

THE MINISTER'S CORNER

Seasons Greetings to you all.

Christmas is quickly approaching! Where has the time gone? This will be our seventh Christmas together in the Highlands. I am busy getting ready, as I'm sure that you are too. Although it is hard to get ready for Christmas with all the beautiful sunny & warm weather we have been having this November. I don't think I can ever remember a Remembrance Day service when I didn't need a winter coat not to mention an umbrella or winter snow boots!

As I gaze out my window today, it is raining. The long string of sunshine has come to an end but sun is in the forecast for the weekend. Soon I will be seeing snow covering the ground and the branches of the trees. It will be quite beautiful even though I don't really like driving through the stuff. The time during the fall season leading up to the coming of winter is a difficult time for me as I imagine it is for many people in Canada. The weather quickly changes from warm sunny days to cool or even down right nippy cloudy days of November and December, the days get shorter and shorter and the nights get longer and longer. How depressing.

The wonderful thing though is that after December 21st or so, the days begin to get longer again and the nights begin to get shorter. The wonder of the seasons, living in the Haliburton Highlands, is in full display with snow generally covering just about everything. To top it all off, we celebrate the birth of Christ with family and friends. After that, each day figuratively and literally is a little bit brighter.

Take the time this Advent, Christmas and Epiphany to remember your family and friends and give thanks to God. Also, try to take a moment to call on someone that may not have many visitors this Christmas and share the light of Christ in their lives too. May God keep you and bless you.

Merry Christmas. Max.



Moderator's Message, Advent 2009

Expectant mothers understand Advent, in a way perhaps no one else can. To be an expectant mother is to live every moment with the knowledge that new life is on its way.

Advent is waiting, wondering, preparing, and trying to believe the words of the Angel Gabriel, "Do not be afraid."

Mary had many reasons to be afraid. As our Song of Faith puts it:

We sing of Jesus, a Jew,
born to a woman in poverty
in a time of social upheaval
and political oppression.

And yet, Mary was filled with joy, saying
"My soul magnifies the Lord and
my spirit rejoices in God."

Such joy enabled Mary to embrace an unreasonable hope in a time of great anxiety, injustice, and uncertainty.

Even in such a time as hers, Mary turned from fear to joy.

Even in such a time as ours, the angel tells us to turn from fear to joy, to embrace an unreasonable hope.

In my own experience, turning from fear to joy is neither an intellectual nor solitary exercise. I cannot think my way into joy nor discover it on my own. I can, however, listen for God's mysterious music and, with others, imagine how to joyfully dance the ways of God, even in the most fearful places. With the gift of church, we are not alone in the movement from fear to joy.

I sat recently with young adult leaders of a Winnipeg congregation. They described how most friends their age have a distrust of the church. Yet they themselves have turned from fear, to embrace joy and hope by imagining - and acting as if - their church is a trustworthy place in which to embrace their questions, thereby making it trustworthy.

Advent is an invitation to listen for God's music of abundance over scarcity; joy over fear; hope over despair — imagining, dancing, and behaving according to God's ways, and trusting the truth of the angel's assurance of abundance, joy, hope, and love. These are the ways of God's peace in the world.

How will you dance from fear to joy during this Advent season? How will you embrace unreasonable hope? How will you love without limit?

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THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS

By Scott Murray Edited by Max Ward

*Tw'as the week before Christmas, when all
through the church
Every creature was stirring, not being left in the
lurch.*

*The services were ready, everything ready to
prepare
In hopes that the people soon would be there*

*The decorations were piled all over the place
From trees and garland, to pinecones and lace*

*The pastor all dressed up, the Music Director
neatly pressed
Both trying hard not to get too stressed*

*Too often the problem we face every year
Is no one remembers any more than the good
cheer*

*For Christmas is not just a time to be getting
There's something that schools are indeed
forgetting*

*The birth of baby Jesus, in a manger with hay
Is really the reason to celebrate this day*

*While Santa and reindeer may seem to be right,
Who wants to celebrate a fat man in tights?*

*So in your efforts, remember this season
That Jesus my friends, is truly the reason*

*The 24th had come and to their delight
The people were gathered, for Christmas that
night.*

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