



Grace United Church

310 – 12th Street, Hanover, Ontario. N4N 1V6

Rev. Micol Cottrell

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"A church with heart in the heart of the community."

Sometimes God meets us in unexpected moments and places. My second year in ministry I had carefully planned out the Christmas Eve service. I had paid particular attention to the hymns. They were going to be perfect, I thought. They were all well known favourites that fit the service just right. All was set, all was ready, and all was carefully planned. Then four days before the service I found out that our church's pianist had been put on bed rest due to a stomach bug. With no time to find someone else she had let us know about a very skilled music student of hers. My carefully chosen hymns were safe, I believed. Then reality came into play. There wasn't enough time for the student to learn all of the hymns. We would have to make do with what he knew. Silent Night was safe, and so was another hymn but that was it. We would have to make do with the Christmas music he knew. He could play Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, and We Wish You a Merry Christmas. It wasn't ideal, I thought, but we were very lucky that he could play for us.

On Christmas Eve we gathered together. We read and reflected on the Christmas stories, we lit candles, and we sang our unexpected songs. Thumpty Thump Thump was our Gloria, Rudolph was our Peace on the Earth, figgy pudding became our Go Tell it

on the Mountain. It didn't matter that none of this was what we had expected for Christmas Eve worship. It didn't matter that my carefully chosen hymns were gone. It was beautiful, holy, and worshipful. We experienced Christ's presence in that unexpected moment.

The sacred stories that surround Jesus' birth are stories of God showing up in unexpected ways. Mary and Joseph are daydreaming about their future and then there is a surprising pregnancy. Instead of a carefully organized birth plan there is an unanticipated trip and an unusual birthplace. Shepherds in the field encounter an astonishing angel chorus. Perhaps most unexpectedly of all God is revealed in a newborn baby.

This year I've decided that alongside all of my planning I'm going to make some space in my life for God to show up in unexpected ways and I invite you to join me in this. Because if Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman can be great Christmas Eve hymns, if a baby can reveal God's presence, then God must be at work in the unexpected moments and places of our lives. For unto us a child is born... now bring us some figgy pudding!

Merry Christmas,
Rev. Micol Cottrell



**ADVENT & CHRISTMAS
AT GRACE**

- December 8 Second Sunday of Advent
Communion
White Gift Sunday
- December 15 Third Sunday of Advent
Christmas Pageant
- December 22 Fourth Sunday of Advent
- December 24 Christmas Eve Service
7:30 pm
- December 25 Christmas Dinner
Doors open, 11:30 a.m.
Dinner served, 12 p.m.
- December 29 First Sunday of Christmas
- January 5 Epiphany Sunday

Please join us for the Christmas season and these very special services.

Don't be alone on Christmas Day...

Grace United Church
Come to a church with heart in the heart of the community

Free Christmas Dinner
with all the trimmings!

Christmas Day, December 25

Doors open at 11:30 am
Dinner served at 12:00 pm

All Welcome

Please let Faye know you are coming!
519-377-9774

IN MEMORIAM

- Doug Bentley
- Toosje 'Ton' Vos
- Brenda Vrba
- Marguerite Perkins
- Gary Kerr
- David Crysedale
- Ruby Corlett
- Ken Gaunt
- Monique Mawhinney
- Clair Rogers



Catalogues are now available at the back of the church. Searching for new and meaningful gifts? Give a gift with vision and help change the world. Turn gift-giving into an opportunity to do something extra for our United Church partners. With your gifts, we help create healthy places to live, promote justice, provide social services, and enliven worship.

**ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING**

SAVE THE DATE

February 23 following worship

Deadline for Annual Report reports is
December 31, 2019