

# In the Orchard

Newsletter, Vol. 13, Issue 2

November 30, 2025

## “This is Our Home”

### Advent and Christmas Services and Events

Nov. 30 - 10 am - 1st Sunday of Advent  
- 7 pm Advent Service at  
Manning Memorial Chapel

Dec. 6 - 7 pm - Nat. Day of Rem. and  
Action on Violence  
Against Women

Dec. 7 - 10 am - 2nd Sunday of Advent

Dec. 14 - 10 am - 3rd Sunday of Advent,  
Service led by Steeple Strummers  
- 7 pm Family Movie Night

Dec. 19 - 9 am - Christmas Breakfast

Dec. 21 - 10 am - 4th Sunday of Advent  
Youth/Choir Presentation  
White Gift Service

- 7 pm - Longest Night Service

Dec. 24 - 4 pm - Christmas Eve Service  
- 11 pm - Covenanter Church  
Christmas Eve Service

Dec. 28 - 10 am - 1st Sunday after  
Christmas

Dec. 31 - 5-8 pm - New Year's Eve Social  
music by Steeple Strummers

### In This Issue

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Reverend's Advent Messages   | 2     |
| Chair's Advent Message       | 3     |
| Tattoo Trip                  | 3     |
| Choir Preparing for Advent   | 4     |
| 100th Anniversary Activities | 4     |
| OVU Holds Carnival           | 6-7   |
| Grants Enable Upgrades       | 8     |
| Vol. of the Year from OVU    | 9     |
| Rev. Don's Sabbatical        | 10-11 |
| Stepping up During the Ban   | 12    |
| Working on our Woods         | 13    |
| Sunday School Growing        | 14-15 |
| Children's Activity Page     | 16    |

“Were you the Parade Marshal?” she asked. It was a wonderful, surreal question that led me to reflect on the last four years. Let me tell you how I ended up on the first float of the 2025 Rotary Parade of Lights.

During the height of the pandemic, we moved here from Ontario. Moving across provinces was equal parts exhilarating and exhausting. Early after arriving, we were tired and needed a break. We bundled up the kids and headed out to watch the parade. As the floats and vehicles slipped past, despite the merriment, I caught myself wondering, “What have we done?”

We had left our friends, family, and the only neighbourhood my children had ever known. We were strangers here. It felt like we had crashed a party. But eventually, that would change.

Before long, the kids started school. I started volunteering. Tim joined the New Minas Volunteer Fire Department. Eventually, we found OVUC.

Today, the parade no longer feels

like someone else's party. Riding in one of the fire trucks, Perry reprised his role as Sparky the Fire Dog (he volunteers as the Fire Department mascot). Tim was guiding traffic.

When the call from Rotary came, looking for children to participate, Betty and Patty couldn't say no. Since their float was at the front, the girls could hop off at the end and enjoy the rest of the parade. Unsurprisingly, the girls needed a parent to accompany them, so I tagged along for the ride. So, no I wasn't the Parade Marshal. I was just a mom looking after her kids.

As we drifted down Commercial Street, waving at friends and neighbours, I was overwhelmed by the feeling of coming full circle – this is our home. We hope your Christmas is as wonderful, fulfilling, and joyful as you have made ours. Thank you.

*Christina Sappington and her daughters Betty and Patty enjoy the 2025 Rotary Parade of Lights from atop the Rotary float.*



# Rev. Don's Message: A Little Joy

Well folks, it is the season of Advent again. I could say, 'already'. It feels like we just got back from my sabbatical and things are already piling up. I wish I was getting out to visit people more; the busyness of the season just does not make it easy. Just the same, I need to focus on the tasks at hand, and they centre around hope, peace, joy and love, as our Advent Candles declare.

Hope is vital, not just in Advent, but we must always hold on hard to hope. And part of our hope must be for peace – peace for everyone facing struggles, violence, persecution, pain, and more. Hope and peace are eternally linked and bound together for the sake of love. Love must be the keystone for the Christian life and the lives of all humankind.

But this year, I think it is joy that is capturing my attention and imagination. Not to raise it above hope, peace and love, but to give joy its due. In a world that is so full of anger and division, we

might wonder if there is any room left for joy. But we need joy more than ever!

What is it that is giving you joy right now? As we all prepare to welcome the infant Jesus in our lives this year, I cannot help but connect it to spending time with our two great-grandsons – pure joy! And spending time with our children and grandchildren – what joy! To see how they've grown into the tremendous, compassionate, and independent people they are gives me great joy. To celebrate the birthdays of both of our mothers - great joy!

I knew that as the calendar turned to October this year, my eyes and heart would be turning toward a return to our home – our home in Coldbrook and our faith home here at Orchard Valley United. And it did not disappoint!

Those are the big things. What are the little things that are actually big things? Cheryl making homemade soup. The first skiff of snow on the deck.

Bumblebee laying on her lambskin on the living room floor. My first hike back at Cape Split. Seeing our friends and neighbours. The taste of coffee in our own kitchen. And the plays and the concerts we attend this time of year speak of Advent and of joy.

When joy doesn't come to us, maybe we need to seek out joy by paying attention to the big and the little things around us. We will soon be shlepping a Christmas Tree into our home. I admit there's not much joy walking around circling the tree to spin the lights from top to bottom. But as each little ornament tells the story of a child, or a place we lived or visited, or the memories of the people who gifted them to us, in that there is joy.

In this season of hope, peace and love, it is my prayer that in it all, you will find your joy.

A very blessed Christmas and joyous New Year to you all.

Rev. Don

# Rev Max's Message: Seven Eventful Months

To the Orchard Valley family, It has been my profound honour and pleasure to have journeyed with you for a little over 7 months now and to say those 7 months have been eventful would be a severe understatement. The movement of the spirit is so evident in this place, and I love the ways that this community challenges itself to listen to the ways that God is calling you to be the church within the community of New Minas and the larger catchment community within the Annapolis Valley.

Sunday School has had consistently 6-10 children most weeks, and all the kids seem to be really enjoying themselves so far. We are always looking for more volunteers, and I will be reaching out to those who have already signed up to get a schedule started in the new year. We are hoping to show an Advent themed family film

during the season and a survey looking for your opinions was distributed along with the announcements this week. If you would like me to send you the link, feel free to reach out via email at [mmartin@orchardvalleyunited.ca](mailto:mmartin@orchardvalleyunited.ca) or [maxisamminister@gmail.com](mailto:maxisamminister@gmail.com)

On the fourth Sunday in Advent along with 'white gift Sunday', the Sunday School will be performing "Once Upon a Holy Night" and the cast and assisting crew are very excited. After this we will take a one-week break for Christmas before returning on Sun. Jan. 4th!

As we venture into this new season, may we be reminded of the things that truly make this season special; not toys or presents or the newest, biggest and brightest things. The things that our creator God calls us

*Max Martin (not ordained yet) helps to serve communion during his first Sunday, Easter Sunday, at Orchard Valley.*



to pay attention to throughout the year: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

If you or a loved one would appreciate a pastoral visit, feel free to reach out via email or contact me at 902-717-8627. From my family to yours, all the best in the coming year.

Rev. Max

# Chair's Message: Experience the Joy of Home

I've heard it said that travel broadens the mind. I expect that's only true if your mind is open to being broadened: I have certainly witnessed people in foreign locales expending more energy complaining about the amenities that weren't 'like home' than enjoying the differences. To me the differences are why we travel. That and the museums – I love visiting museums and churches. Although I have not traveled a lot, it has been under varied circumstances, and almost always involves careful planning.

I have travelled alone, as well as with friends, and/or with family...and I have to say that for me, it's nicer to be traveling with someone – someone you can point out 'that flower' to, or 'that view', or compare meals when you are trying new things (even swapping bites of food), someone who you can relax with and talk about your day at the end of it. - I have traveled by plane, train, and automobile. I have visited places where,

by the standards of the people around me, I would have been considered rich. I have also been on cruise ships, where, by most of the passengers' standards, I would be considered poor, and possibly beneath notice.

Not often have I had to travel suddenly because an authority told me I had to, with little time to prepare, with very few possessions, and no real idea of how long it would be before I could see 'home' again.

It has only happened twice actually, and both times they were forced evacuations because of fire (once from a hotel, once from our home). We were lucky that we were blessed with friends who helped us when we had to leave our home, two dogs and four cats in tow.

Imagine poor Mary and Joseph, having to travel unexpectedly because an authority told them to, with little time to prepare, and very few possessions, friends and family left far behind.

They arrived at their destination

without even having accommodations, and from there had to flee to Egypt. Seeing how badly poor immigrants are treated, even today, I can only marvel at the courage they had. Especially since it was a long time before they could return to their physical 'home'.

But...if home is where the heart is, then home is where the people you love are, where you are safe to be you, whatever your physical environment. I hope that you all get to experience the joy of 'home' this Christmas, whether it's the time you spend with people you love, the food you eat and/or the conversations you have that trigger special memories, or even just the chance to slow down and breathe and just be you.

May your Christmas be a most blessed one.

With love,

Mindy Vinqvist-Tymchuk  
Chair of Council



by Donna Murphy

The Congregational Life Committee organized a trip to the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo on June 28. Forty-eight church members and friends met at OV, travelled on a Bus Boys charter to the Scotiabank Centre, stopped for lunch at May Garden Chinese Restaurant, enjoyed the show and returned. For most, it had been many years since they had seen this show which had its inception in 1979 and has

had representation from 21 countries. Through music, dance and cultural traditions, this year's Tattoo honoured those who paved the way for peace and freedom with the theme 'Flourish' — as well as celebrating what it means to be Canadian. We were entertained by marching bands, acrobats, dancers, military displays, pipes and drums, and much more. For highlights go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-kn2Lws22k>. An enjoyable day for all.



*The Outreach Committee's Gloscap Elementary School Breakfast team, which provides volunteers to make toast/bagels for students for a week four times during the school year, heard of the school's need for nutritious cereal and held a cereal drive during the month of October. Twenty-eight boxes of Cheerios, Shreddies and Life cereal were donated by members of our congregation. Cereal donated that wasn't what the school needed was donated to a local food bank.*

# Choir Entering Advent with Enthusiasm

by Thea Koenig-Burton

The choir is preparing for the Advent and Christmas Seasons with lots of enthusiasm. We have missed Carmen Peng, our pianist, who is away on special study until Jan., but have been blessed to have her sister Colette and Liam Edelstein filling in for her during that time.

On Dec. 14 the Steeple Strummers will share special music. On Dec. 21, the Adult choir and our Youth will do a special presentation Once Upon A Holy Night for our White Gift Service and Thea will sing a solo for the Longest

Night service that evening.

Special anthems are being prepared for the 4 pm Christmas Eve Service at OVUC and the 11 pm at the Covenanter Church in Grand Pré. At our 4 pm service we will be joined by cellist Elizabeth Sircom whom we heard play the piece by the Cellist of Sarajevo during one of Rev. Gloria's sermons.

Having had to cancel last year's late-night service due to weather, we are set to make this year's Covenanter service extra special with 2 anthems by the choir, Caroline Woods singing O Holy Night, and Colette & Charlotte Peng on organ and violin to help make the late-night Carols and Song service one to remember.

In the new year, the new hymn book "Then Let Us Sing" comes our way. We have been sharing some selections from this publication and look forward to many more.

As well, we have a tentative date of the afternoon of Jan. 25 for a Meet Your Feet Fundraiser, which will include skits by Robyn Brown-Hewitt presented by members of our congregation and a hymn sing along.

May your Advent be filled with hope, peace, joy and love. May your Christmas be filled with light and love preparing you for a Happy New Year.

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*The choir dresses in bright colours for Pride Sunday.*



*The choir sings during the 100th anniversary service.*

*The choir dresses in black with a choir scarf that matches the church season.*



# Centennial Events: Sing Joy Concert

by Thea Koenig-Burton

What a joyous event we had celebrating the 100th Anniversary in song. Joining our OVUC choir and Steeple Strummers, we welcomed the Kentville Baptist Church Choir, Conduit Treble Voices Choir and the Seventh Wave Barbershop Quartet performing individually and for the closing as a massed choir.

In addition to performing together we were able to socialize while enjoying supper together thanks to our Congregational Life Committee. Scriptures and congregational hymns rounded out the evening of inspiring music, worship and fellowship. We send a huge thank you to all who helped make this evening one to remember.

*At the Sing Joy 100th Anniversary Concert on June 15th, Thea conducts the massed choir and (centre photo) the Steeple Strummers share their special music.*



*Another centennial event: Vivian MacPhee receives best wishes from Darlene Hennigar at her 100th birthday party, held at the church.*



## Picnic Table Project

by Rev. Max Martin

The picnic table was provided in-part by funds from the United Church of Canada in collaboration with their '100 Tables' initiative "a national initiative inviting its communities of faith across the country to transform a picnic table into a site of welcoming that reflects the Church's century-long commitment to live out God's call to love and serve."

Built by the Flower Cart, the table was finished as members of the community decorated the table with their images of church, God, and meaningful scriptures to them.

This accessible picnic table--space on one end for a wheelchair--will be just one part of a visioning process set to take place for the rear of the property over the coming months, and is sure to provide a space for stories, community, and a meal or two as well!

*Rev. Max Martin and Gordon Wray stand by as another person signs the picnic table.*

# Centennial Celebrated With Carnival

by Rev. Don Sellsted & Sylvia Jacquard

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the United Church of Canada, Orchard Valley decided to hold a Carnival on Saturday, May 24 to which the community would be invited. There would also be no entrance fee or cost for the refreshments or activities.

The organizing committee of Norma Mailman, Diana Dunn, Bev Thompson, Nancy Handrigan, Mark Lipton, Kelly Lipton, Sylvia Jacquard, Jane McDonald, Thea Burton, and Rev. Don Sellsted met regularly. They were supported by many members of the congregation in the set up, running and cleaning up after the event and in the donation of cakes for the cake walk.

At the final meeting on May 22 they had to decide on a contingency plan because rain was forecast. The decision was to move everything inside which unfortunately meant that we were unable to have the Bouncy Castle, although everything else could go ahead.

In the flex space, the conference room and the Sunday Room were the carnival games and other activities. Very popular with the kids were the carnival games (with prizes): Axe Throwing (thanks Acadia U), duck pond, fish pond, boot toss, bean bag toss, and sucker pull.

The other activities were: chip walk, cake walk, face painting, henna tattoos, New Minas Fire Dept. Fire Truck for a 'Touch and Tell', youth

yoga mat exercise, and photo booth.

The refreshments included: popcorn, cotton candy, hotdogs, chips, pop, water, and coffee, and an anniversary cake.

The sanctuary was the home to eight vendor tables, our yard sale tables and displays of our Outreach projects, Pastoral Care, OVUC Music and Choir, Youth and Young Families, and the Covenanter Church. There were also displays by Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous and the Kings County Family Resource Centre.

The attendance was outstanding with somewhere between 600-800 people in attendance over the course of the 3+ hour event. We almost ran out of hotdogs, drinks, and prizes. We did give away all the cakes and chips with 5 minutes to spare! Said Rev. Don about everyone's efforts:

"Our congregation is astounding and astonishing and amazing. They never stopped as many of us logged a lot of miles (kms), physically and passionately. We were here on Friday afternoon, again on Friday evening for the vendors to set up, and even more on Saturday morning. The clean up after the event was enormous but the volunteers were still buzzing with the success of the event.

I don't think calling it a herculean effort is an exaggeration. The effort, the flexibility and adaptability, were outstanding. The ideas and initiatives were incredible."

*Orchard Valley welcomes the community to our Carnival celebrating the 100th anniversary of the United Church of Canada.*



*The New Minas Fire Department was on site with a fire truck and mascot Sparky (our own Perry Warmington).*

*Hundreds of hotdogs were barbecued and provided for free to our visitors.*



Cheryl Manzer and Helen Seymour of the Outreach Committee stand by to answer any questions posed by the visitors.

Centre: Penny Johnson, Helen Gill and Donna Murphy prepare popcorn to share.

Rev. Don Sellsted had the honour of cutting the 100th anniversary cake.



There were many games for kids to play at the carnival. Mary Jane Penny watches a girl choose a duck out of the duck pond for a prize.

Vendors and displays were interpersed throughout the sanctuary.

# Meeting the Needs of Orchard Valley

by Jane McDonald

Over the last couple of years Orchard Valley has attempted to make our facility safer for those that work, visit, attend and to feel supported. To that end we applied for two grants in 2024. One of those grants was an Accessibility grant. The Accessibility grant was to encompass three different aspects of our facility. One of those was making the entrance to our building more accessible by installing a system that would allow visitors, staff and congregants to enter handsfree and secure.

We moved the two accessible entrance buttons to places that are much more accessible for individuals with mobility issues. We have also installed a keyless entrance system. This will allow people to pass a fob (plastic token) over the reader and pushing the button will automatically unlock and open the door. This keeps our people more

secure and safe within our facility.

We have also installed a listening system to help those in our congregation that live with a hearing loss. The system helps wearers hear speakers during the service and other activities that take place in our sanctuary. Also by the time you read this we will have new signage installed to identify our rooms throughout the building.

The signs offer names for our spaces based on different trees we see throughout Nova Scotia. We have also included a French translation and the names in the Mi'kmaq language to acknowledge the respect we have for our indigenous brothers and sisters. They will also include braille on the signs for those living with low vision.

Our second grant was a security grant. We were also informed earlier this year we were approved. This grant has

helped us to install cameras outside of our building to help us monitor activity in case there is damage/unauthorized intrusion we will be able to check to see if there is any video to help the police to identify perpetrators. This has already been helpful when someone did enter our building overnight. The secure entrance system was also partially covered under this grant.

We really hope that the improvements to accessibility and security of our premises make you feel more included and secure in our facility. Our goal is to make you feel comfortable in who you are and know that we are doing our best to protect you while you visit/work with us.

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*The Ash / Wisqoq / Frêne room is the location of the Sunday School. An image of a leaf from that tree is also on the sign.*



*A fob like this one activates the new keyless entry system.*

*All rooms are named after trees found in NS with signs in English, Mi'kmaq, French and Braille. The other rooms are:*  
alder / tupsi / aulne / Rev. Max's office  
birch / maskwi / bouleau / family room  
cedar / qaskusi / cedre / board room  
elm / wikpi / orme / fellowship space  
maple / jioqjtmusi / erable / nursery  
oak / mimkwaqnmusiey / kitchen  
pine / pin / kuow / sanctuary  
spruce / kawatkw / epicea / choir room  
poplar / miti / peuplier / Rachel's office  
willow / l'mujijmnaqsi / saule / Rev. Don's office

*The new listening system connects those wearing the headsets to the church's sound system enabling them to hear the ministers and others clearly.*



# Helen Seymour - Volunteer of the Year

by Sylvia Jacquard

Helen Seymour attended the Provincial Volunteer of the Year dinner and ceremony on September 29 in Halifax at Casino Nova Scotia.

She had been chosen as Volunteer of the Year for the Municipality of the County of Kings in recognition of her work in the establishment of Centre 130 which provides laundry and shower facilities to those in need. They have also worked with Open Arms to provide shelter during the woods ban and times of extreme hot and cold weather.

There was an opportunity to connect with other volunteers across the province and attend displays on volunteering.

On November 13, Helen was presented with the Municipality of the County of Kings, Volunteer of the Year award by Mayor Dave Corkum and Recreation Director ?????? at a ceremony in the Council Chambers.

The volunteer work done by each of the nominees was shared and the

announcement made of the Youth Volunteer of the Year and the winner of the Ted Meldrum Award.

Helen was accompanied by her husband Chris and son Andrew. Also in

attendance to witness the presentation were our ministers, and some of her fellow Centre 130 volunteers.

After the ceremony, refreshments were available during a reception.



*Helen Seymour, centre, stands with Christina Sappington, Councillor and member of Orchard Valley, Centre 130 volunteer Brenda Croszman, (back row) Rev. Don Sellsted, volunteer Helen Gill, Rev. Max Martin and volunteer Sylvia Jacquard.*



*Minister Ritcey and Lieutenant Governor Savage present Helen Seymour with a Volunteer of the Year award at the Provincial ceremony.*

*Helen Seymour is presented with the Volunteer of the Year award for the Municipality of the County of Kings by Mayor Dave Corkum and Recreation Director Maria Lahoud.*

# Don's Sabbatical: Rest, Spiritual Retreat and Study

by Rev. Don Sellsted

**Sabbatical** The essence of sabbatical is rooted in the biblical practice of the Sabbath day described in the creation story. Jesus kept this practice when he took time in his ministry for renewal, regularly going away to pray and reflect in silence and meditation "on mountain tops and by lakesides."

The busyness of church life can often leave little time for reflective, prayerful time. In the context of ministry, sabbatical time is for learning through reflection, revitalization, and recreation. It is unique to each person. For me, it was a blend of study, spiritual retreat, and rest. For my sabbatical, we chose to travel west and live out of our daughter Renae's lake house on Lake Manitoba. A wonderful place for spectacular sunsets, kayaking, and reading and writing on the deck overlooking the lake. We got to meet our newest great-

putting my feet up and having a nap, but to take the time to do things I love to do. With "a change is as good as a rest" in mind, these include exercising the mind and body, as well as using skills I don't get to use often. My son-in-law Dave and I assisted my daughter in building an ice fishing shack. Construction details

garage door for his mother's garage.

I also loved the activity of getting out on the water fishing with my family and friends. I almost feel bad for always catching the biggest and most fish (sure Rev). I also learned that I am better at throwing horseshoes with my left hand than my right, but very badly either way.

Unlike back home in Nova Scotia, we had a lot of rain in Manitoba. But I still found time to walk several times a week. I did miss walking the more rugged and tree lined trails we enjoy here, however they were



grandson and spend time with him and his brother while babysitting.

Bumblebee did not travel out very well, but did have a much better trip home where she was very glad to be back.

On the way home, we had breakfast with Judy and Harvey Gilmour and later that day we arrived at Ken Hassell and Cynthia Bruce's for the night. All asked us to share their 'hello' to Orchard Valley United.

**Rest** The image of rest is also unique to each of us. For myself, rest is not

like calculating angles and cuts for the rafters, cutting and measuring siding, were fun and relaxing. And working with family made it that much better. I also helped Dave successfully build a sliding

enjoyable in their own way. My main routes were along local dykes and fields, and on some roads. I even encountered the largest garter snake I've seen in a long time.

We also spent time with family.

On September 7, I had the honour of presiding over the marriage of my son Dirk and his bride Brenda in Alberta on a beautiful sun-drenched afternoon. Our son Tyler stood up with him. Our family not only gained another daughter, but two more grandchildren! We spent time between Dirk's home and Tyler's home



and getting us all together regularly.

We were in Saskatchewan to celebrate my mother's 90th birthday and Cheryl's mother's 87th.

**Spiritual Retreat** Another goal was to spend time in spiritual contemplation. One of the goals was to journal daily. Although it did not happen daily, when inspired, I seemed to write at length on what I was experiencing in my walks, or while kayaking, visiting with friends, watching the waves roll in, or being absorbed into the phenomenal sunsets across Lake Manitoba.

I read books, not for information, but to help me to experience God in new ways. One particular book, now at my bedside, is "Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations" by Richard Wagamese. I have not been one to listen to podcasts but I did find a few that I found particularly thought provoking.

One comes from a United Church in Calgary where two seminary friends host the discussion on a range of theological and social justice topics. The books and podcasts often inspired my choices of writing topics.

**Study** My primary aim was to read and to write. I created a working cover for my writing entitled, "My Little Book of Personal Theology: from the creator, through the Son, by the Spirit".

My reading included theological books such as "Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict", "The Ritual Animal: Imitation and Cohesion in the Evolution of Social Complexity", and "An Introduction to the Cognitive Science of Religion: Connecting Evolution, Brain, Cognition and Culture".

Also books on faith and spirituality such as "Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept".

I read more practical books such as: "What It Means to Be Protestant: The Case for an Always-Reforming Church" and "The Reason for Church: Why the Body of Christ Still Matters in an Age of Anxiety, Division, and Radical Individualism".

My writings took several forms including essays, reflections, and lectures. I explored a wide range of topics: theological, spiritual, and justice.

I wrote my thoughts on where the United Church was going, opportunities we might explore, while expressing optimism for our future.

In this 'little book of mine', the table of contents is long and may appear rambling. So, how did I decide what I was going to write about? While reading, listening, walking, or paddling, something would inspire me to explore varying topics.

I often began writing before I really knew myself how I felt about something. It was a way for me to dive deeper into my beliefs and theologies and come out understanding myself better.

In case anyone was wondering, the intent was not to have a book to publish. This was for my own way of growing and recharging through reflection, revitalization, and recreation.

It seemed like I was gone for too long, and at the same time, the months flew by. As much as I appreciate the time with my family, time that is invaluable, I was also anxious to get back home to all of you.

I adore this faith family in ways words cannot express. Thank you all for your love and support while Cheryl and I were away.

I returned refreshed and ready for all the adventures in living out the Gospel with this wonderful faith family! May it be so!



# OVU Steps Up During Woods Ban

by Helen Seymour

Extreme dry weather all summer led to the closure of all wooded areas early in August, including the areas surrounding trails where the unhoused make their 'home'. By mid-August, Centre 130 was ramping up to work with Open Arms to make Orchard Valley a temporary shelter for those displaced by the Woods Ban. It took the good will of our congregation to modify how committees met and staff worked, to make the project possible. While Open Arms staff carried the heavy load of registering guests, maintaining staffing and settling the guests into our space, Centre 130 volunteers welcomed guests to their temporary home, designed supper menus, made grocery lists and supplied volunteers to prepare evening meals. It was a heartwarming experience like no other. Our guests respected the

efforts made by the church to provide shelter for them by keeping the floors cleaned and expressing appreciation regularly for meals and kindnesses shown. On the final evening, guests were treated to a send forth chicken dinner with all the trimmings, learned Johnnie Appleseed blessing and were

gifted a Prayer Shawl of their choosing. A huge THANK YOU to all Orchard Valley United congregants for making Outreach a priority.

*At the height of the ban, there were so many people that beds had to be set up in the flex space.*



*Before they left, our guests were presented with a prayer shawl.*

*Cots for men were set up in the Sunday School room and for women in the nursery.*

*Sylvia Jacquard, Helen Seymour and Brenda Croszman prepared a chicken dinner with all the trimmings for our guests for their final dinner.*



# Work Underway in our Wooded Area

by Joy Waterbury

"There's a church in the valley in the wildwood. No lovelier spot in the dale. No place is so dear to my childhood. As the little brown church in the vale"

Orchard Valley United Church reminds me of this song from my teen years singing with the Youth Choir at St. Paul and St. Stephen United Church's evening services.

We have reconstructed our OVUC building and parking lot as an inviting, welcoming and comforting home for all to enter.

As one project has led into another, Norma Mailman {chair of the Building Committee} asked for volunteers to clean up the woods by our newly paved parking lot.

This spark, offered Larry Honey an opportunity to do what he loves. He gardened the bushes and trees creating a view of Orchard Valley from Cornwallis Avenue. It also offered a walking trail through the woods and

a spacing area between the trees so that they were not competing of sun and nourishment. Thanks to Wayne MacDonald, Chris Seymour, Annette Wray and Bill Morrow for their work on this project. This working group seemed to enjoy moderate physical activity without the use of power tools.

For those who love hugging trees and sitting quietly on rocks, there is solace with nature and our creator in this treed area. Larry often told me that he could be working in the woods and people would drive in and enter the church without even noticing that he was there. This is understandable as people are leaving one activity and entering another thinking of their next goal.

Entering the wooded area brings a pause as we walk on the nurturing earth area and breath in natures beauty. When Judy and Harvey Gilmour sold their home and moved closer to family, they donated their stone bench to the forest to provide safe seating for wondering, praying and

contemplation. Nature's mystery holds comfort for many observing the cycles of life. There is now an opportunity to partner with Valley Hospice Foundation to place a Wind Phone next to the bench.

This can provide an accessible and private place, offering an opportunity for someone having difficulty grieving to express their feelings or to continue the life habit of talking to a loved one on the phone. OVUC Pastoral Care Committee is exploring what would be necessary to install a Wind Phone.

Larry has moved to the back yard of the church as he clears and opens this space for all sorts of possible creative ideas.

What would you like to see happen in this space?

Would you like to be part of a Planning Committee for the use of the grounds around OVUC?

Please contact Gary Dunfield, Annette Wray or Joy Waterbury if you are interested in exploring the possibilities for our land use.



*Judy and Harvey Gilmour sit on the stone bench from their garden which they donated to Orchard Valley before moving to Ottawa.*

*Larry Honey and Bill Morrow work clearing dead wood from the wooded area around the church.*

# “Laughing, Singing and Creating Together”

by Rev. Max Martin

Since September the Sunday School has done many crafts, shared the positives (apples) and negatives (onions) of our weeks almost every week. We have laughed and sang and created together, gotten to know one another and think about things like our hopes for the future, our fears, how we can learn from God and one another more through our words and actions, and so much more!

Our class seems to be consistently growing, but we are always looking for more friends to come and join us on Sunday mornings! Youth under the age of 13 are welcome as participants and those over the age of 13 are welcome as class helpers. Thank you to the volunteers and helpers for their dedication to the next (and current) generation of Orchard Valley.

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*In recognition of Rev. Don's return, and to welcome him back from his sabbatical, Maddie Leveille returns his Bible.*

*Gabe and Micah Bornemann-Davis present the new Rev. Max Martin with an Orchard Valley hat during his Covenanting service.*

Looking ahead, on Dec. 21st the Sunday school will share their performance of “Once Upon a Holy Night”, then we will take a week’s break before returning on Sunday, Jan. 4th, 2026! Keep your eyes turned toward the weekly announcements for more

information on upcoming events involving children and young people and make sure to fill out the survey for the Advent family movie night if you haven’t already. If anyone has any questions, don’t hesitate to reach out via email to mmartin@o

rchardvalleyunited.ca or maxisam minister@gmail.com. From my family to yours, I wish you all the best this Advent season and hope your New Year is filled with warmth from the love of family, friends, and the love of Christ.





*Micah Bornemann-Davis (at lectern) and Perry Warmington share the Scripture readings during the Easter Sunday service.*

*Max Martin (not yet ordained) meets the children during his first Sunday at Orchard Valley.*



*Rev. Max's trunk is filled with treats in preparation for Orchard Valley's participation in the Trunk or Treat at the Kentville Resource Centre. Rev. Max also attended the Trunk or Treat in New Minas. The congregation supported both events by donating Halloween candy.*

*During the woods ban when we hosted some of the local homeless people, our nursery was used as a sleeping area and part of Rev. Max's office became the temporary nursery. Heather Hennigar watches her granddaughter Robin Hennigar play on a sunny Sunday.*

# Merry Christmas

Color those Christmas cookies with a splash of festive flair!

