

A LEAP OF FAITH...



Are you a CEO? No, not the corporate type of CEO who makes way too much money. There are also CEOs of a different kind: folks who come to church for Christmas and Easter Only.

If you're a CEO, you're not alone. Churches tend to be full for Christmas and Easter, but as soon as those special days are behind us, those same churches are empty again. You may not know this, but these days churches are a lot emptier than they used to be only 15 or 20 years ago. Critically empty...

No one is to blame for this. Society is just not the same anymore as it was 15 or 20 years ago, it has changed tremendously. So if anyone is to blame for it, it may be the churches themselves who haven't changed with the times. And now they're feeling the pinch of dwindling attendance, contributions and energy levels. Yet at the same time, there is a growing demand for outreach and support from those churches. Times are very tough, which means more people are in desperate need of food, shelter, clothing, counselling, and so on. But who knows how long the churches can provide all that?

That's why the 10 Thunder Bay United Churches have come together in a daring new initiative called a "Leap Of Faith". To pool resources, to draw on each other's strengths and to support each other in the change that needs to happen.

Change is hard. Change is uncertain and challenging. But change is also growth, exciting and full of hope and opportunities. We believe in a God of change and growth, of hope and opportunities – even when it's scary and doubtful. *Especially* when it's scary and doubtful. It's called faith. Faith in god's promises to this world. Faith as part of everyday life, not just for Christmas and Easter. Stay tuned for some surprising results...!

CHRISTMAS CHEER

Cryptic Christmas Card

A man sent his friend a cryptic Christmas card. It said: Merry A B C D E F G H I J K M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z. The recipient puzzled over it for weeks, finally gave up and wrote asking for an explanation. In July he received the explanation on a postcard: "No L."

Thinking Ahead

The nativity play was going as planned and Joseph and Mary were going from house to house, knocking on the doors and asking if there was any room for them. As they continued to get "no room" answers a little voice called from the back "YOU SHOULD HAVE BOOKED!", bringing down the house.

Miscommunication

As a little girl climbed onto Santa's lap, Santa asked the usual, "And what would you like for Christmas?" The child stared at him open mouthed and horrified for a moment, then gasped: "You mean you didn't get my E-mail?!"

The Real Santa?

The local newscaster was with the crowd of parade watchers, welcoming Santa as he arrived in town, and in a live interview asked a bouncy 4 yr old girl if she had talked with this Santa yet to give him her Christmas list. "No" she replied decidedly. "Are you going to talk with Santa?" the newscaster asked. "NO" once again was the most definite answer which was not the reaction that he was expecting at all. "But why?" he curiously asked the little one. "Because the real Santa is at the Mall."

Going the Wrong Way

While a man had gone out driving to do some Christmas shopping, his wife had been watching TV when she heard the announcer say, "be very careful driving on the 401 today, there is a motorist driving the wrong way"! When his wife got hold of him on the cell phone to warn him, his reply was: "You tell me, there's *hundreds* of them here!!".

KAKABEKA CENTRAL UNITED CHURCH



104 CLERGUE ST, KAKABEKA FALLS, ON

NEWSLETTER 3 - WINTER 2011

WWW.KAKABEKAUNITEDCHURCH.ORG

SO WHAT'S THIS CENTRAL UNITED CHURCH ALL ABOUT?

"Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by word and deed, through providing regular inclusive worship services, a nurturing environment, and meaningful outreach to our neighbours in the community of Kakabeka Falls and surrounding area."

That's our "Mission statement". It states in a few brief lines what we're all about. Except... it doesn't *really* say what we're all about, does it? Sure, it states our viewpoint, but does it tell about the wonderful people that make up this warm-hearted congregation? Does it mention the joy, laughter and tears we share? The fund-raising events for different outreach organizations in our community? Does it mention the spiritual journey we're on, the detours and shortcuts we experience? Well, not really...

Therefore this newsletter. To inform and to invite. Inviting you to read a bit more about this little country church in Kakabeka Falls with its big, warm heart. Also check our website and blog for the most up-to-date information. Happy reading!

DECK THE HALLS...

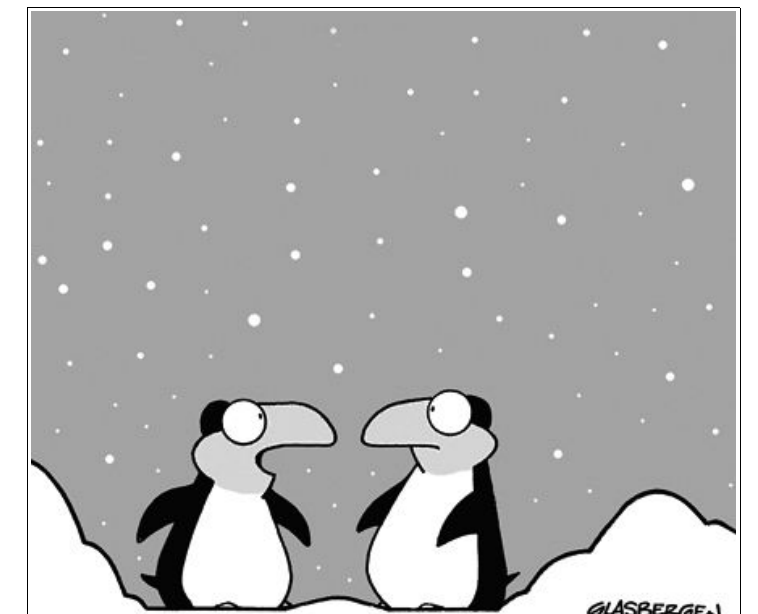
We're entering the time of Advent, the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas. It's a time of preparation for the celebration of the Christ's birth. The Advent period makes all Christians acutely aware again of God's promise to us, and how it got fulfilled with Jesus' birth.

It all comes together at Christmas, a day full of light and hope in a time of year that's marked by darkness. Darkness, when the days are at their shortest and the nights at their longest, but also darkness in a world

that seems to be steadily moving away from "peace on Earth". Crime, lay-offs, economic hardship, wars, environmental degradation... sometimes it seems there's only bad news on TV and in the papers. Maybe we look so much forward to Christmas because that's when the Gospel, the *Good News* started. Christmas celebrates hope in a world full of despair, it's good news when there's so much bad news. It's our light in the darkness.

Please join us for this coming Advent season and celebrate Christ's birth with us this December 24.

Flip to p. 3 for further details on the upcoming Advent and Christmas services.



"Faith means believing in things you've never seen...like your feet!"

Home for Christmas

When I was a little kid growing up, there were two seasons that always seemed a little odd: summer and Christmas.

Summer was odd because no matter how much I tried to cram into every moment of every day, it always ended too soon for me to accomplish all the great projects I set out to do before school started again.

And Christmas was odd because no matter how much I tried to cram into every moment of every day, it always took *forever* for Christmas to arrive! Nothing I did could bring that magical moment into my life any faster. Those last few weeks before Christmas were a strange mix of expectation and frustration rolled into one. Sounds familiar?

As a child, I didn't really understand what Advent was all about. My thoughts around Christmas were totally consumed by sparkling decorations, magical music and songs, the aromas of wonderful home-cooking – and fantasizing about gifts.

But I am no longer a seven-year old trying to lift the tape from the corner of my beautifully wrapped gifts. I now have been grasped by the reality of God's love in Christ to such an extent that God's gift of Jesus really *is* the "reason for the season".

As we grow up, Christmas takes on another significance. Sure, we still look forward to those familiar songs and decorations, not to mention the gifts, but we realize it's not about just that. It's about much more, about something much bigger. And if it's about something much bigger, we feel we have to include as many as we can to share it with. So now Christmas spills over from just our own families to include the company God's human family. And for us at Kakabeka Central United that means the family of this congregation.

Over the month of December, we will have many opportunities to share the joy that is God's love with one another. Nothing will help us come closer together, share more deeply and walk more closely with one another and God than seizing these

precious moments to *be* together.

That's how we can think of Advent: as a personal invitation by the God of Christmas to come home for Christmas.

Come home to God's accepting love, home to God's warm embrace, home to God's family here at Kakabeka Central United or any other church in your neighbourhood.

May the love of our eternal God encircle your heart and home this season and always!

Hubert Den Draak



SUNDAY SERVICES FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Kakabeka Central United Church is a warm, welcoming community of faith to everyone – and we mean *everyone*: baptized and not baptized, young and old, progressive and conservative, skinny and not so skinny, educated and not so educated, farmers and city folk, hockey fans and cribbage players. We don't look at what may set us apart but what brings us together instead: God's unconditional love.

Please join us for one (or more) of our upcoming services for this season of Advent and Christmas. All Sunday services start at **10:00 am**. Feel free to stay for coffee, some great home baking and warm fellowship. We'll do the dishes!

November 27 (First of Advent). Guest worship leader: Ray Dunn.

December 4 (Second of Advent). "Blue Sunday Service" with open Communion.

Christmas is not always a time for joy for everyone. Many experience loneliness and loss (of loved ones, of jobs, of health), and find it difficult to deal with that pain when they are expected to be cheerful. This Sunday offers the opportunity to acknowledge these feelings and name them to the God who is with us in times of hardship and loss.

Dec. 11 (Third of Advent): White Gift Sunday. If you can, please bring a clothing item gift (preferably long underwear, both for ladies and men) for those who cannot afford it.

December 18 (Fourth of Advent): join us to enjoy the Special Music of the Season!

Saturday December 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 7:00 pm. Guest soloist: William Parker from Toronto accompanied by guest Pianist: Evgueni Tchougounov.

December 25: no service.

Jan. 1st, 2012: New Year Service with open Communion.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

Need to get hold of us with a question? A request for pastoral care? Got something to send us? Just want to find out where we are?

Our mailing address is:

**104 Clergue St,
Kakabeka Falls, On.
P0T 1W0
P.O. Box 192**

Or pick up the phone and call the church at
(807) 768-0777 (Nancy)

On the world wide web? Shoot us an e-mail at
KakabekaUnitedChurch@tbaytel.net

Want to check us out online? Surf to our website
www.KakabekaUnitedChurch.org

And for the latest goings-on, read our blog "Footsteps" at
www.ByTheFalls.blogspot.com



Have a

MERRY and BLESSED CHRISTMAS!