what leaders are most familiar with, including additions from *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*.

Coffee Check in: As a monthly tradition we typically host a drop-in coffee check-in. This gives youth the opportunity to have more personal/ focused conversations with youth leaders. At the moment a date has yet to be selected, so stay tuned! When we meet, it will likely be at the Crowfoot Library, and we will be there from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. This will be a great opportunity for youth that want in-person support for making their D&D characters.

Continued...

What to look out for:

Outreach Project Completion: In collaboration with Fish Creek Shared Ministries; youth and young adults all over Calgary have been collecting mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, and blankets for unhoused individuals. No one should have to face the winter cold without protection. With the end of the holiday season, many charitable initiatives close with them. On January 31st starting at 5:30-6:00 pm we invite all our young adults, or youth 16+ individually accompanied by a parent, to join us downtown to hand out supplies, and listen to people's stories. Our final deadline for submitting items is during January's Naked Faith on the 16th.

Collective 2026: Brace for Impact: In a partnership between The United Church of Canada The Presbyterian Church of Canada will be hosting an event from August 12-15, 2026, at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Registration will open on January 15, 2026, and will remain open until June 15, 2026. Registration will be \$450; however, we will be doing some fundraising in order to help subsidize costs. For more details, please use this site: <https://www.collective-gathering.ca/>

Change in Youth Leadership

We are sorry to announce that Jonah Edwards has chosen to step down as youth leader. His last youth meeting will be on [January 9, 2026](#). Jonah joined the youth leader team in July of 2024 and since then has been a steady presence with the youth group. The youth enjoy his ideas for activities, sense of humour and his energy. For several months last winter, he was the only leader consistently available so stepped up to take on the majority of the work required of the youth leaders. We wish Jonah well in his future endeavors. He will be missed.

Elaine Taylor-Kerr on behalf of the Youth Advisory Committee

Youth Leader Needed

St. Thomas and Symons Valley United Churches have a very active youth group for Junior High and Senior High School Students. The program includes social events, mission, and outreach activities, involvement in the life and work of the two congregations, and Sunday morning faith exploration and social justice discussions. The group meets Sunday morning at each church and holds a weekly joint social event typically either on Friday evening or Sunday afternoon. They also attend Fish Creek Shared Ministry youth events.

We are currently looking for an enthusiastic and energetic person to join the youth leader team. The person 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 working with fellow youth leaders to plan and run social activities and Sunday morning youth classes as well as communicate with other staff members and committee members to ensure the success of this program.

For further information or to apply, please email youth-advisory@stthomasunited.ca.

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.

Children's and Youth Choir Christmas Musical

The Children's and Youth Choirs presented an outstanding 45-minute musical performance at the December 14, 2025 service. They delivered a fun Christmas message with their singing and acting. These talented, cooperative, dedicated young people are such a blessing to work with. We are so proud.

A special shoutout to Kate who found the play and as well as directing work on sets and costumes. Thanks to the accompanists, Kari and Cindy.

Thanks to all the parents who get their kids to practice and Sunday services...and must have been helping memorize lines.

Barb Robertson and Kate Power.

Upcoming Special Music Presentations and Events:

January 11, 2026, 7:00 pm: Twelfth Night, at Hillhurst United Church.

Come and enjoy a concert of Christmas music put on by the choirs of the North West Calgary United Churches. Our Adult Choir, Youth Choir and Orchestra will all be participating. Goodies will be served following the program.

March 12 2026: Joy of Song

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 – Universi- ty	Barb Robertson barprob@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 Ziroff gziroff@shaw.ca

Continued...

Adult Choir

Well, the joyous Christmas season has passed and our choir is now working on music for the STUC show in the spring, Joy of Song in March, and Easter. All of these events are important to us and demand a lot of work from the choir to learn all the music. This is not an easy task, believe me! The music genres for each are very different.

Twelfth Night for our north quadrant churches to share their Christmas music with each other is scheduled for [Sunday, January 11, 2026](#), at Hillhurst United Church.

Research continues to support the message that singing is very good for both your physical and emotional health. It is a social activity, it involves breathing, reading, and making beautiful harmony with friends. Consider giving it a try!

As always, new members are welcome. If you are interested in singing, come out on a Thursday evening and give us a try. You do not need to be able to read music. You just have to love to sing!

Pam Bazinet: pmbazinet@shaw.ca

Youth Choir

In addition to the Christmas Musical presented during the service on December 14, 2025, the Youth Choir shared their music with the congregation at the Communion Service on Christmas Eve.

Regular practices resume [January 7, 2026](#).

They will sing at Twelfth Night at Hillhurst Church [Sunday, January 11, 2026](#), at 7:00 pm.

For further information please contact: Barb barbrob@telus.net

Children's Choir

Our choir looks forward to sharing exciting fresh repertoire with you on Sunday mornings in the new year. If you know a prospective chorister in grades K-6, please encourage them to come join us on Thursday evenings from 6:00 -7:00 pm at the church. Check out our page on the St. Thomas website for more information.

Regular practices resume January 8, 2026.

Kate Power: childrens-choir@stthomasunited.ca

Orchestra

The Orchestra will be playing at Twelfth Night on [January 11, 2026](#). They will also be playing at the morning service on [January 11, 2026](#). The Orchestra is a wonderful group of people and we are always eager to welcome new members. We rehearse Monday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 pm.

Dick Worton: dworton@telusplanet.net

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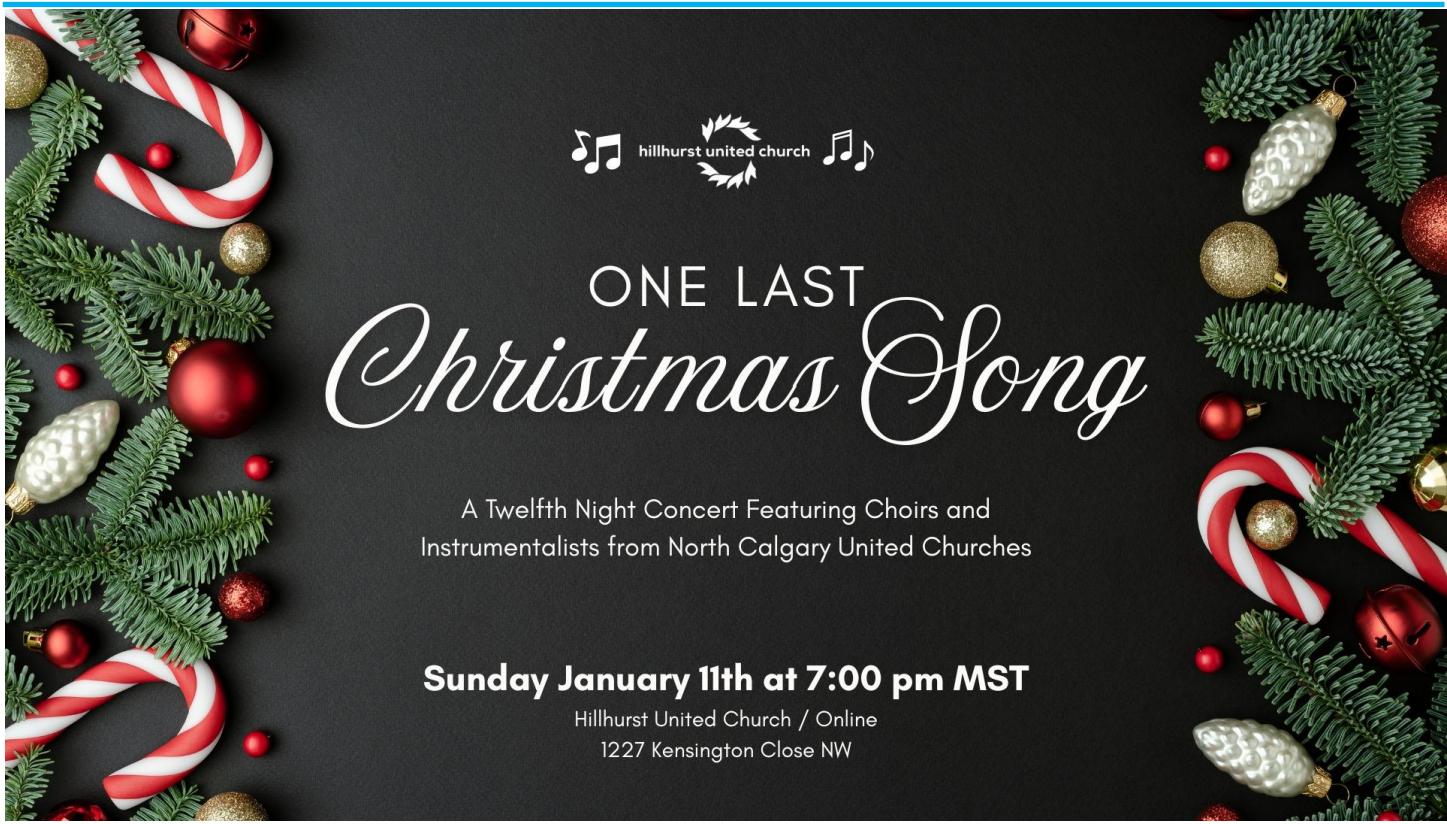
Strummers

The Strummers practice 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 or David Gray: davidmg1957@gmail.com

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 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.



Trivia: Todd J. Robertson

A quick up-date on how trivia has been going. When we place either first or second in Trivia we win a gift card from Brewsters. First place gets a \$50.00 gift card and second place gets a \$25.00 gift card. Because of this we were able to donate \$250.00 worth of gift cards to the Adopt-A-Family program. Our latest trivia night was on December 31, 2025. We had the most attendees that we have ever had with many new people, about 37 people all together. Please keep your eyes open for our next trivia outing and please think of attending, we would love to have you.

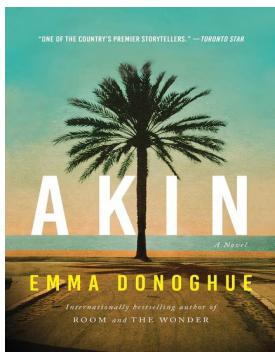
CHRISTMAS CLEANUP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Christmas Cleanup - Cathy Rivard

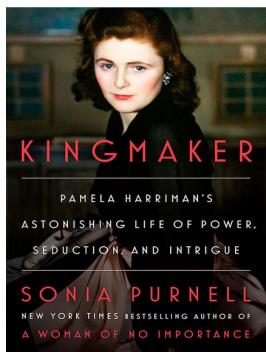
It's time to take down our Christmas decorations, and we could use some help to do it! We are looking for six or seven volunteers who can come out on Thursday, January 8, 2026, from 9:30 am - 12:00 pm to help out. A couple of fellas or strong people would really help with the trees.

St. Thomas Book Club - Rachel Murray

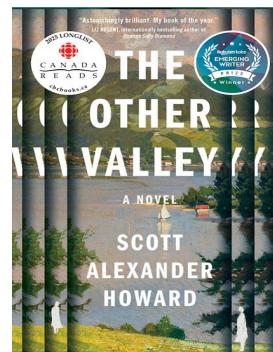
For more information contact Rachel at rachelmurray@shaw.ca. New members welcome! Meets every second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm on Zoom. Meets every second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm on Zoom. This year's book choices are:



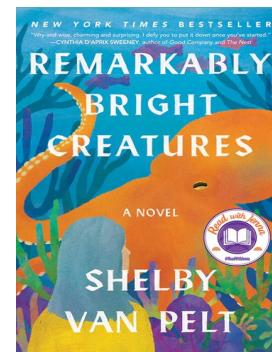
January, 2026



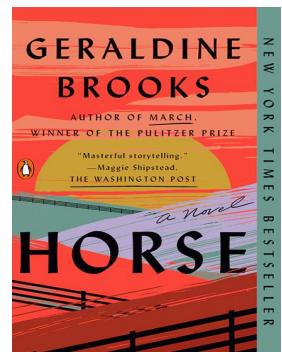
February, 2026



March, 2026



April, 2026



May, 2026

Primetimers - Reverend Tracy

We miss Jan and Keith so much and send them our continued prayers for Keith's recovery, healing, and peace.

Our Primetimers Christmas Meal was held at Ricky's in Harvest Hills. About 30 of us gathered and had a great time! Thanks to Sara and the Ricky's staff for making it wonderful. The Strummers were kind enough to come to the church and lead a Christmas sing-along for the six who participated. For the New Year, some of us look forward to going to The Beatles production at Jubilations Calgary on February 10, 2026; thanks to Joan and Diane for organizing. Movie afternoons will take place in the Sanctuary on the last Wednesday of the month beginning on January 28, 2026, at 2:00 pm; thanks Todd for looking after that.

