

The Messenger

Advent 2018

Reverend's Reflections

It is a great gift that we live on this wondrous island where we are surrounded by so many beautiful trees. In scripture, we know that trees have special symbolism as the cedars of Lebanon point toward God, and to sit under the fig tree is a reminder of what it means to be at home with one's self.

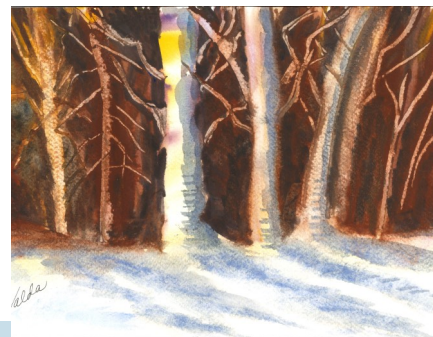
God's creation is one in which all things work together. The capacity for plants to absorb the energy of light and transform it is a miracle, as is photosynthesis which makes light possible. As the messenger of the Creator of all things approached Mary, the question he asked her was whether she might

be engaged in another form of photosynthesis. Was she willing to make the light of God possible on earth, in human form. Mary's yes was also miracle, a combination of courage and audacity.

Our Christian story of faith is one in which the light comes into the world and the world's powers seek to eradicate the light, and a story where God's love prevails and renews the light again and again. At the Easter vigil, the Christ Candle is lit and held up high as we sing, "The light of Christ, thanks be to God!" Our hearts sing this refrain on Christmas Eve but with a different kind of awe and wonder, born of silence, humility and unexpected splendour.

As we move into Advent, we once again have opportunity to reflect on what it means for the Creator of the universe to seek residence in human form. The whole of creation participating in the wonder of cell division and multiplication, renewal and growth. As the stars have their part in the story, they remind us how far back they can see, and like the trees, remind us that we too, "have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."

Art by Valda Kitching



When I Am Among the Trees

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.

By Mary Oliver



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Advent and Christmas Services

- Dec 5th, 12th and 19th Advent Reflection
10:00 - 10:30 am Advent Meditation
10:30 - 12:00 pm Advent Bible Study
Empowered & Empowering Women: An Advent Reflection on Women in the Bible from Eve to Mary: <https://cep.anglican.ca/this-years-pwrdf-advent-resource-honours-and-celebrates-women/>
- Dec 16th 10:30 am Angels' Lessons & Carols Service
- Dec 23rd 10:30 am Christmas Pageant Service
- Dec. 24th 4:00 pm Family Eucharist Service
10:30 pm Carol Singing
11:00 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Eucharist
- Dec 30th 10:30 am Eucharist



Order of the Diocese of British Columbia

The parish is proud to recognize Peter Goddard, invested in the Order of the Diocese of British Columbia on 20th October at Christchurch Cathedral in a special service held for that purpose.

Children's Advent Reflection: *Advent Lives ... and is Changing Lives*

This year we introduce a resource for children that teaches the Christmas story through the animals in our World of Gifts guide. Cows, goats, sheep, even guinea fowl all play a role in this resource. Children will learn about the importance of PWRDF's livestock program to food security in Mozambique, Tanzania and Rwanda. This resource can be used in Sunday Schools, Youth Groups or at home, in whole or in part. Includes stories, candle lighting prayers, activities and crafts. Flip through the resource below, and download by clicking the download arrow in the top left corner of the box. There are also handy and fascinating factsheets for each of the countries in which the livestock program operates, featuring recipes and beneficiary stories.

<https://pwrdf.org/get-involved/advent2018/?fbclid=IwAR31IE8V5InMEzrM->



Lauren and Raymond are happy to share that their beautiful baby girl, named Alma Jane Krakau, was born at 8:38am on Tuesday November 27, 2018 at Victoria General Hospital. She weighed 6 lbs 12 oz, and they are proud to report she possesses an excellent set of well functioning lungs and a VERY healthy appetite.

Everyone is doing well, and they are so happy about our newest family member. They will bring her to Sunday service when they are able and look forward to showing her off! "Thanks everyone for your support and prayers. St Michaels has been an amazing community that I'm looking forward to raising Alma in."



Outreach and You – Faith in Action

Since attending the Synod last month, I have been thinking about my outreach giving and where my faith in action goes. As you know, the Diocese has a goal to raise funds through a stewardship project and St Michael’s is part of that stewardship. So where do I fit in the plan?

I found out that among other charitable work, the Diocese has a significant effort towards low income housing that supports the needy in Greater Victoria. Their Vision Fund also supports the parishes in fulfilling Faith In Foundation projects such as prayer paths and meditation circles. We are planning on using that support in the development of our labyrinth and prayer path.

In our parish we support Northern Ministry families, local children and youth support organizations, local food banks, the Sisters of St. John and other initiatives as needed. Our contributions through weekly offerings support both our infrastructure costs as well as outreach. The Women’s Guild and Brotherhood of Anglican Churchmen are the two key groups that work to collect funds for disbursement. Outreach disbursement of charitable funds are determined through the Parish Council and historical precedence. That is not to say there is never any change in our donation targets. For example, the Food Bank has been shifted from the Mustard Seed to the food assistance project that St. John the Divine provides for low income families.

Thus, my wish to support those who need help is satisfied by the current outreach, we as a parish and as a contributor to the Diocese, provide. I am keen to see much of my outreach dollar find a home locally.

Submitted by Stan Willow

Orange Shirt Day

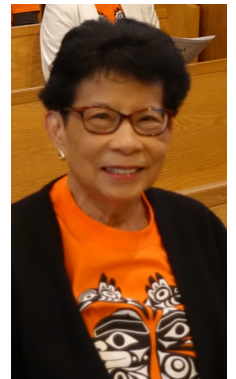
As we remember every Sunday, with Dawna’s welcome to our service, we acknowledge that for thousands of years the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka’wakw peoples have walked gently on the unceded territories where we now live, work, worship, and play. We seek a new relationship with the First Peoples here; one based in honour and respect, and we thank them for their hospitality.

One way that we have demonstrated our commitment to reconciliation is the recognition of Orange Shirt Day in our parish. Thank you to Rosalind Taylor for helping sell numerous orange shirts and for the beautiful display on September 30th.

For more information please go to <http://www.orangeshirtday.org/>



Rosalind Taylor



Jocelyn d’Orban



Ben Lowrey



Georgina and Helen Love and Terry Willow



Marion Edgar and Nancy Whysker

Guild Goings On

As I write this, I am grateful for the support that Guild members give each other. We have just hosted our “best-ever” Christmas Sale, plus catered a BAC Dinner and a Memorial Reception-all in the past two weeks!

For eight years now, we have had a Christmas-themed sale on the third Wednesday in November. We decorate our hall and grounds for Christmas, the Sunday School runs the kitchen concession and the crowds come, enjoying the smells of mulled apple juice and fresh sausage rolls. Donations from the parish and friends are plentiful and of high quality so our income continues to increase every year.

Thanks to Terry Willow, the annual Purdys' Chocolate Fund-Raising Campaign has, once again, gone extremely well and we will receive our orders in early December.

In October, the Guild made donations to : Local Shelter Programs, Northern Christmas Help and the 1UP Single Parent Resource Centre Emergency Fund. As well, money was transferred to the 2018 Operational Budget of the Church. More Smile Cards are on order and coming soon. Remember that loaded Smile Cards make great Christmas Gifts! Look for them soon in the narthex mailbox area.

On December 11th, we will finish the year with a “Pot-Luck Luncheon” in the upper hall for all the Women of the Parish. All Attendees are asked to bring a warm scarf to donate to the needy plus, as many scarves as they would like to put in the “scarf-exchange” area. Attendees can then choose other ones to take home to “refresh” their wardrobe. It is a lot of fun!!! Each time we have done this, I have delivered a large tote of 50 [or more] warm scarves to the Cool-Aid Street Ministry the next day.

Ladies, please mark your calendars and bring a friend. There will be great door-prizes, good food and plenty of fellowship. Thanks to everyone for a great fall season and Merry Christmas!

Blessings, Lenore



Sandra Craig and Sue Hoffman serving sausage rolls in the kitchen.



Valda Kitching ready to welcome the community to our Christmas sale .

Next Guild Meeting

The December 11th Guild Meeting will be a special “Scarf-exchange” luncheon.

The next regular Guild meeting will be Tuesday, January 8th at noon.

All parish ladies are encouraged to attend.

Warden's Corner

Do You Hear What I Hear?

There are lots of signs and sounds of life and activity in our busy parish. This past September, St. Michael's was proudly represented by four delegates at our Diocesan Synod:

Dawna, Wardens Lanny Hubbard and Christine Eschman and youth delegate Annalise Wall as well as Stan Willow who attended as an observer. We gathered with those from across the Diocese at the Songhees Wellness Centre where drumming, singing and dancing swirled around us, as we reflected on the year of reconciliation and our ongoing conversations and friendships with First Nations and with each other.

In the weeks following Synod, the goals and accomplishments arising from this gathering were shared by each of the representatives. Some of these reflections can be read here in the Messenger.

Bishop Logan's Season of Discipleship will begin with Advent and will be our theme for the coming year. This focus will encourage us to intentionally explore a rule of life, a concept many know from the Benedictine tradition and one which is referred to on page 555 in the Book of Common Prayer. A Rule of Life encourages and helps Christians to shape each day with prayer and work and to see the natural overlaps between the two. The Bishop's hope is that this focus will help us grow closer to God and to one another, with the Gospel central in all that we do.

Our Study Group finished reading J. Phipp Newell's book Listening for the Heartbeat of God and using Newell's Celtic Prayers in our morning meditation time. We are grateful to the Rev. Dr. Adela Torchia for leading us in this engaging study as Dawna was teaching this term at the Vancouver School of the Theology. We will begin our Advent study on December 5th and will be looking at the curriculum produced by PWRDF that focuses on empowered women in scripture. Dawna will lead this study as we return to our usual Wednesday time frame, beginning at 10 a.m.

Blessings from Lanny, Christine, and Stan

The Prayer Path and Labyrinth Project Update

The Prayer Path and Labyrinth project continues to move along. As a result of the last town hall meeting, definitive planning has begun with the intent of getting the plan ready for approval.

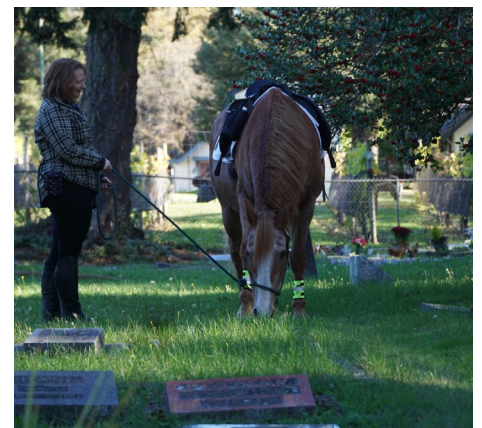
The project has three parts that compliment each other. The Prayer path will link the outdoor worship area with the Labyrinth and tie in the cemetery. Currently, we are seeking quotes for ground preparation and materials. There is still more to do such as the design of the outdoor altar, selection of the memorial bench design and the location of the Prayer Path throughout the three components.

This project will require some volunteer labour to complete the physical layout and the planning. Hmmm, this seems like a good project to volunteer for... Our lead for the project is Christine Eschman.

Submitted by Stan Willow



The Congregation posing for the "We are the Diocese" photo





Animal Blessing: October 14th

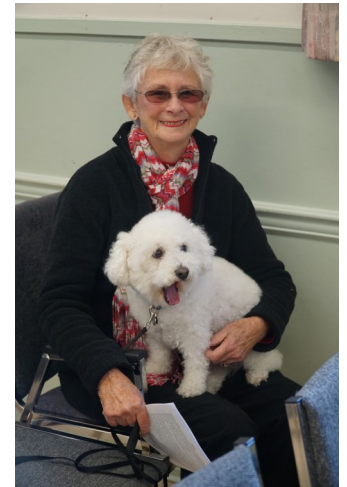
The annual Animal Blessing was held on October 14th and it was a full house with fortunately no misunderstandings amongst our special guests. Helen Love rode her horse, Anika, over and Anika enjoyed clipping the grass in the garden while waiting for the service to start and then thoughtfully left a deposit to help the flowers grow. The dogs and cats were blessed, and some bravely consented to meeting a horse for the first time.



135 Years Parish Celebration & Patronal Lunch: September 23rd



All Saints' Day September 28, 2018



Thanksgiving Service: October 7th, 2018

Love of Advent

I've always enjoyed Advent a little more than Christmas. The feeling of anticipation is somehow more satisfying to me than all the thoughtful gifts I find under our tree. I always enjoy the preparations for Christmas and how lighting the candles, trimming the tree and baking our family's favourite cookies is somehow wrapped up in hymns and prayers and the scriptures we know by heart.

Most of all, I love the contrast of Advent, the juxtaposition of light and darkness, joy and wistfulness. My feelings about Advent are articulated in one of my favourite collects, which describes putting on the armour of light and casting away the works of darkness. The image of being knighted with the bravery of faith gives me courage to explore the light and darkness within the world, and the idea of casting away darkness always makes me think of casting off a knitting project. A process that is not always easy, and not always perfect for me, but fills me with a sense of participation and satisfaction.

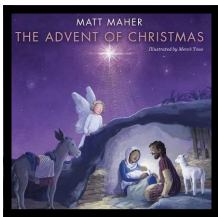
With Advent approaching, I'm beginning to reflect on the subtle changes, and differences that are a part of this new year. I love that even in the constancy and familiarity of the seasons we know so well, there is nuance and surprise.

Submitted by Annalise Wall



Parish Book Club

The Advent of Christmas by Matt Mayer



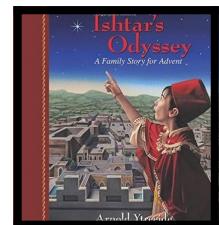
All is merry and all is bright;
It's the most wonderful time of the year.
Four weeks to slow down in the hustle and bustle,
The Advent of Christmas is here!

In a world that has reduced the weeks leading up to Christmas to a wearisome commercial spectacle, this book invites us to slow down, simplify, and remember what Christmas is all about.

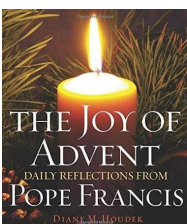


Ishtar's odyssey

Ishtar's Odyssey follows the ten-year-old son of a Persian wise man as their caravan follows a star across the desert. Ishtar would just as soon stay in the comfort of the palace, but slowly he learns that there's much to see, do, and learn in this world that can't be experienced in school. He eventually meets Jotham, Bartholomew, and Tabitha as he follows his father and uncles in their search for a newborn king.



The Joy of Advent



With prayerful reflections drawn from the words of Pope Francis, this Advent companion helps you prepare for the Christmas season. With Scripture citations for each day of the season, a selection from the popes writings, and ways to bring the popes message into your life, The Joy of Advent will lend a moments meditation to even your busiest days.

Submitted by Jo Ellen Schoblom

The History and Legend of the Poinsettia



The plant we know today as the poinsettia has long and interesting history. Native to Central America, the plant flourished in an area of Southern Mexico known as Taxco del Alarcon. The Aztecs used the plant decorative purposes but also put the plant to practical use. They extracted a purplish dye for use in textiles and cosmetics from the plant's bracts. The milky white sap, today called latex, was made into a preparation to treat fevers.



The poinsettia may have remained a regional plant for many years to come had it not been for the efforts of Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779-1851). The son of a French physician, Poinsett was appointed as the first United States Ambassador to Mexico (1825-1829) by President Madison. Poinsett had attended medical school himself, but his real love in the scientific field was botany. (Mr. Poinsett later founded the institution which we know today as the Smithsonian Institution).

Poinsett maintained his own hothouses on his Greenville, South Carolina plantations, and while visiting the Taxco area in 1828, he became enchanted by the brilliant red blooms he saw there. He immediately sent some of the plants back to South Carolina, where he began propagating the plants and sending them to friends and botanical gardens.

Among the recipients of Poinsett's work was John Bartram of Philadelphia, who in turn gave the plant over to another friend, Robert Buist, a Pennsylvania nurseryman. Mr. Buist is thought to be the first person to have sold the plant under its botanical name, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*. It is thought to have become known by its more popular name of poinsettia around 1836, the origin of the name recognizing the man who first brought the plant to the United States.

Congress honored Joel Poinsett by declaring December 12th as National Poinsettia Day which commemorates the date of his death in 1851. The day was meant to honor Poinsett and encourage people to enjoy the beauty of the popular holiday plant.

A charming story is told of Pepita, a poor Mexican girl who had no gift to present the Christ Child at Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked slowly to the chapel with her cousin Pedro, her heart was filled with sadness rather than joy. I am sure, Pepita, that even the most humble gift, if given in love, will be acceptable in His eyes," said Pedro consolingly.

Not knowing what else to do, Pepita knelt by the roadside and gathered a handful of common weeds, fashioning them into a small bouquet. Looking at the scraggly bunch of weeds, she felt more saddened and embarrassed than ever by the humbleness of her offering. She fought back a tear as she entered the small village chapel.

As she approached the altar, she remembered Pedro's kind words: "Even the most humble gift, if given in love, will be acceptable in His eyes." She felt her spirit lift as she knelt to lay the bouquet at the foot of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into blooms of brilliant red, and all who saw them were certain that they had witnessed a Christmas miracle right before their eyes.

From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the Flores de Noche Buena, or Flowers of the Holy Night, for they bloomed each year during the Christmas season and thus, the legend of the poinsettia was born.

Submitted by Phyllis Fatt

<https://www.phoenixflowershops.com/pages/poinsettiahistory.htm>



Interwoven Stories: Conversations at Diocesan Synod

Whether it was a quick discussion at a delegate's designated table with someone they wouldn't ordinarily encounter, with a friend and fellow parishioner in the lunch line, or a question addressed about a controversial motion, the 98th Diocesan Synod was, for me, filled with the over-arching theme of conversation. The conversations surrounding Indigenous reconciliation were especially poignant, as presenters looked from the podium into a sea of orange shirts, and faces eager to contribute and participate in the ongoing work of reconciliation.

My table group housed members of the newly formed Diocesan Youth Council: Ashley Blair, Aleesha Barkemeier, Claire Knowles, and Elizabeth Walker, along with the Reverends Craig Hiebert and Aneeta Saroop. Over the course of Synod, our conversations ranged from Diocesan related themes to Harry Potter houses, and to the knitting of a prayer shawl which kept my hands focused and my mind on task. It was during a knitting session with Christine Eschman, a warden from my parish of Saint Michael and All Angels', that I was struck by how all of the conversations, casual and formal, at Synod were interwoven, and knitted together by a hopeful thread for the Diocese's future, and the vision we share for it.

This was especially apparent in the worship services organized throughout Synod. Each service was designed and led by a different group, for example, the Emerging Futures team and the Emmaus Community each led a service. The Diocesan Youth Council led a 12:15 Eucharist on Saturday, in which we strove to blend the traditional lyricism that attracts many youth to church with some hints of different liturgy, for example a dramatic dialogue in response to the Gospel. "Along for the Ride", the dramatic dialogue, centered on the different ways disciples and others would describe Jesus (for example, Peter, Mary Magdalene, the Syro-Phonecian woman). Through all of these different services and conversations, the 98th Synod was a prayerful and intriguing discussion, with previously unheard voices being raised and overwhelmingly supported by the diocese.

Submitted by Annalise Wall, aka Lois Lane, Roving Reporter



Church Activities and You

Have you ever wanted to help during the service or do some parish community service but didn't know how to be involved? Maybe you want to offer some flowers in memory of someone or would like to read a lesson during a service. I was like that for years, wondering where the greeters, readers and lay people were found to fulfill those positions.

Well, there are several activities and opportunities available for you. All you need is a desire to be involved in the life of the Parish. There are always vacancies to fill and temporary assistance needed for St Michael's activities. The easiest way to get involved is to speak to the appropriate coordinator. To do that, phone the office and Catie can direct you to the right person or talk to any of the three wardens who would be glad to help you. Our Parish is a self-supported organization that only improves with our participation.

Some of the Roles include:

- Greeters
- Readers
- Altar Guild
- Coffee hour hosts
- Support for the annual fall fair, Christmas sale, or plant sale
- Sunday school
- Grounds cleanup (twice a year)
- The library
- Returnable container sorting
- Food bank donation delivery
- Shrove Tuesday and other celebration day events
- Flower offerings
- Article contributions to The Messenger
- The Grounds Prayer Path Project
- Parish Council and their committees

Submitted by Stan Willow



Pause for Poetry

Advent Creed

We believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth.
The one who is full of patience,
who is not afraid of silence,
who does not need to fill each moment with activity and noise.
The one who is beyond bluster and flurry,
and who does not jostle for attention.

We believe in God the Son, Saviour of creation,
who slipped into Bethlehem one night, mostly unnoticed,
who lived thirty years without headlines or hurry,
who frequently took time alone with his patient Father,
who waited for the right time to become the suffering servant,
who stood quietly before the noise of his accusers,
whose silence overpowered their words,
who died, then rose again on a quiet Sunday morning.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens, empowers, renews and refreshes,
sometimes arriving with obvious power,
sometimes with the quiet breath of a whisper.

We believe in one God
who patiently waits for us,
and who longs for us to do the same.

By Dave Hopwood (Engageworship.org)



Mary

Startled!
An angel appears
bringing news of a child.
A baby?
For me?
Surely it's impossible for a virgin to conceive.

Terrified!
What about Joseph?
How to explain?
Imagine the scandal,
the stares and the shouts.
I'll surely be stoned when the news gets out.

Amazed
by words of comfort,
of hope,
of joy.
The child that I carry
is a special baby boy.
A saviour sent from God!

Overjoyed
that the LORD
has blessed his servant.
The mighty one has done great things.
May it be to me just as you say.

Art by Valda Kitching



Making the House Ready for the Lord

Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but
still nothing is as shining as it should be
for you. Under the sink, for example, is an
uproar of mice it is the season of their
many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves
and through the walls the squirrels
have gnawed their ragged entrances but it is the season
when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And
the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard
while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;
what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling
in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly
up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will
come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,
the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know
that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,
as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.

By Mary Oliver
Contributed by Rosalind Taylor

Who Was Good King Wenceslas?

Which of you is not familiar with the popular carol “Good King Wenceslas”?

But how many of you know the true story behind that carol? I’d like to tell you about it ...



The words of the carol tells us that the aforementioned good king was looking out of his castle and saw a poor man foraging for firewood in the forest. In an act of Christian charity, Wenceslas decides to spread the Christmas cheer and sets off with his page, into the cold and the dark, to make sure the wretch enjoys himself to the full. But who was the real-life inspiration for the saintly monarch, and was good King Wenceslas as good as the carol would have us believe?

Well, first of all you can discard the narrative from the carol as fact, as it was invented by the Victorian caroler, J.M. Neale, in 1853. But, you’ll be relieved to hear that Wenceslas did at least exist, although he wasn’t a king. He was actually a duke, but you could call him a prince if you were feeling generous. Born circa AD 907, in Stochov near Prague, in what is now the Czech Republic, he was the ruler of the principality of Bohemia. He was raised as a Christian by his grandmother, Saint Lyudmila. His mother, Drahomira, was a pagan, and ruthlessly ambitious. She had Lyudmila murdered and then ruled as regent herself until Wenceslas came of age. However, intrigue plagued her court and a desire on the behalf of the populace to see an end to the conflicts between the Christian and non-Christian factions within the region led to Wenceslas taking the reigns of government himself.

As a mark of his Christian upbringing, it is said that Wenceslas took a vow of virginity and that German missionary priests, seeking to make Bohemia Christian, enjoyed his wholehearted support. By AD 929 Christianity was spreading throughout Bohemia, but Wenceslas’ own converting zeal upset his non-Christian rivals. That same year, faced with the threat of invasions from Germany, Wenceslas submitted to the German King, Henry I. This upset the nobles still further, who then plotted to get rid of him. These same nobles colluded with Wenceslas’ own brother, Boleslav, who waylaid him on his way to mass. Boleslav cut him down at the door to the church, hacking him to pieces. Wenceslas was only twenty-two years old.

Almost as soon as he was buried, there came reports of miracles taking place at Wenceslas’ tomb. In AD 932, fear of reprisals from beyond the grave, the superstitious Boleslav had his dead brother’s remains disinterred and moved to the Church of Saint Vitus, in Prague itself. The church was a popular pilgrimage site during Medieval times and eventually became a cathedral. Wenceslas himself was canonized and made patron saint of Bohemia.

By Raymond W. Ireson;

<http://www.edmontonstampclub.com/Bulletin/201610.pdf>

Submitted by Peter Goddard

A Sideways Glance at Christmas Joy



My first memory of a Christmas has me in a push-chair on a crisp winter evening. It was not long after the end of WWII, blackouts were still in use, and where we lived the sky was truly dark. I was pointing upwards and quoting, "The stars in the bright sky" (from *Away in a Manger*), having heard it sung in church. When I'm outside on a similar night nowadays, I think of that scene from over 70 years ago.

Wartime and food rationing meant that festive edibles were especially valued. (None of 2018's all-year embarrassment of choices). Christmas began on Christmas Eve, when Mum came home from her office job at mid-day, her wicker basket containing special things for the fruit bowl. Prized among them were tangerines -- the real ones with pips -- and the unique odour of peeling a real tangerine today speaks to me of the endurance of my family, my friends and my country in making it possible for us to enjoy such overseas delicacies on that special day.

One Christmas Dad cadged a Christmas tree from a farmer friend, and was told, "Cut what you want from a tree over there". Heights proved deceptive, and the topmost end of the tree he chose proved to be way too large, so he cut it in half. Even the top half of that would not fit inside his Austin 7 car, so he drove home with it sticking out of the roof, and people cheered. The little tree proved too tall for its designated corner, and on being manoeuvred around it knocked the telephone off the wall and smashed it. The telephone company refused to come out on Christmas Eve, causing much bad feeling about the "little" Christmas tree.

A few years later we were farming near a picturesque olde-worlde village in the Sussex countryside. Dad was organist and choir-master at the village church, and during the evenings before Christmas the choir (young boys and girls plus adults) would visit the local Big Houses (the Manor, the country Inn, country residences, and the artists' homes) to sing carols. I felt stunned by the luxury of those houses and at the way the other half of the village lived. Probably the fatherless Council Estate kids in the choir felt it too, from the way they pounced on the ample refreshments which the landed gentry provided.

December 26 (Boxing Day) was a different story. The landed gentry put on the armour of grandeur and, astride expensive and immaculate horses, trod the countryside to follow fox-hounds with a presumptuousness that suggested they owned the place (as their ancestors had done in feudal times). Dad fumed at the way the shod hooves cut up the fields, and would erect barricades to keep them out.

Boxing Day was also the traditional start to the town Sales, when (mostly) the female carriers of humanity's natural nastiness, sided temporarily for Christmas Day, was uncorked again and she with the sharpest elbows gleefully got the best bargains. Shops got wise to the tradition and started importing inferior goods to sell off in The Sales, until retailing laws caught up with them.

Christmas Day was the most hectic time of the year for a dairy farmer who doubled as the church organist. The cows had to be milked, and all the livestock fed and watered, before we could leave to attend church. One year the Rector's wife (a one-time mother of 4) berated us for being a tad late, and dismissed the excuse that we still needed to milk the cows, whatever the date, by retorting "But why? The milkman doesn't deliver on Christmas Day."

Towns around England vied with each other over the most attractive or innovative street decorations. Cambridge excelled itself one year by suspending life-sized angels between lamp-posts in the town centre. Unfortunately the material of their dresses was not sufficiently porous, and the rainwater that they collected made the angels look pregnant.



Submitted by Elizabeth Griffin

Meditation Moments

Advent

Wind whistling, as it does
in winter, and I think
nothing of it until

it snaps a shutter off
her bedroom window, spins
it over the roof and down

to crash on the deck in back,
like something out of Oz.
We look up, stunned—then glad

to be safe and have a story,
characters in a fable
we only half-believe.

Look, in my surprise
I somehow split a wall,
the last one in the house

we're making of gingerbread.
We'll have to improvise:
prop the two halves forward

like an open double door
and with a tube of icing
cement them to the floor.



Five days until Christmas,
and the house cannot be closed.
When she peers into the cold

interior we've exposed,
she half-expects to find
three magi in the manger,

a mother and her child.
She half-expects to read
on tablets of gingerbread

a line or two of Scripture,
as she has every morning
inside a dated shutter

on her Advent calendar.
She takes it from the mantel
and coaxes one fingertip

under the perforation,
as if her future hinges
on not tearing off the flap

under which a thumbnail picture
by Raphael or Giorgione,
Hans Memling or David

of apses, niches, archways,
cradles a smaller scene
of a mother and her child,

of the lidded jewel-box
of Mary's downcast eyes.
Flee into Egypt, cries

the angel of the Lord
to Joseph in a dream,
for Herod will seek the young

child to destroy him. While
she works to tile the roof
with shingled peppermints,

I wash my sugared hands
and step out to the deck
to lug the shutter in,

a page torn from a book
still blank for the two of us,
a mother and her child.

By Mary Jo Salter



Art by Valda Kitching

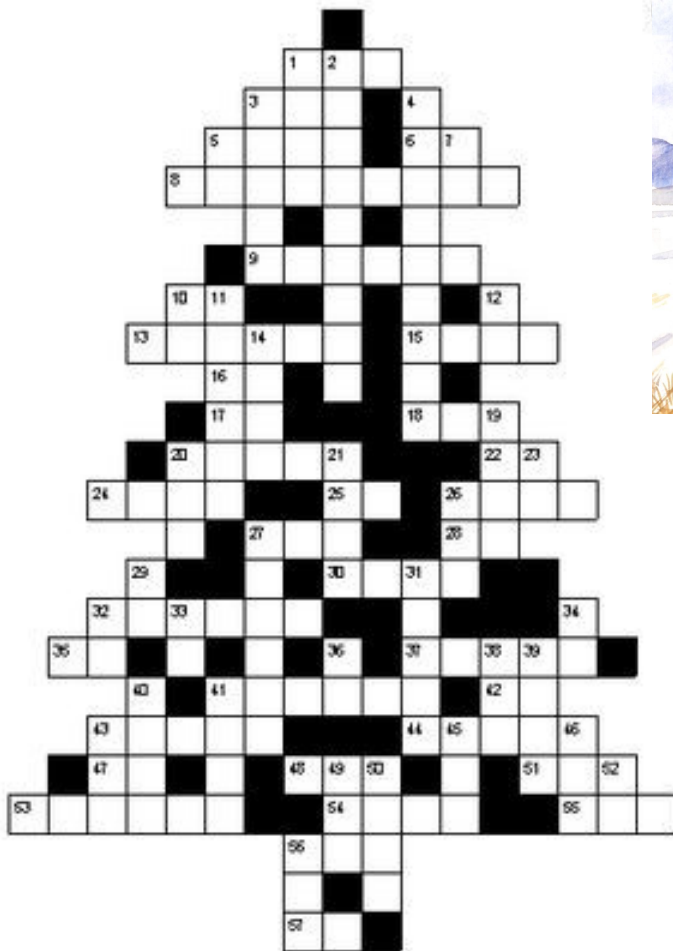
Christmas Inspiration

With time we see, through wiser eyes, the greatest gifts God sends
Aren't power, fame, or fortune, but our families and friends;
We find that dreams aren't just for kids, that prayer can save the day,
That life's a whole lot sweeter when we laugh along the way...

We learn that simple caring means the world when times are tough,
That hugs can sometimes say it all when words are not enough,
We learn to keep a childlike faith forever in our hearts,
For that's where hope and love are born, where every good thing starts.

Contributed by Valda Kitching

Puzzles without Solutions



Across

1. President
3. Observe
5. Discuss
6. "And _____ shall reign over the house of Jacob..."
8. Flock watchers
9. Satisfy
10. The great I _____
13. Mary's resting place
15. Mother of Jesus
16. Negative
17. "_____ and search diligently for the young child"
18. Jesus is the _____ of God
20. The baby
22. "...and shall be called the Son _____ of the Highest."
24. Destitute
25. "...and laid Him _____ a manger"
26. Bearded nanny
27. "And she brought her first born _____."
28. "...and _____ earth peace, good will towards men."
30. Wiseman gift
32. "And _____ him with all the heart" (two words)
35. "...what have we to _____ with thee, thou Jesus..."
37. What the wisemen brought
41. Stepfather
42. Either
43. More accurate.
44. "And all went to be _____, every one into his own city."
47. "For unto you _____ born this day
48. No room here
51. Consume
53. Singing Cherubs
54. Present decorations
55. "For unto you is born, this _____ in the city..."
56. Pro
57. Way to win in boxing



Art by Valda Kitching

Down

1. Jump
2. Birth city
3. Shepherds flock
4. The Holiday we observe
5. Brand of suger
7. Mr. McMahon
10. "Hee shall be born of Mary, _____ Jerusalem..."
11. Baby's bed
12. Northwestern state
14. Hisses
19. Mid day
20. Happiness
21. What the angels did
23. "_____ la la la la la la la"
26. Jehovah
27. Redeemer
29. "His name was called Jesus, which was _____ named of the angel"
31. Illumination
32. "and it came _____ pass..."
33. "... and _____, the star which they saw in the east..."
34. "When _____ his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph,"
36. "Master what shall _____ do?"
38. Sly canine
39. Decorated pine
40. "...behold, there came _____ men from the east."
41. Not Gentiles
43. Parable of the _____ tree
45. Mary's transportation
46. Father
49. Broadcast TV network
50. Christmas carol
52. Instructor's helper
56. Inquire

My Polish Grandma's Russian Egg Recipe

When I was a child, My Bubcia (Grandmother in Polish) lived next to Central High School. She always made these for us when we visited and served it with horseradish mayonnaise. It was guaranteed to make us frequent guests. I still remember the flavour 45 years later and always wondered how she split the eggs. The trick is to cut the eggs in half...Good luck.

- ♥ 3 hard boiled eggs
 - ♥ 2 tbsps. sour cream
 - ♥ 1 tbsps. bread crumbs
 - ♥ 1 tbsp. chopped green onions
 - ♥ Salt
 - ♥ Pepper
 - ♥ 1 tbsp. bread crumbs
 - ♥ 2 tbsps. butter (no margarine for this)
1. Fold a cloth in several layers and hold the egg lengthwise. With a heavy sharp knife, split the egg lengthwise partly through with a firm stroke of the knife. Firmly finish the cut but do not break the egg shell. Do this for all the eggs.
 2. Remove the egg from the halves and reserve the shells intact.
 3. In a bowl chop eggs finely, stir in the sour cream, 1 tbsp of bread crumbs and the green onion. Season to taste.
 4. Carefully pack the egg mixture back into the shells.
 5. Place remaining bread crumbs on a small plate and lightly press the egg mixture into the crumbs to form a crust.
 6. Heat the butter and fry the bread crumb side until lightly browned.
 7. Serve immediately.

Submitted by Stan Willow

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The Messenger is the newsletter of St. Michael and All Angels' Anglican Church. The Messenger is a communication means for members of the parish. It does not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the editor, or the church. While the newsletter exists for parishioners to contribute their news, opinions and views, the editor may edit articles in order to facilitate understanding and fit space.

Contributions should report on parish activities, advertise upcoming events or be original literary articles, which are church related, maximum 500 words.

Please send submissions to the church office, preferably by e-mail to



"I've been good...
my mom's the problem."