

WHAT'S UP...IN THE CWM

Christmas in Review

January 2015

CHRISTMAS IN REVIEW

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Did you know?

- Camping and Retreat dates can be found in the Weekly Wire.
- You can sign up for the Weekly Wire through our website.
- You don't have to have a home congregation to send a submission for our newsletters.
- We LOVE to receive your photos and emails!

STEVE THOMPSON

CANADA WEST MISSION PRESIDENT

Christmas 2014 in Review

Christmas has come and gone for another year. As I write this in mid-January, in some ways it already seems like a distant memory.

In this special feature you are seeing photos of various congregational events around the Canada West Mission Centre that celebrated the season in many different ways. There are photos from worship services, children's programs, Christmas Eve services, and other events as well. The photos are fun to look at because they remind us of the good feelings that we had when we were experiencing them. And if we were not present, we can easily relate to the good experiences of those who we see in the photos and identify with the warmth of love and belonging that they convey.

Effectively, "remembering Christmas" happens on different levels. We remember what we did with our families and our friends. We remember the meals. We remember the gift-giving and the gift-receiving. We remember the special church services and events. And especially when we see pictures of Christmas Sunday or Christmas Eve church programs or services, we remember remembering the birth of Christ which all of these activities actually celebrate.

Such memories will lighten our hearts as we trudge through the still-dark days of January. But as the daylight hours grow longer, we can continue to recognize the light of Christ coming into the world that we celebrated a few short weeks ago. It is this light that regenerates us at the end of each year and gives us hope for the year ahead.

As we continue through the New Year, my prayer is that we may remember the warmth and love of Christmas and draw strength from the promise of new life represented by the birth of the Christ-child. We already know how that life went – the growth of Jesus and his earthly ministry of love. May we strive to seek out Christ's mission for our own lives, seek to live it out to the best of our abilities, and then celebrate the blessings of this year again next Christmas.

--Steve Thompson
Canada West Mission Centre President and Financial Officer



WINNIPEG

First we were blessed by having Brenda Senga and Hazel Cornish from Saskatoon bring ministry and teach us songs from the new Hymnal in November. Their dedication and service is most appreciated. We had a special Candlelight service for Christmas which drew praises from those who attended.

Stan Freer



VICTORIA

One of our regular activities over the Advent period is "Red Sack Sunday". Just prior to the start of the Christmas season, small red sacks are given out, and a day to return them is designated. The purpose of these sacks is to encourage us to count the blessings we have been given, and to provide support to a local charity by digging a little deeper and giving to an organization outside the church. Last year, through this program we raised \$567 dollars for a local group. The congregation has had a long standing affiliation with the Burnside Gorge Community Centre. This organization provides a number of programs and support services for individuals and families who live in the immediate area of the Victoria church. We were happy to once again provide them with support that will help them continue their fine work in our community.

About the middle of December we also held our annual Poinsettia service and gift exchange at the church.

For the poinsettia service, members of the congregation are encouraged to bring plants (you guessed it poinsettias), which decorate the sanctuary with vibrant colours of green red and white for Christmas. We bring the plants and dedicate them (either publicly or in silence) to the memory of a family member or friend. Many fond memories, and wonderful anecdotes are shared during this time, as some share stories of what those individuals meant for, or did for them. After this service, we did what we in the Community of Christ do so well, we shared in a wonderful pot-luck lunch (with delightful Christmas decorations (courtesy of Sally and family)).

After the meal and clean-up, we got to the seriously fun business of the gift exchange. Photo bottom right hand page. This is always lots of fun as people employ all sorts strategies in an attempt to end up with the package they hope to take home.

John Canty



On Dec 14 we had our annual Poinsettias, Pot Luck Lunch and Gift Exchange Experience. We had worship, fellowship, food and fun. We even had a program where the 12 Days of Christmas song was sung by all, and 12 lucky people got to act out parts of the song. Lots of silly good times and laughs were had. It is a joint effort by everyone to share, care and carry out the activities of the day, but a special thanks goes to Jodi, Jason, Tyler and Brandon LeBanc for decorating the dining hall and serving the food. Thanks as well to the kitchen clean up crew lead by Joe Boulay and Carl Bolger, and to Joe again for being our faithful camera man. It take a team to complete most activities and we have great team members.

Sally Glasier



VANCOUVER

In Vancouver, we always kick off the Christmas season with our 'Women's Christmas Breakfast'. All women are invited from near and far, members, relatives and friends.





For the past several years we've presented the Surrey Women's Centre with over seventy five Christmas gift bags for the women they support. These women arrive at the centre often with nothing but the clothes on their backs in an effort to escape abusive relationships. For some women, this is the only Christmas present they will receive.

Pictured left Cheryl Melder from the Surrey Women's Centre with Leah Christensen.



This year's Women's Christmas Breakfast team included Sara Peters, Sky Lee and Debra Donohue pictured right. The men generously are voluntold to prepare our wonderful breakfast (no they volunteer!). This year Robert Peters led a crew of David Donohue, Vic Suddaby, Bill Thederahn, Brian Gibson, Benjamin Christensen and Nathan Christensen in the kitchen.



Kat Goheen sang 'O Holy Night' for us, with Leah Christensen on piano.

VANCOUVER

Our Advent plays took on a different look in 2014. Our first advent play took place on a space station in the year 2065 with a group of wise *people*. They discover the planets and stars aligning in an unusual way and decide to beam down to earth.

Our second Advent play was set in 2014. We were a volunteer clean up crew from the Community of Christ picking up garbage at the beach after a fireworks show. The crew realizes they've been cleaning up without their lighting equipment, and discovers the night sky has been lit by a very bright star.

Photo below.



Week three was set in 1870. A covered wagon is travelling to Bethelton with a young pregnant woman named Mary Ellen and her husband Joe. Disaster almost sets in when a stampede of cattle disables their wagon. Fortunately, two young cowboys come to the aid of the group.

Week four was set in the actual time of the birth of Christ and we were very happy to welcome a few guest actors from Washington State.

Christmas in Vancouver wouldn't be Christmas without two of our favorite soloists, Helene McDonald and Kat Goheen. I can still feel the goose bumps on my arm.



PRINCE ALBERT

Our congregation celebrated Christmas in several ways. Each Sunday of Advent we featured either Hope, Love, Peace or Joy. We were to practice that feature daily until the next Sunday. It was interesting to see how each person viewed the theme.



Katie Gallagher, quilt designer

We purchased 100 pairs of socks and filled them with a face cloth, a comb toothbrush and toothpaste, package of Kleenex, small toiletry and chocolates. We did this after church. Several adults and three youth completed this fun task in short order. These filled socks were taken to the homeless shelter to be given to the clients over our very cold Christmas season.

We helped wrap Christmas gifts for the workers / clients of our Kinsmen community workshop. It is always rewarding to do this as too many of them never receive Christmas gifts otherwise.

Church members spent Christmas with their families. We decided that we also needed a "church family" dinner. We all took potluck items to the home of Ina Buck to help her celebrate the end of her chemo treatments and to celebrate the blessing of Christmas. It was a delicious turkey and ham meal with all the trimmings. Fun, fellowship, love and caring were shared by all.



**Christmas celebration at
Ina Buck's home.**

**Left to Right
Corrine Gallagher,
Norman Potter, Ina Buck,
Allan and Lois Simpson,
Linda Klughart and Maria
Bird.**



Christmas supper

**Left to Right
Marlene, Lucas
and Danielle
Mitchell, Corrine
Gallagher**

**This is a picture of the presents we helped wrap
for the clients / participants of our Kinsmen
workshop.**



REGINA

In Regina, the Christmas season always starts with decorating the church. And I mean the **WHOLE** church! Foyer, sanctuary, study, hall, kitchen and even the bathrooms! Sometimes we even decorate ourselves.



This year our Sunday openings were full of music and J-O-Y.

JOY





And our Advent services had lots of Christmas Carols, Angels, Nativity Scenes, Trees and Gifts. The themes of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace were exactly what we needed to hear and we enjoyed the focus moments provided by the actors each Sunday.



REGINA

On December 14th, we had our annual Christmas Lunch and a visit from Santa's Elf who brought treat bags for the kids (and the bigger kids!)



Every year we collect money to help someone or some group in our area that needs a little help and this year we donated money to our local Food Bank, Street Culture Kids and helped a family in our area.

We also had time to have a movie night, watching "A Christmas Story" and a few of us dressed up for the occasion. (We'll let you decide who is wearing the costumes!)



In short, we sang, prayed, laughed, ate, got together and immersed ourselves in the story of Jesus' birth once again. It was a wonderful holiday season and we are looking forward to a great 2015 as a congregation!

RIBSTONE

Eighty-four people attended our Christmas Eve service. This year's theme was "Christmas in the Country" and the community and congregation were encouraged to dress in western wear for the Vesper service.



During one of the Advent Worship services, the Ribstone congregation was blessed with a duet by Betty Sherry (Ribstone) and Joan Brown (from BC), accompanied by Isabelle Cornfield on piano.

The tradition at the December E.S.T. (Eager Saints Troop) meeting is for the children in the group to act out the Christmas story in costume and to eat birthday cake for Jesus. This December the kids also had a fun gift exchange and made a nativity Christmas tree ornament to take home with them. They also received wonderful gifts from the church and three children went home with the December door prizes (a tree ornament with a Christmas tree and a lion and lamb on it). Shown in the photo are some of the white gifts under the Christmas tree, which are taken to a local radio station which joins forces with the Salvation Army to distribute the gifts to children in need.



For two weeks each year near the Christmas season the Ribstone congregation donates gloves, mittens, scarves and toques. These are taken to a local radio station which joins forces with the Salvation Army to distribute the winter wear items to children in need.



RIBSTONE

Each year near Christmas, the children of the Ribstone Sunday School, put on a concert, organized by their teachers. This year, though some children were gone due to illness or other commitments, the concert was attended well by not only the Sunday School children, but also their families and friends. 105 attended church on the concert Sunday.



The T'n'T (Tweens and Teens) class, under the direction of their teacher, Leila Goheen, put on a live play involving actors and puppets called "Of Pigs and Paintings."



The Elementary class, under the direction of their teacher, Kathy Watson, with assistance from Tara Schaffer, performed a play about the birth of Jesus, culminating in the acting out of the nativity story.

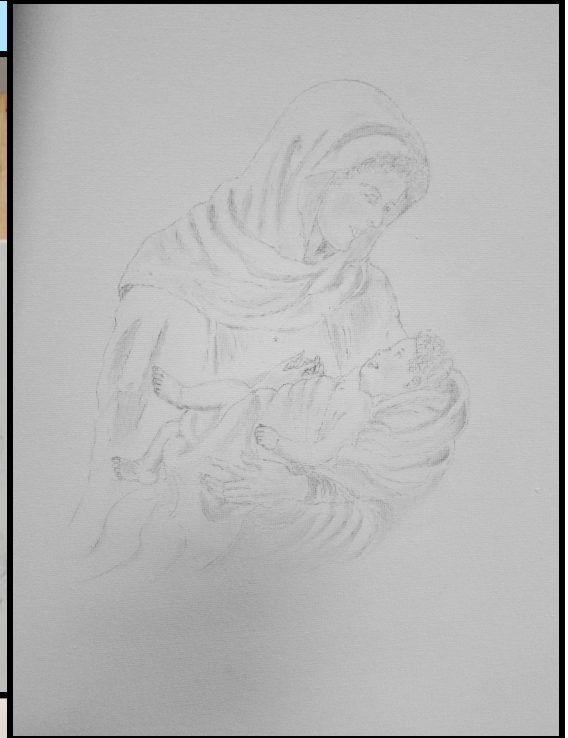


Under the direction of their Sunday School teacher, Karen Ell, the preschool class performed two recitations about the Christmas story.



RIBSTONE

During one of the services prior to Christmas, Anita Bates made a drawing of Baby Jesus and Mary while Isabelle Cornfield played the piano. The congregation in attendance was amazed by the details Anita included in her artwork.



These photos are some of the over 50 shoppers (0-12 years of age) finding treasures for their parents, siblings and grandparents for Christmas. Seen in one of the photos are some of the wrappers who busily get the purchased items ready for the children to take home with them. This year, the net profits from the sale were donated to the Chauvin Scouts group.



Our December J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) for the preschool children of the Ribstone congregation and surrounding communities was focused on the birthday of the King.

SASKATOON

Christmas potluck on December 21st. Samuel Middleton (photo to the right) was blessed during the worship service.





SASKATOON



Hope





Love



EDMONTON



The Edmonton congregation marked Christmas on both Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve. On Christmas Sunday Mike Bock made a presentation to the children based on the question, "What does God want for Christmas?"

After discussing the big gift-wrapped box for a couple of minutes it was opened and the answer was evident in the big mirror inside: God wants YOU for Christmas!





Then on Christmas Eve we celebrated with a series of readings, the singing of Christmas songs and hymns, and the lighting of the Christ candle after all the candles of Advent.

Peace



Thank you to all the congregations who sent photos and stories of your Christmas events. It is a great pleasure for all of us to see your smiling faces so joyful at Christmastime.

Our next 'What's Up...In the CWM' newsletter will come out in May. I encourage you to start thinking now about what your congregation might be doing in the next few months that you'd like to share in that publication. You may want to assign one or two people to keep photos and notes about your events.

We welcome anyone in the Canada West Mission to submit their stories, photos, poems, and articles to debra@communityofchrist.ca



Community of Christ

We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.