# CONNEXIONS

Dec 2026 / Jan 2027


ST. ANDREW'S

GROWING. LIFE. TOGETHER. WITH GOD

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# Cradle of Love

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# *Message from Rev. Laurie*

**Corinthians 3:18**

**And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.**

Beloved Church,
I tend to notice the passing of time through children. When did she get so tall? He has a moustache now? My daughter becomes a mother, and I wonder where the years have gone! I remember holding her as a baby, like it was yesterday! The change in others faces, makes me wonder about the change in my own.

Then I look at the congregation and realize that the faces have changed. The "face" of St. Andrew's is being transformed, and we reflect the larger world - the diversity and beauty of all who walk the way of Jesus. In the last month we have had "first time" worshippers from Calgary, China, Punjab, Korea, Ghana, Nigeria and Sudan. We all come to worship God and praise the name of Jesus Christ.

We are revealing the glory of the Lord, even while being transformed.

**In this season as we lean into the good news of Jesus' birth, we remember the power of God working through a human child to reveal "God with us".**

Each year we remember the story of Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus and have new insight into our own lives. We remember how Jesus faced the cross and grave and trust that we are not alone in our fresh grief or silent suffering. We join the many witnesses who are being transformed through the risen Lord. Knowing that God is with us - Emmanuel- changes how we live.

**THIS baby transforms us**.

In this season of preparation, first I pray you might trust that God is with YOU - Emmanuel. Second, embrace that we mirror the love of Christ in our own humanity and are "God with us" to others. Some days might not feel like it! But the promise is that degree by degree, God is noticing a change in us too! Our inner glory is growing "from the Lord, who is the Spirit".

Be transformed this season, **children of God**, and know that the glory of the Lord shines around and through YOU.

Deep peace,

*Laurie*

Rev. Laurie McKay



# *Session Highlights*

- St. Andrew's Session participated in our annual retreat on November 6 & 7, 2026. Our retreat focused on "Walking the Way of Jesus." It was a meaningful opportunity to step away from regular Session business and spend time in fellowship, reflection, learning, creativity, and prayer. Together, we explored what it means to listen actively to God and one another, practice conversations about our faith, encourage and expand leadership, and care for our congregation and wider community. Our time concluded around the Communion table, reminding us that whatever comes next, we move forward together, grounded in Christ and attentive to God's leading.

- The annual Christmas Bazaar was a huge success again this year. The bazaar demonstrated a strong sense of community, with people taking the time to connect with and show kindness to one another. Thank you to everyone who made the bazaar a success!

- The nomination process for Elders has now concluded, and we are grateful to everyone who participated prayerfully in this important process. In the coming weeks, we will learn more about those who have been nominated and about the role and calling of an Elder. We encourage you to continue to hold the nominees, our Session, and our congregation in prayer as we discern God's call to leadership at St. Andrew's. Voting will take place on **November 29 and December 7**.

- Rev. Laurie will begin a four-week online Advent Study on the Book of Ruth on Wednesdays, starting November 25th for four weeks, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

- Surviving the Holidays will be held on the morning of December 5th. If you know of someone who has experienced the loss of a loved one, you are encouraged to speak with Judie Coleman or Alice Williams.

- There will be a nine-week Intercultural Ministry course happening in January for any congregations who would like to be more intentional around intercultural ministry. More details coming soon on this exciting initiative.

- Christmas Eve services will happen at 4:30 (Family Christmas Eve service and it will not be live streamed) and at 7:00 p.m. (this service will be live streamed). On December 25, 2026 there will be a YouTube service available for streaming at any time throughout the day.

- **Save the Date:** the Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for **March 14, 2027.**

**Submitted by Lorna Andronikou, Clerk of Session**





# Elder Profile: Deanne Barrett

I am very much a product of the love and care of St. Andrew's over the past 4 decades. I was baptised at St. Andrew's by Rev. Karl English when I was an infant, and my faith journey has been shaped by so many people who are still part of St. Andrew's faith family today. Debby Dorcas will tell you that as a child in her Sunday school class I was very shy, and I am forever grateful that St. Andrew's has always been a place where I felt brave enough to try public speaking. I remember Rev. English being so encouraging and providing gentle coaching when I would speak from the pulpit, and I do a lot of public speaking in my work to this day!

I have fond memories of singing with all the church school classes together in the lower hall once a month, and I remember at Christmas seeing the entire kitchen counter covered in pre-made graham cracker "gingerbread houses" that we decorated in Sunday school. When I was a teen there were so many kids in Sunday school that we had 2 classrooms in the lower hall made with room dividers for junior and senior high Sunday school. In senior high I remember my brother and Kristi Millar racing to see who could find the bible passages first. When I was in university studying to become a teacher, Rhonda Wishart encouraged me to get involved as a youth leader, and I spent many Friday nights playing floor hockey with the Coutts boys.

My husband Aaron and I were married here at St. Andrew's by Rev. Peter Coutts in 2009, and when Josh and Inara were little, Inge Murray encouraged me to teach Sunday School.

Some of my favourite childhood memories are coming together on Mother's Day to paint my grandma's fence; she had a big corner lot, and all of my aunts and uncles and cousins would get together to paint and then have a picnic in her big yard. With my kids, I love it when we rake the leaves together in the fall, or gather firewood where we're camping. I think that being an Elder is a lot like those activities; working together with a group of people toward a common goal and getting to know one another in the process. In church life, working as a group to understand how the Holy Spirit is moving in our community is really a wonderful experience, and I've enjoyed working alongside others on the Faith Formation team and the Rainbow team. As an Elder I focus on ministry that involves youth and their parents, and I have a special place in my heart for truth and reconciliation and creating safer spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ folks.

After church on Sundays, I like to go home, walk our dog, have a nap, and enjoy a glass of red wine with family dinner and board games.

Submitted by David Townsend






# *Thank You Artists!*

This past spring, the Rainbow Team put out the call for any artist in the St. Andrew's church family to submit an original piece of affirming Christian artwork to hang in the newly renovated Lower Fireside Room as another step in being public, intentional and explicit about affirming the identify of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and celebrating our diversity! We are so pleased that four St. Andrew's artists have so generously donated their artwork to share their love of God with the people who enter the new space. Pictured here is Ian Judd with his beautiful stained-glass inspired painting above the fireplace. Sheri Coutts next to her beautiful oak-framed painting entitled, "The light is always on". Inara Barrett alongside her two digital drawings featuring a variety of 2SLGBTQIA+ flags and the symbol of the cross and a dove. Inara and Deanne Barrett next to their colouring book inspired painting of Jesus and his flock of sheep.

We also want to acknowledge the team of painters and decorators who spent many hours painting the walls and doors of the Lower Fireside Room and selecting furnishings, which creates a fresh backdrop for the colourful and creative art. The room is now complete, and no more donations are needed. The refresh of the room was a 12-month project from the time the application for grant funding was written, to the finishing touches of bespoke artwork gracing the walls. Truly, this is another beautiful example of many people coming together to share their time, treasure and creative talent in order to serve the church and glorify God.

Submitted by Deanne Barrett





# Faith Formation Update




**Fall Family Fun Fest –** Our first ever Fall Family Fun Fest was held on Saturday, October 24, 2026. A spooktacular time was had by everyone in attendance with pumpkin carving, games, and ice cream sundaes. A huge thank you to Inge Murray for all her efforts in making the event a huge success. Special thanks goes out to all the helpers including Kaitlyn Werle, Ceanna Dhanpaul, Josh Barrett, Inara Barrett, Delisa Dhanpaul, Deanne Lomheim, Lorna Andronikou, and Craig Murray.
















**Young Adult Initiative –** A new ministry is being formed in response to support for young adults at St. Andrew's. The target audience is senior high school through to young adults. There have been two meetings to date: October 24, 2026 and November 19, 2026.

**Moms Walking with Jesus Art Nights** – Join Deanne Barrett in a simple guided art exploration of your walk with Jesus. We will paint, doodle, and drink tea. Please reach out to Deanne Barrett at: dlombeim@gmail.com if you are interested in joining. The event is happening on December 11, 2026 from 7:00-9:00 p.m.







**Intergenerational Musical** – If you like to sing, please consider joining us for our Intergenerational Musical this year. We will be participating in worship on Sunday morning, December 13th, and we welcome every age and stage!! No choir experience is necessary – just a love of music and having fun! Please add your name at the sign-up desk in the foyer. Practice tracks for the music, and sheets with words will be provided to everyone. Practice dates happen Thursday evenings, Friday evenings and the first part of church school on Sunday mornings. It is going to be SO much fun – we hope you can join us!! Reach out to Debby Dorcas if you are interested: ddorcas@standrewscalgary.ca

Submitted by: Lorna Andronikou, Inge Murray, Rhonda Wishart, Debby Dorcas, Deanne Barrett, Lauren & Matt Nolette

# *Gratitude and Generosity*

The Gratitude & Generosity Team (G & G) of Session wishes to draw your attention to a relatively new information card that can be found in front of you in your pew on Sunday mornings.

Did you know that it is very easy to make a donation from the comfort of your pew even if you do not have a cheque book or cash with you? All you need is your cell phone and your credit card. Used along with the QR code found on the front of the pew card, your donation can be made in minutes. Whether it is your regular Sunday offering (select General Fund) or your response to a special appeal, the QR code will take you immediately to the donations page on our St. Andrew's website. Our safe and secure giving platform is managed by Tithe.ly. And for those who may wish to give online, Tithe.ly now offers you a recurring giving option on a weekly or monthly basis.

For some people, using cash and/or cheques has almost become an obsolete form of giving. We know many people do not carry much cash with them today, instead using their credit card for financial transactions. If you are one of those people, we encourage you to use your credit card along with the readily available QR code for your donations and offerings to St. Andrew's.




**2 Corinthians 9:7 —** ***Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

**Submitted by Cathy Millar**

# SHEILA KIRKLAND: A JOURNEY OF SERVICE, MUSIC AND DEEP CHRISTIAN FAITH

***Submitted by David Townsend***



**It was a pleasure and a privilege to recently spend some time with Sheila and her children, Ian and Sheila, in her lovely Oakridge home. Hearing her fascinating and inspiring story deepened my respect and admiration for this remarkable lady.**

**Sheila grew up in Biggar, Saskatchewan. Her mother recognized her musical talent at an early age and encouraged music lessons from a highly respected local music teacher. Sheila's father worked for the railway.**

**The ministry in Biggar was part of a dual charge with the minister also looking after a congregation in nearby Wilkie. Robert Kirkland and his mother were members of the Wilkie congregation and at that time were living in Montreal, as Robert was working on his PhD at McGill. When the minister learned that Sheila was also heading to McGill, he asked Robert and his mother to welcome her. Mrs. Kirkland invited Sheila for dinner and that is how she met her future husband. They were married in 1951.**

**Sheila had already graduated with a BA in music from the University of Saskatchewan before she received a scholarship to McGill to further her music in education studies. She earned her Licentiate (a performance degree) while at McGill.**

**Robert (Bob) Kirkland, whom Sheila affectionately calls "Kirk," was a mining geologist. They lived in Montreal before moving to Schefferville, Quebec, near rich iron ore deposits and less than two kilometres from the Labrador border. They then moved to Sept-Îles, Quebec, where a port had been built to ship the ore.**

**However, this was the time of the FLQ crisis in Quebec, and it was decided to move the family to Toronto. They remained there for twelve years before Robert was transferred to Saskatoon. Their grown children remained in Ontario but Sheila followed him to Saskatchewan in 1980 and then to Calgary in 1982.**



**They soon found a church home at St. Andrew's, where Karl English was minister. Sheila sang as a choir soloist and led the Chancel Singers at the weekly early service for 18 years. Robert became an elder and enjoyed serving coffee at after church gatherings. Sheila also directed several Christmas pageants at St. Andrew's, involving as many as eighty participants in various roles. She is delighted to have passed her reins over to Debby Dorcas and is grateful for the care and skill Debby now brings to directing music for the youth.**



Unfortunately, Robert Kirkland passed away suddenly in 1986. Sheila remembers the kindness of many St. Andrew's members during these challenging times. Bob and Sheena Barclay and Norm Haines were very caring and helpful. Harry Eisenhauer helped her to arrange her finances while his wife Ruth provided support. Sheila describes St. Andrew's members as "generous solid Christians."

Serving as an elder at St. Andrew's for thirty-five years, Sheila was also active in the national church. She played a significant role in the Presbyterian Church's centenary in 1975 by organizing a banner competition. Sewn by hand and machine, hundreds of banners were received. When the competition was over, Sheila took 125 banners and established five touring exhibits that crisscrossed the entire country. This introduced the banners to the general public and is the reason why they can be found in most churches, no matter their denomination.

Sheila also has wonderful memories about John Bell's faith through music program at St. Andrew's. Bell was a Scottish composer and hymn writer, and Sheila helped to organize his visit. The program was an immense success: the church was full, and everyone, be they from St. Andrew's or greater Calgary, participated.

Her distinguished musical career spans seventy years of choir directing, including thirty-five years leading the well-known women's choir, "The Notables."

Sheila married Rev. Frank Breisch in 2006. Frank, known for his fancy socks and many contributions to St. Andrew's, including initiating the Side by Side program, passed away in 2019. Many will remember his celebration of life, which closed, at his request, with "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Sheila feels deeply blessed to have shared her life with two wonderful husbands. She is also grateful for her travels to about sixty countries, where she has enjoyed exploring history and art, often in the company of her daughter.

Now spending much of her time in prayer, the St. Andrew's prayer chain is especially important to Sheila. She has a strong belief that God is always with you.

Throughout the past, Sheila has been enriched by the leadership of the ministers. Looking to the years ahead, Sheila strongly believes that the church should focus its time, money, and talent on youth—the church's foundation and future.

Her son, Ian, and daughter, Sheila, visit their mom twice a year for two weeks at a time and stay in close touch despite their own active lives. Ian is a professional engineer and runs a busy engineering consulting company based in Peterborough. Sheila is a Chartered Accountant (CPA) and has had an interesting career dealing with several high-profile clients in Toronto. As the three gather for a family photo, their mutual love and respect is evident.

Daughter Sheila and son Ian told me that their mom did not inform people about her age until about five years ago. She always felt the number stereotyped a person and she never fit into those categories. Now she enjoys celebrating that she's ninety-eight years young!

To close with some words from Sheila: "My entire life has been centered on Christ, and he has continuously blessed me with a rich and happy life. I hope that the church will continue to minister to the glory of God and that He will enrich the lives of all that accept His love and grace."

# WAYS TO IMPROVE MEMORY ACCORDING TO EXPERTS

**To improve memory, retrain your brain with these smart strategies to sharpen focus and boost cognitive thinking.**

1. **Try to remember before googling**

The internet is great but it fuels a modern-day condition called digital amnesia - forgetting information because you trust a computerized device to remember for you. The brain is a “use it or lose it” machine says experts. We should challenge ourselves not to always look things up.

2. **Take a nap**

Quality restful sleep is non-negotiable when it comes to thinking fast on your feet but a strategically timed nap can come surprisingly close. A 30 - 90-minute nap mid-day can rival what you get overnight in terms of memory consolidation, creativity, and productivity.

3. **Get exercise every day**

Any time you move in a way that gets your blood pumping, you give your brain a boost. Blood is filled with oxygen and nutrients that feed our brains. Exercise also spurs the body to produce a protein that acts like a fertilizer to the brain.

4. **Don’t multitask too much**

The brain is not designed to focus on several tasks at once. As a result, our brains feel stressed when we multitask and we make more errors. The stress, perceived or not also triggers the release of hormones that interfere with short term memory.

5. **Eat for your brain**

Nutrition has a striking impact on your day-to-day memory and focus. Three science-based recommendations are:

1. Berries and Beets… berries are bursting with antioxidant compounds with a unique ability to cross the blood brain barrier. Beets are rich in nitrate which relaxes the blood vessels throughout the body increasing blood flow.
2. Turmeric… this spice rich in curcumin a potent anti-inflammatory substance. People who eat a lot of Indian food or spicy curry tend to perform better on cognitive tests and rates of Alzheimer disease are lower.
3. Another important thing to remember when it comes to eating… Try not to let yourself get hungry. If you go too long without eating your blood sugar drops and that impairs focus and decision making.

**Memory loss prevention**

Life can be busy and complicated at times. How many of us sometimes think we are ageing too fast, unable to do the things we used to in a quick and efficient manner? However, inability to multitask has nothing to do with memory. We may not be concentrating or focusing on the task at hand. Still, it can be alarming. The first time you go to the fridge, open it and forget what you were there for. Whether or not memory concerns are cause for concern starts with your age. The risk of dementia as well as other conditions contributing to memory loss increases as we age. A little falling off on things like the recall of names after age 50 is normal but if it is more than that it may be wise to look at whatever else may be going on.

**Some things that may cause memory glitches**:

1. **Stress or anxiety**

Hello!!… who does not have some degree of stress and/or anxiety in their life. However, if there are too many external pressures such as financial troubles, a loved one unwell or burning the candle at both ends, cortisol levels run high. The stress hormone that keeps you revved and ready also affects part of the brain involved in memory. Similarly, anxiety may feel like a memory disorder because you cannot concentrate on anything.

2. **Depression**

Research shows a link between depression and cognitive impairments. Some key facts are:

Reversible: memory issues tied to depression usually improve or disappear once the depression is treated.

Root cause: stress hormones like cortisol can temporarily shrink the part of the brain that handles memory (the hippocampus).

3. **Menopause or perimenopause**

Among the many joys of perimenopause, the transition itself may contribute to cognitive impairment.

4. **Not enough sleep**

(I can personally attest to this one)

Poor shuteye can affect your memory in a big way. If you never get to the deeper stages of sleep certain proteins may not clear from the brain. It is a good idea to talk to your doctor about possible sleep disorders such as restless leg syndrome or sleep apnea which can be treated and boost alertness during the day which helps memory.

5. **Possibly medications can fog your mind**

Certain meds if taken over a longer period of time such as benzodiazepines (often for anxiety) are known to affect memory as are anticholinergics (for stress incontinence).

Over the counter sleep aids and allergy meds like Benadryl and some opioids may also deal your memory a nasty blow.

6. **Drinking or partying too much**

Scientists have known for years there is evidence of brain shrinkage with alcohol disorders.

7. **Thyroid issues**

When your thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone it can cause forgetfulness or brain fog. Also, if too much thyroid hormone is cranked out this can also interfere with cognitive function. Thyroid hormones are so important for the energy metabolism of certain individual cells including those in the brain.

8. **B12 or folic acid deficiency**

One of the known treatable causes of dementia is vit B12 deficiency. That said, taking B12 pills or another B vitamin (folate) does not help to improve memory unless you are deficient.

**Submitted by Barbara Keanes for the Wellness Team**

# HERITAGE SENIORS – LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD!




**The Heritage Seniors were originally founded in 1988 by the members of St. Andrew's congregation. There is a plaque on the wall in Trinity Hall commemorating the event with names of the founding members. The main purpose of the group has always been to benefit seniors in the Calgary region and keep them healthy, fit and engaged.**

**Social and exercise activities have always been a focus. There is a monthly catered luncheon with a speaker or other entertainment. Weekly fitness activities include aerobics, yoga stretch, and carpet bowling.**




**John Young, Ron Horwood and the Barclay Brothers (Bob & James) were a few of the prominent leaders well known at St. Andrew's. Each of them attended fitness classes until they were well into their nineties.**

**Thank you to Sylvia Shaw for giving her thoughts from a Heritage Seniors member perspective:**



**"I've been a member of the Heritage Seniors Group for several years now. I knew many of the current members when I joined and I was interested in the fitness programs.**

**I go to the fitness group once each week, (held in Trinity Hall at 9:30) coordinated by Jason who is a massage therapist. It's good fun and gets us all moving within our individual abilities. We enjoy a warm-up, some light cardio, work on balance and strength, then cool down with deep breathing. It's a great program.**

**I then go to the Yoga/Stretch class in the Upper Room with Heather who is a trained yoga teacher. Heather uses various programs targeting different areas of the body, focusing on stretch, balance and strength. The last 10 to 15 minutes of the program are focused on relaxation – this is the part I like best! Some of the class finds us standing or sitting and for those who don't want to go down onto the floor, they can participate whilst sitting on two chairs.**

**The monthly luncheons, held in Trinity Hall, are catered and often have an interesting program. It's an inexpensive hot lunch and a nice way to socialize.**

**Most of the people I've gotten to know are from the community and they are all pleasant, supportive and caring. They want to stay in the best shape possible so that they can keep enjoying these later years. Many Heritage Seniors members help the Guild at Bazaar time, and the Guild, in turn, helps Heritage Seniors with the Strawberry Tea. That's a win-win!**

**Overall, I find it a positive and wholesome environment and I'm happy to be a member."**



**Heritage Seniors president Maureen Pelz tells us that there are currently about 68 members and most of them come from the neighbouring community. They are always looking for new members and ideas. St. Andrew's is fortunate to be affiliated with such a vibrant and community-minded organization. A great way for St. Andrew's to be woven into the neighbourhood!**

**Submitted by David Townsend**

# *Surviving the Holidays*



**A GRIEFSHARE PRESENTATION**

The holidays can be stressful and exhausting even on the best of times. There are many expectations placed on us to be busy, joyful, excited and happy.

Grief can make the holiday season more challenging, by amplifying feelings of loss whether that loss is recent or years ago. A loved one's absence can serve as a painful reminder and inevitable reality check.

We hope that this video presentation followed by a short discussion time will help those dealing with grief and loss to find some comfort, support and helpful suggestions on how to navigate through the holiday season.

**Your hosts will be your GriefShare facilitators – Judie Coleman, Alice Williams, and Allie Turnbull. Come join us on SATURDAY DECEMBER 5, 2026 FROM 10-11:45AM IN THE KARL ENGLISH LOUNGE.**

**We ask that you register on the GriefShare website: www.griefshare.org / find a group or sign up in the foyer.**

# 2026 Christmas Bazaar

After much preparation and anticipation our annual Christmas Bazaar was held on Saturday, November 14. Our church building was buzzing with activity as we welcomed members of our faith community and many others from the neighbourhood to this event. Early estimates would indicate that our congregational efforts raised approximately $13,000 which will go toward continuing God's work in this place and in our world.

Grateful thanks to all who supported this year's Bazaar with your time, talent and treasure. Special thanks to our young people and to members of Heritage Seniors for their support on the day. We could not do what we do without each and every one of you! Thank you!

Our 2026/2027 Guild Executive is now in place as follows:
President – Audrey Mann
Vice-President – Dolly Forcade
Treasurer – Elizabeth Dolan
Secretary – Margaret Bates
Communications Coordinator – Sylvia Shaw
Card Secretary – Kathy Slimmon
Kitchen Convenor – Pam Livingstone

**Submitted by: Sylvia Shaw**







# ... More Bazaar
















*... Last but not Least!*









# Our Cup Overflows

CONNEXIONS SA

**February / March 2027**

**Deadline January 15th**




# ConnXions

We welcome articles for the next issue to be submitted by Jan 15, 2027 to:
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