



December 2024 - "The DW Digest" Newsletter

Celebrate a Better Christmas

I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord... "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind."

(Luke 2:10-11,14 EHV)

Do you feel at peace this Christmas season? With all the preparations that need to be done (like decorating, gift buying, cooking, and cleaning), it's hard to imagine how anyone can feel at peace. We all have earthly expectations regarding how Christmas should look and feel, and we get frustrated when they are unmet!

If Christmas is supposed to be a time of love, joy, and peace, why do we often feel so stressed about the holidays? The answer is simple: we let earthly worries rob us of the spiritual peace God offers us through the Christmas Gospel. Christmas is not about trees, decorations, parties, and lights. Christmas is about Christ! He is our everlasting hope, joy, and peace.

Jesus once spoke a parable about seed sown onto a thorny section of a field. As the seed sprouted and grew, the thorns began to choke it. Jesus said: *These are the ones who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things enter in and choke the word, so it becomes unfruitful.* (Mark 4:18-19 EHV)

Does that verse describe us during this busy season? Do our earthly expectations choke us from the true joy, peace, and hope God offers us through His Word?

Someone might object, claiming that Christmas gift-giving and decorating symbolize the gracious work Jesus has done for us and direct our attention to Him. If that is the case, keep doing what you are doing.

But be honest with yourself: when you fret about everything you need to do to prepare for Christmas, are your thoughts drawn to Jesus or away from Him? Are our preparations moving us to be like Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him teach? Or are they driving us to become like Martha, who inadvertently allowed the good things she wanted to do to honour Jesus prevent her from receiving the peace and joy He came to bring her? (cf. Luke 10:48-42)

Maybe it's time to take a break from all our busyness and prayerfully meditate on the Christmas Gospel summarized in the verses above. Ask the Holy Spirit to grant you understanding and peace as you listen to Him speak through His Word. Read the texts slowly, savouring each word by asking the Bible questions. For example, what is the good news? What kind of joy does it offer? What comfort do I receive from the fact that it's for everyone? Why do I need a Saviour? How is Jesus my Saviour? Why is he called Lord? What is the peace He offers?

As you prayerfully use the Bible to answer these questions, your worries and anxious thoughts will be replaced with Christ, and you will have peace. If you have any questions to which you can't find answers, feel free to contact me.

Let us celebrate a better Christmas this year, not by stressing about our expectations, but by slowing down to focus on the true meaning of the holidays by meditating on the Christmas Gospel. Only there will you find peace, rest, and joy for your soul. Why? Because it's only there that you find Jesus. Amen.

Voters' Meeting on Sunday, December 15th, 2024

Our next quarterly voter's meeting is scheduled for after next Sunday's worship/fellowship (at about noon). Physical attendance is highly encouraged. Please let me (pastor) know before the meeting if you need to attend via Google Meet so I can set it up.

Christmas Schedule at Divine Word

December 24th at 7 p.m. - Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service

December 25th at 11 a.m. – Christmas Day Worship

Sunday Bible Class

We are on chapter 15 of our study of the Gospel of John: a simple yet profound book of the Bible that is filled with wonderful encouragement and application as it focuses our attention on Jesus. I highly recommend you check out a class to grow in your knowledge, faith, and joy in Jesus.

Friday Fellowship Bible Class

Even though we are taking a break for December, we'd love for you to join us for supper and Bible Study at 6 p.m. on the second and fourth Fridays of the month starting in January. We are studying many profound things Jesus said during his ministry and exploring their meaning for us. For instance, have you ever wondered why he compared himself to the temple? Or what he meant when he said you can't sew new cloth on an old garment? Come and find out!

In-person Worship Attendance

September – An average of 38 for Sunday worship and 31 for communion,

October - An average of 44 for Sunday worship and 27 for communion

November – An average of 39 for Sunday worship and 30 for communion

Daily Prayers

I continue sending out daily devotions, links to other devotional sites (included in Monday's messages), Bible classes, Communion registration reminders, and announcements.

If you or someone you know is not receiving the daily prayers and would like them, please let me know their email address, and I will add them to our email list.

Note: Please let me know before unsubscribing if you do not wish to receive the Daily Prayer. The 'Unsubscribe' feature at the bottom of the daily email would remove your name from all congregational emails, including urgent ones.

Evangelism Notes

By: Jordan Alves

The Christmas parade and Open House this year was a great success! Thank you to all the volunteers who helped make the events possible. We had 40-50 visitors from the parade attend the open house, everyone enjoyed the snacks and caroling. Evangelism will next me in the new year to discuss plans for 2025.

Trustee Notes

By: Jeremy Doherty

- Numerous items on the 2025 project list can be found in the draft budget.
- Anticipated submission window for Federal grant applications is March 2025, will look to submit a request for monies for architect/engineering drawings to support the VTO work.
- Backflow valve inspection completed to maintain the City program, ongoing annual cost is now incorporated into the budget process. Due to the Canada Post strike there has been a delay in getting/paying the invoice and getting the report to submit to the City.

Youth Education Report

By: Paul Reepschlager

Sunday School attendance includes three-five individuals at several age levels. Thanks to the teachers for all their efforts.

Elders' Notes

By: Jeremy Doherty

- Letters of encouragement and concern have been finalized and will be used as a tool for reaching out to delinquent members.
- Lay led service on Dec 1 performed by Paul Reepschlager, thank you Paul.

Updates from the Board of Stewardship and Treasurer / Financial Secretary.

By: Jim Neubauer

I. E-Transfer Process

We will be continuing to use the e-transfer process in 2025. Those that have registered or have been using this process regularly will not be receiving envelopes for 2025. There is no work to do on your side.

Remember, you can contribute weekly or monthly or whatever is easiest for you. Please don't hesitate to email me: jim.neubauer@sympatico.ca or call 613-258-6367 if you have questions. The etransfer email is divinewordtransfer@gmail.com

II. Regular Offerings and Budgets

Regular Offerings: Please find below the financial summary as of December 1, 2024 of all regular offerings collected to date being applied toward our Current Church Operating budget requirement of \$134,630 for 2024 increased from \$131,250 for 2023.

As of Dec 1, 2024
Offerings Received – \$132,800
Offerings Budgeted - \$124,273

As of Sept 8, 2024
Offerings Received - \$96,849
Offerings Budget - \$93,205

As of June 2, 2024
Offerings Received - \$61,071
Offerings Budget - \$56,959*

As of March 10, 2024
Offerings Received - \$24,011
Operating Budget - \$25,890*

*- modified actual budget number from previous reports – due to formula error

After 48 weeks we are approximately \$8,500 ahead of the weekly budget projection. This number is slightly overstated since we normally receive all monthly donations during the first 2 weeks on any month and in addition there were a couple of one-time donations made that were higher than previous years. Regardless, this amount is approximately \$22,000 ahead of last years total of \$109,800. So Great job!!!

So overall, I am upgrading my previous A- rating to an A for the first 48 weeks of the year. Now, let's continue with this trend of cheerful giving for December and make this a blessed season.

I am also hopeful that with God's help we can continue this trend into 2025.

Investments:

Sunlife - Value \$315 K (YTD growth 11.56%) – Funds 100% available

Scotiabank - \$60 K – 1 year cashable GIC @3.25% - Funds 100% available

Scotiabank - \$55.3 K – 2 year GIC @ 3.85% (Funds available Nov 25, 2026)

Scotiabank - \$120 K – 15 month GIC @ 6.05% (Funds available Feb 24, 2025)

Very pleased with the Sunlife Investments in 2024, (5 year YoY return is 4.6%) With the drop in GIC rates we will continue to evaluate all options. The plan is to ensure that we maximize rates of return – while having sufficient money available for projects.

At this point in time, we have the Sunlife investment (over \$300 k) to use at any time as well as in excess of \$80,000 between the cashable GIC and our bank account. In addition, the plan will be to split the GIC maturing in Feb 2025 and have a portion of it (minimum \$25 K) available as a cashable GIC.

As another note, we are still trialling an online version of the existing donations software used for tracking members contributions. It provides us better flexibility in accessing the data and most importantly we will have removed any single points of failure with our data – either a person or computer. Still trialling but we plan on purchasing this annually in 2025.

Please continue to provide your offerings – whether in person or via e-transfers and let's try and finish ahead of budget. As always if you have questions – don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you

I want to thank all the volunteers quietly working in the background at church by doing things like helping with the social media, setting up the altar, watching over our finances and member offerings, keeping on top of administrative paperwork, teaching our children, providing dinners and snacks, making necessary facility repairs, maintaining the property in order, beautifying the sanctuary, helping me organize for services, giving fellow members an encouraging note or call, inviting people to worship, and upholding DW's ministry in prayer. Know that your work is not in vain. I thank God for all of you and all that you do.

Are You Struggling?

Are you or someone you know struggling spiritually? If so, do not hesitate to contact me (Pastor). *Our conversation will be kept confidential.*

Pastor Sullivan's Contact Information

Home address: 81 Upminster Way, Ottawa, ON, K2J5G2

Email: pastor@divinewordottawa.ca

Primary (Mobile) Phone Number: (613) 255-2317 **Home "Internet" Phone:** (512) 887-8982

Feel free to use my mobile phone number as the primary way of contacting me. If you see "Texas Caller" or a number with a "512" area code on your Caller ID, it is probably me calling from my home Internet number. Do not be afraid to answer the phone.

May the LORD continue to bless you.

In Christian love,

Pastor Michael Sullivan