

It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope. *Pope Benedict XVI*

The Spirit of St. Mark's

Parish Newsletter

December 2, 2018

FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

We never know when these encounters might happen. A friend was describing recently a conversation she had with a heavily tattooed sales clerk at a local store. My friend shared that she too recently had gotten her first tattoo. 'What is it?' asked the clerk. My friend told her it was a fish, a symbol of Christian faith. (Back in the days of persecution in the early church, Christians would use the symbol as a secret way of signaling their faith without arousing suspicion from others – the first letters in the Greek alphabet of Jesus Christ Son of God, Saviour spelt ΙΧΘΥΣ or ichthys which translates as 'fish' in Greek). 'So what has Christ ever done for you?' the clerk shot back. It wasn't a question my friend was expecting. She gathered herself and responded that Christ had done three things she could think of: Christ had sustained her throughout her life – in good times and in bad; Christ had protected both her family and her when they had been living in challenging surroundings in the Arctic; Christ continued to guide her throughout the day in choices she needed to make. It was the clerk's turn to ponder. Then she asked if she could stop by for a visit with my friend because she wanted to find out more about Christ. We never know when an opportunity might present itself.

Advent is a time of preparation. It is a season of waiting. Sure, we are preparing ourselves to celebrate God's First Coming into our midst in all the vulnerability and innocence of a newborn crying to be fed in a barn. We are also awaiting expectantly God's Second Coming, Jesus' triumphal return. He is the One before whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord. Advent is also a time when we allow God to attune us and to sensitise us to the myriad of ways God is already showing up in our daily lives – as God chose to show up in my friend's day through her encounter with a store clerk.



Sometimes, we do need to slow down and pay attention, because God, the all-powerful One who put it all aside to assume the struggles and challenges of our day-to-day lives, often comes to us in small, hidden and unexpected ways. The mystery of Christmas is that God engages with us as one of us – weak, broken, vulnerable,

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May the miracle of the Christmas season fill your heart with joy.

subject to illness, frustration and disappointment – that we might know God is with us and for us, and will never, ever, ever let us go. This is how Martin Luther expressed the truth in a Christmas sermon in 1530: *If Christ had arrived with trumpets and lain in a cradle of gold, his birth would have been a splendid affair. But it would not be a comfort to me. He was rather to lie in the lap of a poor maiden and be thought of little significance in the eyes of the world. Now I can come to him. Now he reveals himself to the miserable in order not to give any impression that he arrives with great power, splendor, wisdom, and aristocratic manners.*

Is this something we struggle to understand, let alone recognise and experience? Of course, it is! It's one of the reasons the church gives us the season of Advent. Truth be told, we need at least four weeks to welcome this truth once again – that God has done everything, and still does everything, to reveal to us God's all-sustaining, ever-protecting and constantly guiding love to which my friend was able to testify in her conversation with the store clerk.

This Advent and Christmas, may God surprise you yet again with just how far God is willing to go to communicate his all-embracing and fathomless love for you and for all those whom you hold dear.

A blessed Advent, Christmastide and Epiphanytide to you and your loved ones.

Tim+

The next date for
Baptism is January
13th.

If you are seeking
baptism for
yourself or your
child, please call
the church office
(519-752-6451) for
additional dates.

A REPORT FROM OUR CHURCH WARDENS

St. Mark's is truly a blessed community. We have watched so many groups grow and become deeper in their spiritual journeys; we've witnessed outstanding outreach to our community and beyond and are in awe of the overall generous and loving care of our parishioners.

Our job as Wardens is not always an easy one as we continually work towards ensuring St. Mark's is compliant with Safe Church Policies, Insurance Policies, Employment Policies and many more administrative responsibilities that are deemed the duties of a church warden. We continue to work diligently to keep all of our procedures current and protect the assets of your church and we appreciate everyone's cooperation in making this possible for us.

We want to thank all of our outstanding staff who provide amazing programmes and always put in the extra effort to make sure these programmes reach their full potential. The staff works as a team to not only support each other but to

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Hold this time close to your heart and feel the warmth of God's love this holiday season!

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERVICES

December 2nd	1st Sunday in Advent	
	Holy Eucharist (BCP)	9:00 am
	Holy Eucharist (BAS)	10:30 am
December 5th	Midweek Eucharist	
		10:00 am
December 9th	2nd Sunday in Advent	
	Holy Eucharist (BCP)	9:00 am
	Holy Eucharist (BAS)	10:30 am
December 12th	Senior's Christmas Eucharist	
		11:00 am
December 16th	3rd Sunday in Advent	
	Holy Eucharist (BCP)	9:00 am
	Christmas Pageant	10:30 am
December 19th	Midweek Eucharist	
		10:00 am
December 23rd	4th Sunday in Advent	
	A Service of Lessons and Carols	9:00 am
	A Service of Lessons and Carols <i>(Reserve sacrament available following the service.)</i>	10:30 am
December 24th	Christmas Eve	
	Christmas Eucharist	4:00 pm
	Christmas Eucharist	7:00 pm
	Candlelight Eucharist	10:30 pm
December 25th	Christmas Day	
	Christmas Eucharist (with carols)	10:00 am
December 30th	Christmas 1	
	Holy Eucharist (with brunch)	10:00 am

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support everyone from the child to the senior. Their love and care for our parishioners is a true blessing and the Wardens and Parish Council want to take this opportunity to thank each one of them during this Christmas Season. Of course, a huge thank you also to all of the volunteers who put in countless hours to make our parish seem to run effortlessly.

As the season quickly approaches, we want to remind you of the '*Reason for the Season*'. Christ was born to save us from our sins and to give us eternal life. As you celebrate with family and friends this Christmas season, remember the Child that was born on Christmas morn. We all wish you a very blessed Christmas.

Vicki, Christine, Steve and Neil

The star of Bethlehem shone when Christ was born.
In the darkest nights, Christ's love still shines the brightest.

BOOK STUDY

Beginning in the New Year and prior to Lent, you are invited to participate in an afternoon book study at St. Mark's. Exact times and dates to be announced. A sign-up list will be on the Information Table in the next several weeks. Please sign up so that books can be ordered. We will discuss Barbara Brown Taylor's book *An Altar in the World*. Taylor is an acclaimed author, speaker, and a priest in the Episcopal Church.

In the New York Times bestseller *An Altar in the World*, Barbara Brown Taylor shares how she learned to find God beyond the church walls by embracing the sacred as a natural part of everyday life. In *An Altar in the World*, Taylor shows us how to discover altars everywhere we go and in nearly everything we do as we learn to live with purpose, pay attention, slow down, and revere the world we live in.

Facilitators are the Rev. Margaret Shortell and Fr. Bob Schroeder. Watch for further details.

Offering envelopes for 2019 will be available for pick on December 10th.

If you would like envelopes or would like to change your method of giving, please contact the envelope secretaries, Dan and Anne Walker at 519-756-3685.

CHRISTMAS AT MESSY CHURCH

Coming up on Friday, December 14th, our theme for the evening is centred around the manger and how to decide how we can make room for God in our lives. There will be a variety of crafts, songs, sensory play and the greatest story ever told. We even have a special visitor and treats!

A turkey dinner with all the trimmings will be served at about 6:10 p.m. Our Messy Church families and visitors are welcome to bring a traditional dish that is a family favourite at this time of year either for main course or dessert. But remember, all are welcome with or without a pot-luck dish.



After dinner, our Messy Church congregation is invited to hear a special Christmas presentation from our Children's Choir directed by Alison Clark and two local school choirs under the direction of music teacher Kaleena Snell beginning at 7:00 p.m. This concert is a special gift to all of our St. Mark's congregations and our community!

We hope to see you on December 14th around 5:00 p.m. for this special Christmas celebration.

Each day of the holidays comes bringing its own gifts.
Open your heart, untie the ribbons, and enjoy the contents!

CHILD AND FAMILY MINISTRY

We have so many joyful Christian holiday experiences at St . Mark's to offer to our children, their families and to our community at large.

Sunday School and the Christmas Pageant

Sunday School classes K-6 are 'getting ready' to welcome Advent and to practise each Sunday for our annual Christmas Pageant entitled '*Jesus Born Today*'. This year our pageant about the birth of our Lord has a peppermint twist: What would it be like if Jesus was born in Brantford? Our dress rehearsal takes place on Saturday, December 15th at 10:00 a.m. There are lots of roles for children who can't make it on a regular Sunday but would like to be part of our pageant; costuming is provided and songs are familiar. Please come and know you are welcome!

Following the rehearsal in the church, the children will move to St. Mark's Hall for a well-deserved snack and will have the opportunity to craft a Christmas decoration until noon. This might be a great opportunity for parents or caregivers to leave the children behind and Christmas shop!



Our pageant will take place Sunday, December 16th during the 10:30 worship service. Come and enjoy and please stay after for a Soup and Sandwich lunch and a special visitor (with treats!).

Monday, December 24th

Please join us at 4:00 p.m. on December 24th for a family service which includes all ages and stages and learn about the *Christmas Legend of the Stork*.

Sunday, December 30th

Please join our congregations for a combined service on Sunday, December 30th at 10:00 a.m. followed by a New Years' Brunch! Sunday School will be held for children at 10:00 a.m. in Munro Hall to discuss Christmas Legends.

Sunday, January 6th

Regular Sunday School commences at 10:30 a.m. to discover Epiphany!

Merry Christmas to all from Pat McMillan, Children and Young Families Coordinator, and the St. Mark's teaching staff.

Christmas is a day of meaning and traditions, a special day spent in the warm circle of family and friends.

SOME NEWS AND NOTES

Hearfelt thanks to all those who have contributed to the Daily Bread gift card programme. As you may recall, the funds you have contributed have been used in the past to purchase \$20 gift cards for clients at the Daily Bread Christmas dinner. In consultation with Lil Paul, Parish Council has decided to allocate funds donated for gift cards this year to next year's programme. All children will continue to receive a gift this year. Next year, with the support of a very generous donation from the Foresters and using accumulated funds from your donations, St. Mark's is planning to put together gift bags for the clients.

Thank you too to those who generously support the Rector's Discretionary Fund. This Fund allows me to respond to specific financial needs 'at my discretion.' Those needs may include assistance with food, medication and medical supplies, rental assistance, emergency accommodation or financial support during work interruption. Without disclosing any information which might reveal the identity of those needing help, it is my practice to consult with the treasurer before making any disbursement as a way of ensuring accountability for how the funds are deployed. At our October meeting, Parish Council recently indicated their support for a monthly contribution of \$100 from the Discretionary Fund to the

Children's Breakfast Programme at Northland Gardens, the community housing project south of St. Mark's on Memorial Drive. The programme currently offers breakfast to 57 children on three mornings per week at a cost of \$0.80 per meal. Through our contribution, the organisers will be able to offer more nutritious breakfasts to a greater number of kids. Thanks be to God.



By the time you are reading this, we will have completed Alpha, a course introducing participants to the Christian faith. I have been delighted with the response to the programme from folk both within and outside the St. Mark's community. The number of friendships which have developed amongst participants over the Fall has been especially encouraging. My hope and prayer is that some of the table groups will continue meeting as small groups after the course concludes. Our thanks to all those who have worked hard to support the programme: those who have set up, cooked, cleaned up and hosted table groups. Our thanks to Christine Fournier who not only coordinated the event, but had her hands in the sink while we were watching the DVD presentations.

I was thrilled too with the response from the community to the various events the

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All submissions for the Vestry Report need to be e-mailed to Anne Walker no later than January 14th.

The Vestry Meeting is on February 3rd.

The three wise men saw the light and followed it.
They are rightly called wise!

A THANK YOU FROM TYSON MENARD



Dear Holly Jolly vendors and volunteers: Thank you for your participation and donations for St. Mark's Church. I'd like to take this time to acknowledge the person responsible for organizing it this year, Mrs. Laurie Murray. Holly Jolly gives us the chance to make new friends, see new people and just have fun with one another. So now we pray.

Dear God, thank you for all the people that came to help at Holly Jolly and all the vendors and staff and even just the shoppers. Thank you for bringing us all here today, meeting new friends and seeing new faces so thank you for that. Amen.



The 2019 flower and candle charts will be available on Sunday, December 16th. At that time, please feel free to write your name and phone number on any available date.

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Reconciling Circle sponsored during Treaties Recognition Week: two film nights followed by discussion here in Brantford, a blanket exercise in Hamilton family craft night at the Mohawk Chapel and a public forum on treaties affecting the Haldimand Tract at the Woodland Cultural Centre. We support these events as a concrete step towards building relationship with our Six Nations sisters and brothers, and developing a better understanding of one another and the issues we face as Treaty people. Our thanks to Nancy Harvey for her commitment on our behalf to promoting this important work.



I hope you have had an opportunity to check out our fully accessible family washroom. I cannot tell you how pleased and thankful I am that we are now able to offer enhanced facilities to those with mobility issues and to families with infants. It is a great gift, especially as more folk in our life are needing to use walkers and as we welcome more young families, particularly at Messy Church. Our heartfelt thanks to Anne and Dan Walker, to Elaine and Duane Bower, and to all those who served in varying capacities on the project - Mary Henderson, Becky Menard, Henry Tabak, Benton Forde, Neil Dunning, John Walker and those who financially supported this project.

Holly Jolly Faire is our principal fundraiser during the year and it requires a tremendous amount of preparation and organisation. It really is a community event. I am deeply grateful to Laurie Murray and her team for another highly successful bazaar. HJF brought in over \$6 000, even with the competition from other Christmas bazaars happening on the same day. Our thanks to all who contributed to the team effort.

See Christ in every person. Be charitable and share your blessings. This is our chance to realize how blessed we are.

CHRISTMAS BASKETS 2018

The goal of this programme is simple - to ensure that no child goes without a toy at Christmas, and that no family goes without Christmas Dinner. We believe that every person should feel special and cared-for during this wonderful time of year.

The Christmas Basket programme relies on the generosity of our community to keep it running. Listed below are several ways that you can help.

Volunteer - Due to the late start this year, there is a desperate need for volunteer help. Please consider donating some time. Volunteers are also required to help with delivering the hampers on Friday, December 21st. Just arrive at the former Sears store at 8:00 a.m. with your vehicle and instructions will be provided. If you would like more information, call 519-751-0000 or speak with Jim or Betty Kelso.

Monetary Donations - A donation of \$50.00 made through your church envelopes will provide breakfast, lunch and a turkey dinner with all the trimmings for a family of 5.

The Mitten Tree - Mittens, hats and scarves are needed for adults and children.

Toys - You can add your donations of new or gently used toys to the box in St. Mark's Hall. If you are donating used toys, please make sure that they are in good condition, washed and in working order.

Colouring Books and Crayons - New colouring books, crayons, puzzles, etc. are always appreciated.

Food - We have been asked to provide canned fruit and cranberry sauce for the Christmas hampers.

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP UPDATE

There is no news yet on the arrival date of the Iraqi Refugee family that is presently in Jordan. The family is waiting for their Exit Visa interview and no information is available until that interview is scheduled. Please remember them in your prayers. It is an anxious time for them. Thanks to those of you that are storing furniture and household items until the family arrives.



ROCK SOLID YOUTH

One of the service projects that the St. Mark's youth has been working on this past month, is collecting Christmas cards to mail to members of the armed forces who won't be home for the holiday season. Some of our members, Christina, Bradley, Brianna, Ethan and Keegan signed a message that went into the 309 cards that they collected and mailed off.

What a great way to start off our Advent adventures.