

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

865 2nd Avenue West
Owen Sound, ON N4K 4M6
519-376-7886

November 2011

Fire From The Bush



Minister's Message

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life

[John 8:12]

Dear family and friends of St. Andrew's,

It is a Season of busyness and a Season of planning and visioning for all of us in one way or another. I have always been inspired by the Rev. Dr. Bushnell. When he started his teaching career at Yale, he found himself struggling for faith. He asked God for more light, thinking what he needed was to see more clearly. Then he realized there was little point in asking God for more light when he was not willing to follow the light he had already received.

He knelt down and prayed, *O God, I believe that there is an eternal difference between right and wrong, and I hereby give myself up to do the right and refrain from the wrong.*

That is where he started; and beginning from there he was led into a deeper religious life. He became a noted theologian, a persuasive Christian preacher and an author of many books on the subject of living a vibrant faith.

Advent is a place where and when we can start as we seek ways to renew our faith. We can begin right where we are

with the faith we have. We can determine to take seriously the light that God has already given us.

Life is bathed in heaven's grace. Continually, patiently God is reaching out to communicate His mercy and love to you. You need only present yourself and be aware of His goodness being offered to you. Everywhere and in everything God is speaking.

We invite you to join with us during the Advent and Christmas Season as we seek together to follow the Light that God has given us. As sojourners on the upward way we are intentionally pursuing God's truth and listening for the eternal voice speaking to our life and times.

Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with God's love and blessings.

(Rev.) Ian & June Johnston



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2011



Please take careful note of the following service times:

Christmas Eve - 7:00 A service for all ages. During this service puppets tell the story, children dress up for the nativity and we close with a special candlelit sanctuary.

- **9:00** We worship with carols, lessons and Christmas communion.

Christmas Day - There will be one service held in the sanctuary at 10:30 a.m.

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Visit our web site at:

www.standrewsowensoun.org

Message from the Interim Moderator

"Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others. God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well." Romans 12:4-6a NLT

I always find it amazing when I think of the church of Jesus Christ, it's made up of people with different ideas, different backgrounds, different ages, and sometimes not having a lot in common. Yet, somehow, God uses the church to bring His love to this world. Each one of us is an instrument of God, used by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's work here in Owen Sound. The one thing which we all hold in common, that can unite us together is Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds us that the church is just like our body, it's made up of different parts, yet each part is important. Especially during a vacancy each of us has the opportunity to stretch ourselves as we do God's work. God has richly blessed St. Andrew's with an extremely efficient, caring and strong staff. From the front desk to the pulpit, from the music ministry to taking care of the building, and from the pews to your

homes, God has provided people with faith who care. Hold each other up in your prayers, especially the staff as they try to cover not one, but two vacancies.

The most difficult part of a vacancy is the beginning, because it almost appears as if nothing is happening, that things are moving so slowly and we are concerned that we will never get a minister. However it is during this time that a lot of the most necessary and important work is being done. Your search committee, and your session are working and praying to discern the direction in which God is leading St. Andrew's. This is important in order to find the senior minister that God is calling here.

This is a time for experimenting with who you are as the people of God. It is a time to build one another up, and to use the gifts that God has given you. It's been over 50 years since St. Andrew's has been in a vacancy, and so things may not always run as smoothly as in the past, but I urge you to be patient, and to trust that God is leading. This is a time of hope, as we search for God's direction. Do not be afraid to boldly step out in faith as a congregation, trusting that Jesus is there.

In Christ's Service

Rev. Jim

Interim Moderator



2011 CGIT Vesper Service

The girls and women of St. Andrew's CGIT and Division Street's Explorers invite you to join them on Sunday December 11 at 3:00 for our annual Vesper Service, at Division Street United Church. The theme of the service is *Do You Hear What I Hear?* and will include carols, skits, advent reflections and refreshments. Make sure you support our CGIT girls by joining them in this time of worship!



Stephen Ministry

Many of you know that there are a few people at St. Andrew's who have taken the courses to be Stephen Ministers, but not all of you know what this special ministry is about.

What is Stephen Ministry? It is, *Christ Caring for People through People*.

Stephen Ministry is a Lay Caring Ministry. The training prepares lay persons to provide one-to-one Christian care in and around the congregation. This ministry is founded upon Scripture, specifically Acts 6, where Stephen was the most notable of seven people set aside by the apostles to provide care to the widows and orphans in the Christian congregation in Jerusalem. Stephen's acts of care and mercy are reflected in the care giving of those who provide *Stephen Ministry* to people in need in the congregation today.

Stephen Ministry began in 1975 under the direction of Rev. Dr. Kenneth Haugk, a pastor and psychologist. It is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 100 denominations, has surpassed 10,000 congregations and is in 50 States, 9 Provinces and 20 countries. Stephen Ministry is in almost every size of congregation. No matter the congregation's size or location, two key things are the same everywhere: first, hurting people need care; and second, God has gifted people so that they can effectively care for hurting people.

Some of the people in our congregation who could benefit from one-to-one Christian care:

- those who are grieving the loss of a loved one
- people who are hospitalized for a long time
- individuals who are terminally ill and their families
- persons who are experiencing divorce (before, during and after)
- parents who have children leaving home for the military, college, marriage or work in another geographical area.

- people who are lonely
- new members of the congregation and/or community
- family members who have someone in a nursing home
- inactive members
- parents and families of people with disabilities
- people convalescing at home or in an institution
- those who are homebound or in a nursing home
- people facing birth-related issues
- people who have suffered a significant financial setback
- people who have lost their job
- single parents (for whatever reason)
- people who have unplanned retirement
- people in the process of moving out of town
- persons affected by disasters, natural and human caused

The need for trained workers is likened to the record of Matthew 9. The needs of the church community can be many and many partners sharing with the pastor(s) and church professionals help reach people with the love of Jesus. God has a design for how people's needs can be fulfilled as taught in Ephesians 4:11-13.

We are blessed to have trained Stephen Ministers in St. Andrew's and we hope that they will be a blessing to the membership as they take up their tasks. Their work is confidential, so you may not know all that they do. Their tasks are assigned through the staff. Remember them in your prayers.

The current Stephen Ministers are:

Betty Cunningham
 Tina Farquharson
 Andre' Lacroix
 Ernie McMillan
 Heather Mutch
 Doug Umbach
 Bev Wilkins

Ann Fahrur
 Sandra Hibma
 Elizabeth Lacroix
 Jean McMillan
 Judy Tomkins
 Tena Van't Foort



Fourth Friday – 2010 - 2011



Fourth Friday is a program offered to those over 55 in our congregation, and includes a delicious lunch followed by an interesting program. This event is held on the last Friday of each month at a cost of \$8.00 per person.

Join us for a fun program with great food.

Date	Program
Jan 27, 2012	Keeping Bees
Feb. 24, 2012	Comedy Hour with Ann Fahrn
March 23, 2012	Peter Struthers Pharmacist
April 27, 2012	Flowers with Jan Middleton and Kay Thorfinnson
May 25, 2012	Travelogue with Doug and Loreen Cumming
June 22, 2012	String Music with Donna Steinacher and Mabel Williamson
June 24, 2011`	Bryan Barbour & Friends Music Show



Please note....

- The Annual Meeting date is March 6, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.
- 2011 Annual Report submissions are due by January 30, 2012
- If you are heading south for the winter please let the church office know where your tax receipts can be sent.

Family Christmas and Fireside



On Sunday Dec. 18, we will hold our Family Christmas and Fireside events; two unique, enjoyable ways to prepare for Christmas with family and friends.

Family Christmas

Join us at 3:00 for a variety of crafts for people of all ages and ability levels. This is a great time to introduce your friends and neighbours to the St. Andrew's community.

Fireside Potluck and Talent Show

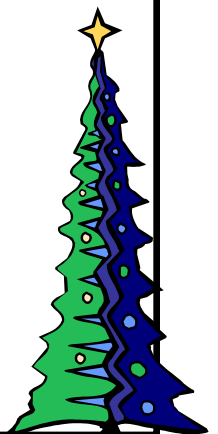
At 5:00 we will begin our Fireside Potluck and Talent Show. Please be sure to bring your dishes, as well as a salad, main course, or dessert. Anyone can take part in the Talent Show portion of the evening. Bring a song, a story, a poem, a dance, whatever you like. Show us your talent!

Come just for Family Christmas, come just for Fireside, or COME FOR BOTH!



Memory Tree

Once again a Christmas tree will be placed in the Memorial Garden at the front of the church. Donations in memory of loved ones can be made to light the tree. Please arrange for your donation to be made at the church office. All donations will be recognized in a Christmas bulletin and will go toward the Memorial Fund.



The Congregational Visiting Nurse



We are very blessed to have a Visiting Nurse within our congregation. The position was set up in its format similar to that of [The Canadian Parish Nursing Ministry](#). Bev Wilkins has been covering this ministry part time for about five years. We have had some inquiries about this ministry and what does Bev do for St. Andrew's. Hopefully the following will be helpful for your understanding and appreciation.

What is a Congregational Visiting Nurse? (CVN):

A CVN is a registered nurse with specialized knowledge who is called to ministry and affirmed by a faith community (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church) to promote health, healing and wholeness.

The Role of the CVN:

The role of the CVN is to promote the integration of faith and health in a variety of ways that reflect the context of the faith community. Specific examples include:

- health advocacy
- health counseling
- health education
- resource referral

Registered Nurse: A CVN must be registered in the province in which the nurse practices. The nurse's license or certificate of competence must be valid and current. This ensures that the public is receiving safe and competent care.

Specialized Knowledge: The CVN must have specialized knowledge which meets the criteria of the core learning competencies developed by agencies or groups doing this nursing ministry over many years (such as the Canadian Association for Parish Nursing Ministry).

Called to ministry: Although nursing itself is a vocation or "call", nursing ministry is a call to a specialized practice. The nurse is called by God to this special service. It is a step in one's faith journey that brings the nurse to become a CVN.

Affirmed by a faith community (congregation): Although the CVN is registered, educated and aware of God's call, the CVN is also called by the faith community. By calling the CVN to serve the faith community (congregation), the nurse becomes affirmed as the congregation's visiting nurse, thus validating the nurse's call to ministry.

To promote healing and wholeness: This is the mandate of the CVN in the faith community. The CVN needs a personal understanding of the theology of health, healing and wholeness in the context of the faith community being served recognizing that theology differs from individual to individual and even with a denomination.

Bev Wilkins, as a community nurse, visits many clients in the community who are members or associated with St. Andrew's. She does not account those visits to the congregation. Due to confidentiality rules, she cannot communicate those people to us unless we assign them to her.

How to arrange for the CVN to visit: If you feel that a member of the congregation could benefit from a visit or a term of care by the CVN, please contact the office. Rev. Johnston or Megan Purdy will review the request and assign the CVN as is deemed helpful or necessary. Nancy Robinson may receive requests.

Notes from the Kirk Session

The following is a Session Synopsis which will be provided after each Session meeting and can be found in the weekly bulletin or on the church website.



- Although the Session has been understood to be a **Closed Court of the Church**, that is becoming less of the practice, being **Closed** for sensitive discussions such as Personnel or such sensitive issues.
- Anyone may communicate with the Session in writing.
- Anyone may request to be heard in person before the Session (in writing).
- St. Andrew's has received two memberships by transfer this fall, June Johnston from St. Thomas, and Joyce Pentelow from Puslinch,
- Megan Purdy will be Ordained to the Office of Ruling Elder December 4, 2011. Her first term will be confirmed.
- Megan Purdy will continue to lead in worship and preach once a month.
- Some upgrade improvements to the nursery have been approved.
- Christmas Eve services will be 7PM and 9PM this year. Holy Communion will be celebrated at the 9PM service.
- Session has affirmed the trial of blended music, traditional and contemporary for the 10:30 worship service. Session has directed that this will be reviewed in January and discussed at the February Session meeting. Although the Session gives oversight, it invites input of the members of St. Andrew's, Pro and Con. The 9 AM worship will continue with the contemporary format. The current policy is to provide worship services that include **The Whole People of God**. We acknowledge that this will not satisfy everyone, but we are committed to work on this together. Your prayers and patient support is appreciated during this time of transition.

Christmas Carol Evening



If you love to sing Christmas carols, and feel the season of celebration is all too short, circle your calendar for Dec. 14 at 6:00 P.M. for a caroling evening.

A bus and driver will take us through the town as we spread as much joy as possible through music. We'll conclude with hot drinks and Christmas treats either at the Kelly residence or the church, depending on the number of carolers.

The bus has limited capacity so our caroling numbers will be determined on a first come basis.

If interested contact Ann Kelly 376-8474.

The bus is filling up already!!!!



The Flower Committee

The Flower Committee is in need of some new members since two have retired. No experience is necessary. Help and encouragement is offered by present members. Wouldn't you like to come along and have the fun of making a large arrangement suitable for a large church? We have a large collection of flowers from which to choose. Speak to Nora Jones after church or call her at 519-372-2517.



The Flower Committee would like to thank those who have placed floral arrangements in the Sanctuary in memory of loved ones.

Have you checked out the church website recently?

at

www.standrewsowensound.org



We've dusted off the cobwebs and given it a fresh, new look. It's been updated with current information. Each week you can find the weekly bulletin and the sermon. Read about the youth and adult groups in your church, outreach & missions and much more. There is also a monthly calendar of events which you can print at home if you have your own printer. Pictures of special events will be added on a regular basis. Why not check it out soon.

If you have pictures of a recent event that you would like to have added to the website or an announcement that you would like posted, please call Dee Renaud at 519-422-2616 or send her an e mail at eddeerenaud@gmail.com

Stewardship Committee

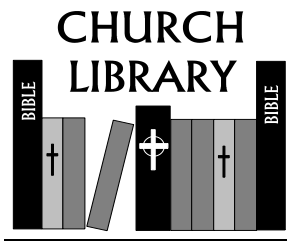
The Stewardship Committee of St. Andrew's is committed to educating the congregation about, "what and how" we give back to God.

A Time and Talent Inventory was sent out to the congregation with the Fire from the Bush in August, and we would like to thank all of you who have taken the time to fill out and return your survey. The Stewardship Committee will now collate the results, providing the church with an inventory of your skills and talents which we can draw upon if needed. If you haven't had a chance to fill out the inventory, you can still do so. Additional copies are available at the church office.

We will be continuing our education initiative into the new year; so watch for the power point messages, bulletin board inserts and a new bulletin board in the Narthex.

As the end of the year quickly approaches, we invite you to consider making a special Christmas or end of the year gift. St. Andrew's continues to be a place of family and community worship, and a place where God's love is shared in so many ways with so many people in Owen Sound and around the world. Your financial support helps ensure we continue to thrive, grow and fulfill the Mission God has placed before us.





HOT OFF THE PRESS!!!

Lynn Austin's latest book "Wonderland Creek" has arrived in your church library.

NEW DVDs ADDED TO THE LIBRARY:

Soul Surfer

The astonishing true story of a courageous 13-year-old surfer who lost her arm to a shark attack---but never lost her faith! You'll be inspired by how Bethany Hamilton overcame physical and emotional trauma to return to competitive surfing with the help of her family---and God.

The Grace Card

Witness the transforming power of forgiveness! When Mac loses his son in an accident, his grief sabotages his career on the police force and makes for a combustible situation when he gets a new partner---part-time pastor and "rising star" Sam. How can they work together in life-threatening situations when they can't see eye-to-eye on anything else?

The Shunning

Katie Lapp has always struggled with the rules that define her sheltered Amish community, but when a wealthy outsider begins asking questions about her family, Katie begins to wonder about her origins. What connection does this woman have to her life...and how will the unravelling secrets change Katie's faith? Beverly Lewis' *The Shunning* is a powerful, personal journey of discovery based on her famous novel.

NEW CHRISTMAS DVDs:

Christmas in Ganaan

An unlikely friendship blossoms between two 10 year-old boys from different backgrounds during the racially charged backdrop of rural Texas, 1964. Through the years into manhood, prevailing attitudes and the growing civil rights movement severely test their friendship. In the end, they will discover that despite people's differences, it's the memories you make that determine your happiness and peace in life. Starring Billy Ray Cyrus.

Mrs. Miracle

As Christmas approaches, widower Seth Webster needs help. When he advertises for a housekeeper, Emily Merkle comes knocking at the door---and changes everything. With two rambunctious 6-year-old twins, a heartbroken father looking for new love, and a Yuletide pageant to prepare for, she's got her work cut out for her---and proves to be more than a run-of-the-mill nanny! From the *New York Times* best selling author Debbie Macomber.

Christmas Lodge

Mary Tobin loves three things---her grandfather, the outdoors, and restoring historic properties. When she rescues Charlene Rand while on a mountain hike, Mary learns that the girl and her father live at a ramshackle lodge that holds happy memories for her grampa. Resolving to repair his broken-down home, will Mary encounter reluctance---or romance---from Jack Rand?

COMING SOON!

DVD - Love Begins

The heartwarming family drama that unfolded before Janette Oke's *Love Comes Softly* series... laying the groundwork for everything that followed! When Ellen and Cassie Barlow lose their father, they have difficulty maintaining the family farm. Will hired worker Clark Davis prove to be a troublemaker---or a god-send?



Christmas books & DVDs will be out on display mid-November!

Dee Renaud, Church librarian

White Gift



This years White Gift Sunday will be November 27th. The money raised this year will go to the following places:

International:

\$ 450 to support our **foster child Wendell de Jesus Lopez**. We have supported Wendell for a number of years, and in 2007 Rev. Ted and Judy Tomkins had the opportunity to meet him. He is a friendly, shy young man, who enjoys playing soccer. His mother Karla really appreciates all of our support.

\$300 to **Cropshares** which is part of the **Canadian Food Grains Bank**. The money is used to grow crops which are sent to parts of the world in need of food aid. The government of Canada matches all donations at a ratio of 4:1 allowing our money to go further.

\$750 towards the **Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D)** to support health and livelihood restoration programs in Pakistan. PWS&D is working through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGFB) to provide food, shelter, medical care and emergency supplies to those most affected. Many families worry about rising food prices, health concerns and a lack of jobs. PWS&D is responding through local partners to address critical needs while planning livelihood restoration programs.

Local:

\$500 to support the ongoing work of Safe'n'Sound which is a homelessness initiative in our community.

\$350 to support the programs of G& B House which is a Residential Support and Recovery Home that provides support to men who have substance abuse problems. They offer individual and team skills to support and encourage residents to empower themselves in becoming responsible for their own personal recovery.

\$200 to Union Place to be used in the programming for individuals struggling with mental illness.

\$200 to support the Crisis Pregnancy Centre which provide practical, emotional and spiritual support to those in distress as a result of a crisis pregnancy, during and following the pregnancy to new mothers, fathers and families.

Remembrances



The following people who were associated with St. Andrew's have died since the August Fire From the Bush.

Mrs. Margo Durkin,

Mrs. Winnie Burlington,

Mr. Paul Capel

Financial Update

(As of October 31, 2011)

Income to date	\$ 278,620
Expenses to date	\$ 305,805
Deficit	(\$25,918)

New Members

The following individuals became members of St. Andrew's since the last Fire From the Bush:

- Mrs. June Johnston, St. Thomas
- Mrs. Joyce Pentelow, Puslinch

Megan's Musings: Advent and Christmas Refocus

The seasons of Advent and Christmas are upon us once again. These holidays invite us to think about how we relate, respond and integrate into the culture around us. Robert Louis Wilken's defines culture as; the rituals, laws, language, practices and stories that guide the behaviour, thoughts and affections of people, the way in which we live and find meaning in the world. The Church is a culture in its own right. Through Christian faith and involvement with the church we are welcomed into a distinct culture. We are given stories from the Bible and the saints, rituals such as baptism and communion, language by which to express our spiritual selves, and a host of practices that are intended to better connect us to God, one another, and our best selves. Celebrating Advent, Christmas and Epiphany is just one way that we express our participation in Christ's distinct culture; as a congregation, and individual families.

In Advent we wait, with expectation for the birth of Jesus Christ, reflecting on the importance of his birth- both for the people who had waited for thousands of years for a Saviour and for us as those who have known the full benefit of his life, death, and resurrection. We also anticipate the time when Christ will return and will complete the work that he began. So for four weeks we light candles together and reflect on Peace, Hope, Love and Joy. How will you mark this season at home?

In our celebration of Christmas we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. As families and as a church we celebrate that because He loved the world, God sent his Son, Jesus, so that all those who would choose to believe in Him would not be left alone in their sin, but would be welcomed into an eternal life with God (John 3:16). We celebrate that God sent Jesus into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it from itself (John 3:17). We celebrate the gifts of forgiveness, wholeness and new life, which Christ makes possible for each person who will accept them. How will you mark this holy day at home?

As the busy-ness of the season increases, may each one of us not lose sight of the different focus that the Church and Christ's distinct culture places on things. May we reflect on the grace of God in our lives, give thanks for it, and find creative and meaningful ways to express it to others. May we find time to wait in anticipation and to celebrate the coming of God's greatest gift to humankind, Jesus Christ. Have a blessed Advent and Christmas season.

Megan



Thank You

I would like to thank the following people for their fabulous assistance with our Sunday School program during the fall term; Tricia Morris, Chuck Rossel, Kristi Sanderson, Gae Trinkwon, Aird McCombie and Kristen Hibma. Thanks too to our wonderful Nursery volunteers for their dedication. Your help is greatly appreciated, and we couldn't run our children's programs without all of you. Thanks again!!

Looking Ahead...



March Break Adventure Day

Our annual March Break Adventure Day will take place on Thursday March 15th from 9:00-4:00. Children in JK-Gr. 6 are welcome, and cost will be \$5.00 for the day which includes lunch and two snacks. Mark your calendars, and watch for further details in the New Year!

Pancake Tuesday Coordinator

Before you know it, Lent will be here. At St. Andrew's we kick off the season with our annual Pancake Supper. We are in need of 1 or 2 individuals who are willing to organize and coordinate this event. Please speak to Megan if you are interested.





Sunday School Challenge

Give a farmer seeds...and he can grow food to feed himself.

Give a farmer tools...and she can feed her family.

Give a farmer fertilizer...and he can feed the community.

Give a farmer all three...and we can help change the world!

Subsistence farmers in the Swat region of Pakistan are working hard to recover from the devastating floods of 2010 that affected more than 20 million people and washed away thousands of acres of farmland. For families who lost everything -including their homes, fields, livestock and supplies- starting over is a daunting challenge.

In response Presbyterian World Service and Development are issuing a Sunday School Challenge, and we at St. Andrew's would like to take part.

\$130 is all it takes to provide one farming family with seeds, tools and fertilizer to support themselves and their community. We want to see how many families we can help get back on their feet after the devastating floods.

Beginning Sunday Nov. 6 until Sunday Dec. 25, all Sunday School offering collected will be put towards the Sunday School Challenge. So, start planning ahead for how you can raise or save some money to donate to this worthwhile project. Together, we can change many families lives. Let's get started!

Harvest Happening 2011

Thank you!



October 22 saw Harvest Happening return to St Andrew's Presbyterian Church after a very long time away. Many volunteers helped and contributed to a very successful day.

The baking sold out as did the turkey and beef pies. Collectibles and the cafe/lunch had record sales this year. All areas saw considerable traffic with our total sales over \$9000.

Once our bills are paid we will know what our profit is for 2011 but it is looking like we will have made approximately \$8300.00

We always need new faces to help with pie making (no you don't have to be a cook). There are onions and celery to cut and turkey filling to stir or pies to be bagged and labeled.

For those bakers out there we always appreciate your delightful desserts!

We appreciate that the Youth Group helped us out with the elevator and with fliers at the Market.

Please keep us in mind next Fall when we start up again and ask for helpers.

And if you have new ideas for Harvest Happening be sure to let us know!

See you next year!

Diane Lewis

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A Shoebox Story- by Helen Meneray

One morning each week, I volunteer at the church answering the phone. It is a fairly straightforward role...which can be challenging but also rewarding, especially when one witnesses a special sermon lesson.



I have many happy memories of filling the Christmas shoeboxes with Carol Sue and my foster nieces. We would go off through the mall picking out an item of clothing, some candy, a toy and personal items... Then we would gather around the table, at home to display our items, share the ones we could and then pack them into the boxes. It was fun! However, when I no longer had young people, I didn't enjoy the task any more...seemed a burden for me, so I started to just give a donation of \$..I got a receipt for it...That was a much better plan for me.

One day just before tea time, Nancy and I noted a lady coming through the doors with two shoebox parcels. I recognized Joan, as a gentle, kind lady, I was acquainted with through the school system. In a low voice, Nancy conveyed to me that the boxes had already been delivered that very morning but she made no mention of this to Joan who displayed her great smile as she placed the two gift boxes on the counter. Joan immediately announced to Nancy that no one had 'prayed over' the one box and asked Nancy to join her. With their hands clasped together above the box and heads bowed, Joan began to pray:

She prayed for the person who had prepared the box.

She prayed for the person who would receive the box and

She prayed for the people caring for the boxes along their journey...

I, too had bowed my head and with each new prayer, I felt as if I was sinking lower and lower until I wanted to just disappear under a mat somewhere.....I realized I had never 'prayed over' the boxes or the money I sent...never...In a huge way, it had been about me and what I got out of it...I had never even given Carol Sue a choice to complete a box when my nieces no longer came. I did what was easiest for me!

After this experience, I gave Carol Sue an option of filling a shoebox which we complete with items that we pray will provide comfort, caring and joy to the recipient. For me, I now send my money with conscious thought and prayer.

May your Shoebox experience be a fun but prayerful one!

In Special Memory of Joan Johnson