

# Christmas 2023



*Merry Christmas!*

Through this month of December, I hope that each of us will be doing more than simply preparing for Christmas. By that, I mean, that we do more than simply decorate our homes, shop for our loved ones, stock up on our baking and cooking ingredients, and making it to all of the special events and gatherings. I hope and pray that each of us will prepare room in our lives for Jesus. We have seen him at work in many ways throughout the year, and he continues to want to work in our hearts and lives.



Within four months earlier this year, we had people from India, Nigeria, Ghana, and Columbia, among others start attending worship. In September, we hired Kwaku Asumadu as our Youth Pastor and launched the Alpha Course. In October, we focused on “The End of Atheism” sermon series. In November, we held our Remembrance Sunday worship service, Pastor David Osiri preached here for the first time, and most recently, 17 new members officially joined the family!

The Lord is at work – do more this month, draw closer to the One whose birth we celebrate!

Merry Christmas in our Lord,

*Pastor Greg*

*<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. – Luke 2*

Just imagine those shepherds working through the night. Their jobs offered no protection from the weather, the harsh terrain, or attacks by predators, both animal and human. In the midst of this, angels appeared to tell them not to fear because Jesus had been born. What an incredible event. Soon the shepherds were praising and glorifying God.



Here we are in 2023. The news is filled with frequent natural disasters, the danger of climate change and the ongoing horrors of war. There are lots of reasons to be fearful. This Christmas, let us return to that Christmas Eve and hear the angel’s joyful proclamation to stop the fear because Jesus is in the world and now in our hearts. The importance of the angel’s message has not diminished over the centuries. We need to hear this wonderful assurance once again as we celebrate this Christmas.

May you be truly blessed this Christmas,

*Ric Graham*



## Church Family News

### **BIRTHDAYS (90+)**

*Dorothy Smith*, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 97 years young  
*Richard Skidmore*, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 91 years young  
*Glenn McCann*, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 91 years young  
*Elaine Campbell*, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 91 years young  
*Marion Howlett*, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 93 years young  
*Marjorie Moores*, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 96 years young  
*Lee Lindsay*, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 94 years young  
*Dorothy Wright*, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 99 years young  
*Lorene Mills*, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 100 years young  
*Marcelle Thorp*, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 98 years young  
*Ken Mahood*, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 93 years young  
*Mary Loree*, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 93 years young

### **DEATHS**

*Henry Hendriks*, November 1<sup>st</sup>

### **ANNIVERSARIES (50+)**

*Dieter & Margot Franke*, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 58 years  
*Terry & Nancy Lane*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 57 years  
*Jack & Carolyn Scott*, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 59 years  
*John & Margie Ferguson*, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 56 years

### **NEW MEMBERS**



**Front Row:** Jeff & Michelle Morant, David Osiri, Roger & Diane Pope, Diana Cardenas (and Dante), Don Sinclair, Diego Tautiva, Betty Van Rys.

**Back Row:** Edith Beaudette, Jack & Steve Christiaans, Alarmathi Sankaran & Tanej K.V., Betty McWilliams-Fillier, Manu George & Moncy Manu.

## LIFE ON THE FRONTLINE

### **“Life on the Frontline”**

For the first 6 weeks of 2024, our entire church family will engage in this series focusing on how we live out our Christian faith and calling in our ordinary, day-to-day lives. Pastor Greg’s sermons will relate to the weekly small group videos and discussions. If you’re not already in a small group, let us know, as we’ll be starting some new small groups meeting specifically for this 6-week, church-wide series.





## HOW GOD HAS BEEN "WITH US" AT BYRON UNITED IN 2023

As we approach the end of 2023, we reflect on what has happened at Byron United in the past year. That is what the Leaders' Board did on Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. We met in person in the church for a full-day planning retreat. This was our first in-person retreat since 2019. We invited members of our three Church Growth Teams to join us. Our discussions focused on ways we **CONNECT, GROW** and **SERVE** ... **CONNECTING** with God and each other, **GROWING** spiritually in our faith, and **SERVING** people in our Church family and beyond. We looked at key successes in these areas this year, and then discussed how we can continue to grow in these three areas in 2024.

Our day was a joyful Spirit-filled experience. We praised the Lord in song, read Scripture passages that applied to each of these three areas, and thanked the Lord for His blessings over the past year. We prayerfully requested His continued guidance in 2024. We celebrated our successful experiences this year.... **CONNECTING** through inspiring Worship services, various Fellowship opportunities, and Community Connections reaching out to the Byron area. We listed the many opportunities for **GROWING** spiritually through Discipleship.... small groups for adults, growth in our Sunday school program and now Youth programs on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. We noted the increased number of people **SERVING** as volunteers within our Church, "Ministering" to our Church family, as well as those **SERVING** others in need through Mission Outreach and Byron Cares Food Bank. We also recognized the generosity of our Church family in your financial support throughout 2023. At the end of the day, we each stated what made us most **THANKFUL**, and what **EXCITED** us most.

I share this information as we enter the season of Advent... a time of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. It is a time of looking forward to celebrating God's amazing gift of His Son. Jesus came as **IMMANUEL ... "GOD WITH US"**. We sing hymns with these words at this time of year. But do we stop to reflect on what **"GOD WITH US"** means throughout the remaining eleven months of each year?

God has been **"WITH US"** in 2023, and earlier years because we are a Church that prays to Him for His guidance and direction. We held a **Week of Prayer and Waiting on the Lord** to ask Him how He desired to "grow His Church" during this past year. Through that Week of Prayer, we sensed a direction to establish three 'GROWTH TEAMS' which have met regularly to discuss how to GROW in three different areas. First, in increasing our numbers attending worship. Through their initiatives, we have many new families, representing a multitude of countries, now attending regularly. Second, how to personally grow spiritually. We have several small groups meeting weekly to grow in their faith journey. Alpha provided another opportunity for spiritual growth this year. Third, how to expand ways we voluntarily serve the Lord within and beyond our Church. We now will embark on a Church-wide Campaign, exploring how to share God's love in our everyday lives wherever we may be.

During Advent this year, may we reflect on the **Hope, Peace, Joy** and **Love** that Jesus came to bring to us. May we give thanks for the ways in which God has fulfilled many of our **Hopes** for 2023 and provided **Joy** for many people in our church family and beyond.

On behalf of the Leaders' Board of Byron United Church, I thank each of you for the **Love** you share with our Sisters and Brothers within our Church family, and also for what you do to share God's **Love** beyond our Church for those in need. May Christmas this year be a blessing to each of you, as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, and that He came to live WITH US.

**IMMANUEL - "GOD WITH US"** - at Christmas and throughout the year ahead.

**Christmas blessings to all!**

*Linda Peck, as Chair of the Leaders' Board of Byron United Church*



## OUTREACH TEAM

God is given the glory as we respond to the needs of others around the world with prayer and kind deeds. The Outreach Team is humbled by the generosity of our kind and loving congregation.



### Sock It to 'Em and Undie Sunday



Bins were full to overflowing with your donated socks and undies for the homeless in London, thanks to your generosity. Between Ark Aid, the Men's Mission and Byron Cares Food Bank, Ken and Diane Minshull distributed 62 pair of undies and 276 pairs of socks. Out of cash donations of \$505 they will purchase warm boots, hoodies, coats, hats and mitts. These will be distributed throughout the cold winter months.

### Samaritan's Purse – Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Campaign

Fifty-four thoughtfully filled shoe boxes were delivered to the depot here in London. The monetary donations, totaling \$946.50 will be forwarded directly to Samaritan's Purse to be used at their discretion.

### Southdale Chaplaincy – Christmas Angel Tree Campaign

Pastor Pam Cullen, the Executive Director of the Southdale Chaplaincy, advised that they will distribute gift bags to families this year as part of their Santa Claus parade. There will be appropriate family gifts in each bag, taking into consideration the ages of the children. Your participation continues to make Christmas a JOY for so many children and their families in the Southdale Chaplaincy, who might otherwise not receive a gift.



### Tom's Bike Ride

Our own Tom de Gryp, organist and choir director, rode 1,000 kilometers around Southwestern Ontario this summer and fall with the goal of raising \$1,000 toward the work of the Outreach ministry. We are SO grateful to Tom and congratulate him and all of you for helping him reach his goal.

### Sunday Samaritans

Ken and Diane Minshull regularly collect hats, mitts, boots, coats and other warm clothing from the **Ark Aid Blue Box** across from the office. Ark Aid, Indwell and Rotholme are recipients with some items also distributed to the Men's Mission. **Thank you Ken and Diane for the work you do!**

*The Outreach Team would like to thank our caring and supportive congregation.*

*Your faithful support is a blessing to so many less fortunate than us.*

*You brighten their days and give them the gift of JOY.*

*God bless you, everyone!*





At Christmas we celebrate our Lord and Saviour, a babe born in a humble manger. This babe, our Lord, has called us to serve and He has certainly provided us with that opportunity through the Byron Cares Food Bank.

As Christians we practice gratitude and this Christmas we are so very grateful for your generous support. Byron Cares Food Bank volumes have more than doubled over 2022; we served 149 clients in October 2023 versus 65 for the same period last year. With the 149 households served we supported almost 500 people in October and November is trending to be even busier. Your donations have blessed our clients: seniors, single parent homes, newcomers and Indigenous people. Your donations of funds and food and the efforts of our committed volunteers have truly fed the needy in our community. THANK YOU.

This is both a praise and a prayer opportunity – we praise the Lord for the awesome support from our Byron United Church family and our Byron partner churches. This year we have also been blessed with some very generous cash and food donations from the wider Byron community. We are grateful and see this as a wonderful way to minister together with and to our Byron neighbours. We ask for your continued support and for your prayers to allow us to sustain our services through this period of unprecedented growth. Sadly, business is booming at our Food Bank and food banks across Canada.

With your support we strive to bring the Light of Christ to our clients. Love came down to us at Christmas and our Christmas prayer for you is that our God of Hope will fill you with love, joy and peace. We represent these gifts by serving our London neighbours through the gift of food.

Dick & Marilyn Walker and Lorilee Down  
Byron Cares Food Bank Co-Ordinator's



### Church Office Hours

The church office  
will be **open:**

Wednesday, December 27<sup>th</sup>

Thursday, December 28<sup>th</sup>

Friday, December 29<sup>th</sup>

8:30 AM to 4:30 PM



# Join Us



## Celebrating Christmas

**10:00 AM** Sunday Worship  
Nursery, Sunday School & Youth

**Sunday, December 10 at 7:00 PM**  
Four-Choir Concert of Lessons & Carols



**Saturday, December 16 at 7:00 PM**  
Outdoor Carols & Hot Chocolate



**Sunday, December 17 at 7:00 PM**  
Hang a shard of broken glass on the tree  
in memory of a loved one



**Christmas Eve**  
**6 PM** for Children & Families  
**8 PM** Hymns & Candles



**10 AM Sunday Worship**

**519-471-1250**



**[www.ByronUnited.ca](http://www.ByronUnited.ca)**



**420 Boler Road at Byron Baseline**

**BYRON**  
UNITED  
**CHURCH**