

# In the Orchard

## Christmas in an Army Hospital - a poem by Gordon Hansford

Christmas of 1945, I was in the 24th General Hospital in Horley, England. I remember looking out the window and seeing Windsor Castle in the distance. The staff did all they could to give us a nice Christmas, as most of us had been away from home for a long time. They put up decorations and we had prepared a good meal.

The previous day, an Air Force man had been brought in and put in a far corner of the ward. He was very quiet and we wondered who he was. We were told he was a German POW with a severe head wound. As we were finishing our meal and singing tunes, a soldier with his arm in a sling walked over to the prisoner's bed and offered him a bottle of beer. Another offered a chocolate bar. I had my flute and started to play "O Tannenbaum". Despite his wound he sang along in German. He had a beautiful baritone voice. I then played "Silent Night" and again he sang and the sound seemed to grow as it rang through the ward. All of us who were able went to his bed and gave him what we could spare. He smiled and we all had a feeling of peace and good will to all.

It was Christmas of nineteen forty-five.  
I was flat on my back, but still alive,  
And thankful to be as I lay on my bed  
Snug and warm, and pretty well fed.  
The doctors and nurses and orderlies, too  
Did everything they could possibly do  
To give us a Christmas especially fine  
As we'd been far from home for a very long time.

Decorations were strung around the ward,  
The dinner table was a well-laden board.  
A bottle of beer each, and a package of  
smokes.  
The air was soon filled with laughter and  
jokes.  
'Though each had their problems with  
sickness or wounds  
We all sang together the old Christmas  
tunes.

But back in one corner a quiet lad lay.  
He'd been brought in on a stretcher the  
previous day.  
After a while somebody said,  
'Who is that guy? He looks half dead'  
An orderly spoke up, 'He's a German guy  
Who was hit in the head, just above the  
right eye.  
He was in prison camp 'til his wound gave  
him trouble,  
When they brought him in he was bent  
almost double!"

A hard looking soldier with a sling on  
his arm  
Walked up to his bed and we thought he  
meant harm.  
But he stuck out his hand with a bottle of  
beer  
'Merry Christmas, Jerry, we're glad that  
you're here."

One by one, all the chaps able to walk  
Went over to the German and tried to talk  
What they thought was his language though  
their accents were queer.  
The young German smiled, and it looked  
like a tear  
That ran down his cheek, as the boys shook  
his hand  
And a lad with a flute, who'd once played  
in a band  
Played "O Tannenbaum," that old tune so  
grand.

The young German sang, and his voice was  
clear.  
Patients and staff hushed their talk and  
drew near.  
Then "Silent Night", the sound seemed to  
grow  
As it rang through the ward and out o'er  
the snow.

We all gave him something we thought we  
could spare  
His bunk was soon covered, and as he lay  
there  
He smiled a broad smile, and I knew that  
then  
A feeling of peace and good-will to all men  
Was there in that ward, on that Christmas  
day  
Back in Old England, that land far away.

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*The late Gordon Hansford and his wife Helen.*

# “What Are You Obsessing About?”

*... we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

*Romans 5:3b-5*

I am a little sad right now. Not because of world or local events, and not because of politics or religion. I am sad that we won't see our children and their families this year, but that's not it. I am sad that we can't all worship together right now, but at this moment that's not it either. At this moment, I'm sad because we only have one more episode of Midsomer Murders to watch (don't judge me!). It's been my guilty obsession!

What are you obsessing about as we enter the Advent season? For months now, it's been all about COVID-19 and politics. Daily updates on our numbers and the US election makes for hard to ignore news.

Advent is about waiting and getting ready. Not the idle finger-twiddling kind of waiting, but using the time getting ready by shedding the negative, fear-inducing, anxiety-building obsessions and instead obsess in all that nurtures and sustains hope within us.

What about obsessing over Christmas

decorations? In a study reported on by psychologist Deborah Serani on decorations, she says it produces happiness by taking us out of the normal 'day in and day out' signals allowing Christmas decorating to spike dopamine, a feel-good hormone.

Isn't that a much better obsession? Whether it's colours, smells, ambiance, or nostalgia, it sounds like a healthy choice. Let's allow ourselves to obsess over the little things in life that give us joy. Make fresh baked bread. Over-decorate our homes for the season. Buy, make, or learn to make hot spiced apple cider. Pick up that book you've been meaning to read and don't put it down until it's read. Learn a new hobby. Binge-watch a new favourite TV program (we promise not to judge you!).

In this pandemic, let's follow all the rules to keep us and our neighbours safe. But we've suffered enough, endured enough, and shown our true character as people of faith concerned about one another. Let the result of all of this be hope. As the writer of Romans tells us, hope does not disappoint. As people of faith, we are in the hope business.

In this Advent season, let's obsess about hope, and through hope we will experience the peace, joy and love of



this season. Like most obsessions, it won't stop at the end of the season.

Obsess in connecting with family, friends, and neighbours. Get obsessed with faith-seeking justice, and through justice we find peace and joy. All this in the name of love and the name of God who is Love. Get obsessed with all that the birth of Jesus into our lives again this year can inspire within us now and into the new year. Jesus loves to turn the world on its head. In a world turned upside down, let's stand on our heads and see things with new eyes and a new perspective, and all through the lens of hope – hope for ourselves, our community, our family, friends, and friends we have yet to meet. Even in the difficult times, my hope for us all is that we will continue to share the good news of our faith and our lives with one another, filled to overflowing with justice, peace, and love.

With love and joy, Rev. Don Sellsted

## Council Chair: Celebrate Hope, Peace, Joy and Love

Hallelujah! We are on the brink of Advent. We are in the season for waiting. This year waiting can have so many different meanings in the environment we now find ourselves. We could be waiting to be able to attend an in-person service at OVUC, we could be waiting for a vaccine, we could be waiting in line at the grocery store, we could be waiting for test results or even waiting for this season to be over because it brings you pain.

Our waiting could be so different this year, but one thing remains constant and that is the celebration of the birth of the Christ child. As I read a prayer at our Council meeting last night from the World Council of Churches, I felt the strength to keep going. We need

to remain faithful that our Lord will be there for us whether it is sorrow and pain or whether we are celebrating a joy. We have endured much change over the last eight to nine months and the end of COVID has not appeared in front of us, yet. But one thing that we can cherish is our Christian belief that God gave us His only son to care and save us perhaps from ourselves . . .

Right now we can celebrate those four words we hear this time of year. We can celebrate HOPE, hope that life will be better, that we can share the burdens with our faith community and make our individual loads lighter. We can celebrate PEACE, peace that our world will right itself, that our anxieties will fall away as

we trust in God to care for us and protect us. We can celebrate JOY, joy that every day brings a new beginning and that the future holds mysteries that we have yet to know. We can celebrate LOVE, love that we share with our family and friends and we take whatever opportunities that we have to be with them whether that is by Zoom, FaceTime or if you are lucky in person. For our connections with others is the best gift we can each have. This time is special. Let us all carry our faith with us wherever we go.

As we move into this Christmas season, above all look after yourself and others. Be safe in what you do and know that God walks with you every step of your journey.

Merry Christmas, Jane McDonald



# How We Are Coping With COVID-19

COVID-19 has affected all of us for the past nine months, in ways we would never have imagined. Although the work of the church has slowed down for some, others have been very busy behind the scenes, and we have all been in front of many screens. Who knew about Zoom meetings before all this? Our Rev. Don has been perfecting his entry onto the big stage - livestreamed services!

## Worship in its various forms

We are fortunate at Orchard Valley that Rev. Don had the knowledge and willingness to do taped worship services since the beginning of the closure of the church building back in March.

In the late summer, a committee did the work necessary to put in place safeguards that would enable us to worship in person, including a limit of people,



masks, a shorter service, hymns sung only by the 4 distanced/bubbled choir members and/or taped special music, hand sanitizing, and tracking attendees.

When in-person services started in late September, a team of Andy Pitter, Gary Dunfield and Sylvia Jacquard began the work of assembling the equipment, software and knowledge to livestream the services. After many weeks of learning sprinkled with lots of trial and error, the first livestreamed service took place on November 22. People from anywhere are now able to see our live service through a link posted on the Orchard Valley United website homepage.

## Music in the Orchard by Ken Hassell, Music Director

Thirty Days hath... Actually, it feels more like 389 each, doesn't it! But now we are ... in the groove?!? When we all were shut down, as you remember, nothing happened (anywhere) for a couple of weeks. Don & I then started on our journey. We came together, duly masked and distanced and sanitized, to fashion recordings to be posted on YouTube and our website. We did our best to use the KISS method. Short services were/are necessary. For special music, I have asked people who have volunteered/been asked to offer their talents. Some have recorded remotely; others have recorded with me in the sanctuary. We've had vocal solos, duets, trios, quartets, instrumental offerings, and one special instance where our son, Colin, added drums from his studio in Toronto to the recording!

For Advent, we'll be recording a sextet, vocal solos, chimes, and, since Colin will be home and out of quarantine (fingers, toes, and eyes crossed), we'll record some very special music with him! We may also have a special soloist recording for Christmas Eve!

Nov. 18 marked the restart of Chimes practice (with masks and white gloves)! We'll be recording our musical offering in December for presentation at the Dec. 13 service. Phew! That's what is and will be (hopefully not forever and ever!). Amen!

## Covenanter Committee by Beth Crosby

The Covenanter Committee continues to meet monthly via Zoom. We were sorry to be closed all summer, due to COVID (We normally leave the Church open for visitors from sunrise to sunset.) Nor did we host our regular weekly Sunday services.

We will not be holding our traditional 11:00 pm Christmas Eve



*The socially distanced choir of Scott Sweatman, Debbie Mailman, and Thea Burton sing the hymns played by Ken Hassell to the great appreciation of the congregation.*

Service this year, which is usually packed, but are planning a pre-recorded service, facilitated by Rev. Don.

## Outreach by Susan Cater

COVID-19 came in with a bang! We did not know what to expect or how things would change. It has been wonderful to have the Church community especially during this time when other forms of community are on hold. Receiving phone calls from members of the congregation, a simple card stating "thinking of you," and being able to watch the services are constant reminders of how blessed we are. Things are still happening, differently, but happening.



The Outreach Mask Project is underway. The hope is these masks made by members of the congregation will be handed out to people in our community as a reminder that we are thinking of them, we are still active in the community, we miss them, love them and they are not alone!

In thinking about this I get goosebumps -- we have a generous, caring and loving Orchard Valley United family!

*continued on pg. 4*

# How We Are Coping With COVID-19<sub>(cont. from pg. 3)</sub>

## **Recording the Mission and Service message and its challenges by Judy Gilmour**

I have a new appreciation for cinematography. But rain or shine, the message must go through. The drudgery of COVID-19 has blurred fundamental senses like time, and place, so I have had to develop a checklist for M&S taping: -Harvey: have we done M&S this week? -When does Don need it? -Is there sufficient light to tape outside? -Where is Harvey? Do I dare take him away from the football game to tape this? -What am I to wear? (Can't keep pjs on even though its already four in the afternoon.) -Make sure glass of wine is not in sight of camera. -Where is our pet cat Pingo? (She already has had one guest appearance.) -Where are my glasses? (Don't need to tell you how hard it is without them.) -What angle of the camera is best? (Make Harvey hold it higher.) -Remember to look up into the camera while you read (sure, sure). -First run didn't go so well. Second run didn't go so well either. Third version marred by Harvey's thumb. -Darn ... video won't forward to Don; keeps saying "sending". -Can you believe it's already time to do it again for next week?

## **From the Support Staff by Theresa Perrin, Admin. Assistant**

Part of what I do here at Orchard Valley is being a link between the people of the congregation and what's happening here in the church.

What I've discovered during COVID-19 is that not only is it beneficial for me to speak with our church family, but for them to speak with me as well.

Being without that personal contact this spring and summer, has been very depressing. I've been at home four days a week, not speaking with anyone outside my immediate family. I missed having human contact, especially with our congregation.

Not being able to speak with people has truly affected me. I'm very glad I've been able to come back to work and once more have contact with my OVUC family.

## **by Doug MacKinnon, Custodian**

I never expected to be working through a pandemic. I think of the good people I met through all the services, dinners and other functions at the church. Part of my workload did consist of setting up for many functions. The focus now is on sanitizing, and doing my part to keep people safe. My workload has decreased on one hand, and increased in other areas. The one positive I will take from this is the people I've met. Even though I don't see everyone all the time, I hold you close as my friends.

## **Spirit Chair Yoga by Joy Waterbury**

Spirit Chair Yoga Practice has restarted on Monday mornings again at Orchard Valley. Registration for limited numbers, social distancing and masking is working out well. We are just happy to be in community again enjoying each other's energy. Our practices ring with gratitude, prayer and meditation in motion. We wish peace and good health to all this Christmastime.



*Carol Faulkenham strikes the Warrior I pose.*

## **Women's Breakfast Group by Heather Hennigar**

The Women's Breakfast group had their first face to face get together on Nov 6. and again on Nov. 13, meeting at Bryanna's Café for a socially distanced breakfast. It was so good to be able to actually see friends, share stories and enjoy a great meal together. Because

of concern for others with the increase in COVID-19 cases, the breakfasts are again suspended for the time being.

## **Men's Group Activities by Chris Seymour and Ian Godfrey**

The Men's Group still meet monthly for breakfast. We were concerned about meeting during COVID, but were advised that as long as people stay home if they aren't feeling well, we should be okay.

We've had to change the way we take and deliver Fundscrip orders. We phone our regular supporters, take their orders, and arrange to collect cheques. Then, we deliver most orders directly to their homes.

We couldn't put the Guys' Cans out this year. Instead, we put a notice in the bulletin, asking people to donate using their envelopes. We may be close to what we usually generate in funds, but we won't have final figures until after Nov. 30.

## **Good news during COVID-19 by Andy Pitter**

What a lift it was to see some of our children making paper palm branches and singing together with Thea Burton on Zoom for Palm Sunday!

It was great being together on Zoom to do yoga with Joy Waterbury, make prayer flags with art therapist Dr. Mary Norton, and make Mother's Day and Father's Day cards. The

Sunday the kids made butterfly-shaped snacks with Gail Gordon, Micah and Gabe Bornemann-Davis ate those snacks during the Coffee Time Zoom!

Another highlight was Eastlink giving WAICC churches a time-slot for about 4 months during the pandemic. WAICC folk worked together on this so various nursing homes, seniors' residences and others had access to local worship without needing the Internet.



# Dorothy W. Robbins Celebrates 100th Birthday

by Sylvia Jacquard

Orchard Valley was the scene of a very happy occasion on Nov. 14 when Dorothy Walker Robbins celebrated her 100th birthday with 200 friends and former teaching colleagues.

She arrived at the church to the music of five bagpipers, which concluded with a lone piper playing "Happy Birthday". The decorated sanctuary had a table upon which was a birthday cake and individually wrapped pieces of cake for the guests as they left. Most of the guests were from the local area but some came from Bridgewater, Truro, Fall River, Halifax and Dartmouth.

Guests entered the event from the main door, made their way through the hall and, in a socially distanced way, around the sanctuary, spoke with

Dorothy and left via the side door.

While they were waiting, visitors watched a slideshow of photos from Dorothy's life from child to adulthood, ending with a videotaped message from Premier Stephen McNeil. They were also entertained by a video made by Dorothy's former colleagues at TAPHE (Teachers Association for Physical and Health Education) which featured everyone holding signs and dancing (Dorothy's favourite thing).

Dorothy was presented with congratulations from Queen Elizabeth II, the Governor-General and other dignitaries.

"Wow; I never dreamed I'd reach 100! A huge thank you to the Teachers College committee who so efficiently planned a well-organized, COVID-safe event and to all who attended, brought or sent

cards and greetings, flowers, goodies, best wishes, memories and made donations. It was indeed a very special day!" said Dorothy.



# Church Expansion Moves into Phase Two

by Harvey Gilmour

Following the return of responses to a congregation-wide questionnaire showing overwhelming support for moving ahead with a circa \$2 million building rehabilitation and expansion, discussions have been led by Council Chair Jane McDonald to set the stage for next steps in pursuance of someday breaking ground.

Tommy Duggan will succeed Harvey Gilmour as chief liaison with B.D. Stevens Ltd. and the architects as we proceed into phase two, the "detailed design" phase.

Phase One was the footprint and

functional interior and esthetic exterior design, which the congregation has approved; Phase Two is detailed interior schematics and closer adherence to cost issues. Tommy, a residential home-builder by profession, brings his construction expertise to his representation of the congregational interests in this next step.

As we proceed into Phase Two, Gary Dunfield, Harvey Gilmour, Rev. Don Sellsted and Jane McDonald will serve as the transition group until it is clear what breadth and depth of input will be required from a project implementation committee.





# Family Worship and More!

by Andy Pitter

On November 8, three families came out for a new family worship happening on the second Sun. of each month at 3 pm.

A family worship was something Rev. Don had thought of with the church re-opening, because there was a real void for him having a children's time at the first in-person worship with no children present. Rev. Don and Andy Pitter led the worship with Nancy Handrigan playing and singing. Sylvia Jacquard and Noah Duyan ran the slideshow and Sylvia also took photos.

Rev. Don wrote a drama about the 10 commandments and the two greatest commandments that Andy, Robert Pitter and Grace Oleskevich voiced in a video. The families worshipped God through repeat-after-me prayers, action songs, rhythm instruments, and a discussion of how to love God and others. They put "loving others" into action by making cards to be sent to

some in our congregation. Perhaps the most fun was alternating between standing and crouching for the song "Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah" – everyone got a workout then!

Andy used a Workshop Rotation curriculum to help develop the worship. This kind of Sunday School curriculum focuses on one Bible story or passage a month through workshops such as drama, music, and arts and crafts.

Back in Sept., parent and Sunday

School teacher, Johanna Rosolen, asked for packages with simple activities and discussion questions for families. Andy took this idea and used the curriculum to make a package so parents/grandparents could explore November's Bible focus with their kids. Churches doing this call them faith-at-home kits or "church-in-a-bag"! If you'd like one contact Andy. The next family worship is planned for Sun. Dec. 13 at 3 pm (registration required).



*Shaking their maracas in time with the music are the Duggan family: Leo, Tom, Lucy and Sarah.*

*[center] The Rosolen - Duyan family, Winslow, Johanna, Wesley, Katia and Noah, wait for the service to start.*

*[left] Micah, Gabe, Julien and Sandra, the Bornemann-Davis family, make cards that will be given some in the congregation.*



## Junior Youth Group: The "New Crew in Town"

by Grace Marcoux

Extra! Extra! There's a new crew in town, and they're here to have fun – welcome to Orchard Valley's Junior Youth Group! We are a collection of kids from grades 4-8 and a few enthusiastic adults who gather once a month at the church for an evening of fellowship and fun.

Organizers Andy Pitter and Grace Marcoux are aiming to provide a safe space for kids to be themselves, build community, and explore their faith. We're open to all, whether you come to church on Sunday or not.

So far our group has held a Halloween costume party, where we made some wickedly cool decorations, and played lots of fun games (while maintaining some social distancing and safe COVID practices).

Especially fun was our "Secret Society" game; it didn't take the kids very long to pick up on the secret to join the society!

We had a small

Christmas-themed Zoom gathering on Nov. 27 with games (including another "secret" to figure out), and other fun. Youth are invited to take part in a video pageant and also a family LEGO Christmas build challenge. More details TBA.

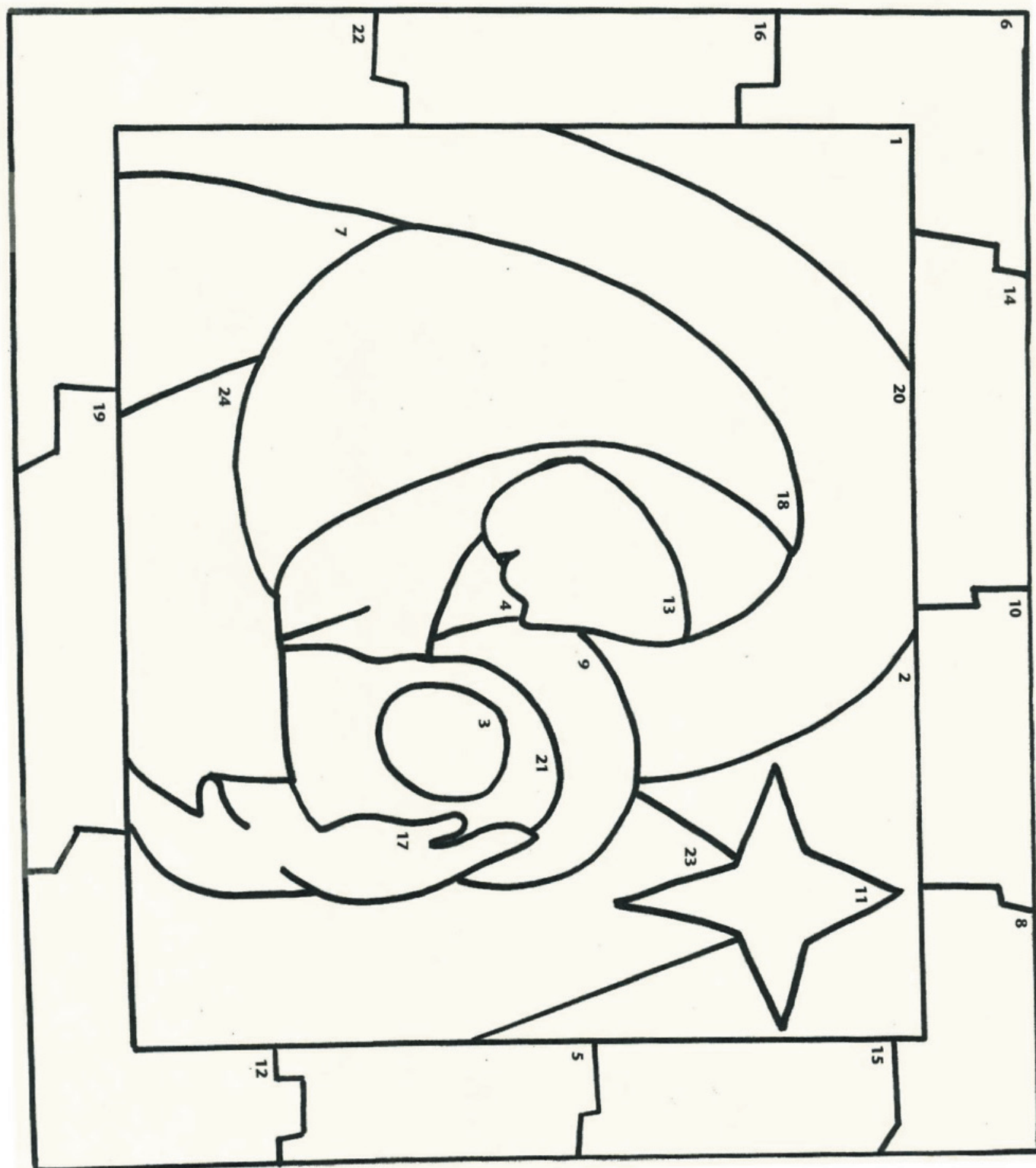
If you have any questions or you/a youth you know would like to join us, please reach out to Grace or Andy. All are welcome!



*Katia Duyan holds the super cool pumpkin craft that she made after the Halloween gathering.*

## Advent Colour by Numbers

On each day of Advent, find the numbered shape in the picture. Start with number 1 on December 1 and end with 24 on Christmas Eve.





## Hot Cocoa Prayer

1. Measure two tablespoons of cocoa powder. Taste it (it's bitter). Pray for some of the things that are bitter in your life and a little hard to take on their own.
2. Measure and add 1–2 tablespoons of sugar or sweetener. Taste it (it's sweet). Offer a prayer of thanks for all the things that are sweet in your life and are perhaps best in small doses.
3. Add a pinch of salt. Taste it (it's salty). Offer a prayer for moments of grace and clarity, experiences that bring out the flavour of life.
4. Warm some milk (or milk beverage) while reflecting on when you have experienced the Holy in the past day or week. What has warmed your heart?
5. Mix warmed milk beverage with hot chocolate mixture. Taste it (it's yummy). Give thanks to God and enjoy.

U	O	H	A	H	D	C	T	O	I	E	U	H	S
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FAITH@HOME

WORD SEARCH

Joy

Prophet

Equip

Connect

Wild Star

United Church

Peace

Advent

Hope

Equip

Love

Epiphany

Christmas

Baby Jesus

Imagine