

THE GOOD NEWS

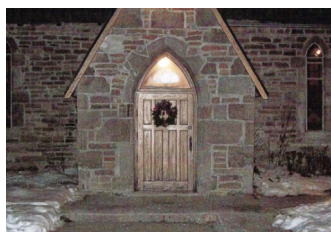


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Peace on Earth



REFLECTION:

SUBMITTED BY FATHER JOHN STOPA

The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us... This is the Gospel reading we use from the Gospel of St. John (John 1:14) on Christmas morning. It emphasizes our belief that God's Truth, God's Essence, God's Everything came to us in human form. God – in the form of Jesus Christ – became man in all things but sin and lived among us.

Recently, someone asked me why God chose that particular era and why God chose that particular place and culture? Why wouldn't God choose a better time: like now – we have better communications, for instance, and God's message could get out a lot faster. God could reach a wider audience; certainly, much wider than a dozen men and some other stragglers who followed his Son. God would have been more effective in 2019 reaching people in this age of the Internet and 5G networks, no? – and in this age of great enlightenment? We are, after all, a more aware people... aren't we?

Are we?

God's actions remain a mystery in all things. Why God chose a backward time and backward place is part of that great mys-

tery. Remember to whom the message of Jesus' birth first comes to, according to the Gospel of Luke: the angels announce the birth of Jesus not to Kings or Emperors, but to shepherds out with their flocks, out in the middle of the fields. Lowly, simple shepherds. And, God sent his Son into the midst not of glamour and prominence, but



of scarcity: there was no room in the inn, he was laid in a feeding trough (Luke 2:7). From that moment onward, God knew with a human understanding – as well as a divine one – what it was like to be a vulnerable human, in the frailness of the human condition.

If you take anything from the Christmas message this year, my hope and prayer is that you will remember this theme that "The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us." God chose to save humanity. God chose to liberate us from our sinfulness.

God chose to take on our frailty and live as one of us.

God didn't have to do that. But God did that to show us that God loves us.

If we live with that truth as our reality, then our own lives can be transformed into something rich and beautiful. We need only look at the beauty of the created world around us – and it is a beautiful planet and universe and galaxy and..., and we can marvel at the hands of God who made it all.

The Word became Flesh; God invites us into becoming Jesus' disciples, and into also living God's word in our lives. God's Word continues to dwell in us and through us, because we allow God to work in our lives that we may become that which God calls us to be.



I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Holy New Year and decade!



She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21



Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

Luke 2: 13-14



Members of St. Thomas' were greeted by a frightened raccoon when they arrived at church on a lovely Sunday morning in November.



CHRISTMAS TRAVELERS

EXCERPT BY RALPH F WILSON SUBMITTED BY LORRAINE MADORE

Christmas recalls the story of travelers propelled by the unhurried rhythm of their animals:

*We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.*

Why did these wisemen undertake such a journey?

A tall astronomer, advisor to the Persian king, springs from his midnight vigil in the palace courtyard. "Casper, come! Look along the road I've sighted toward the constellation of the Jews." Casper peers into the blackness. "Do you see it? That brilliant star is new tonight! It must signify the birth of a mighty king."

A soft whistle escapes him as he spots it. "There it is!" He's talking rapidly now. "I've read ancient Hebrew scriptures which tell of this ruler's star." Rising, he announces, "We must see him. We must go!"

Traversing the caravan routes of Persia, Babylon, and Syria for 1,200 miles, they ford broad rivers, pass ancient cities, cross barren deserts. Three months they trek westward, day after day, "following yonder star."

In Jerusalem they inquire, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." Wor-

ship? So the Babe is more than a king!

Now they follow the shining star till it rests over a simple Bethlehem home. At early dawn neighbors gather to watch the richly-robed travelers dismount. Joseph meets them at the door.



"We've come to see the child, the King." The wise men fall before the Babe, faces to the floor, royal counselors doing homage, worshipping the Christ child. Outside, their servants unload weighty chests from the camels and set gifts before the King. Heavy fragrances of frankincense and myrrh mingle to fill the room as one by one the boxes are opened.

A touch of the boy-child's tiny fingers, a final longing look, and the men rise to go. Camel bells soon fade in the brisk morning air.

We, too, travel at Christmas, visiting family and friends. Yet, like the wisemen, the most important journey we make these hectic holidays is to draw nigh Jesus himself with the gift of our hearts.

LOCAL CHURCHES LISTENING TO DISASTER VICTIMS

Submitted by Lorraine Madore

Local clergy recently met with victims of the local floods and tornado to learn how the churches can better help if another disaster strikes.

A committee of local Anglican, Roman Catholic and United churches, including their clergy Father John Stopa, Father John Orban and Reverend Christine Johnson, have been challenged to ensure the churches have a game plan in place.



Before planning, they wanted to hear directly from the people hit

by these disasters to discover what their needs were, both immediately and during the long months and years of recovery.

During the meeting, held at Bethel-St. Andrews United Church in Fitzroy Harbour, there were some tears as people recounted their experiences from the last couple of years. In the midst of disaster, many felt that communication was poor and information was not always shared. Some felt alone and abandoned. The practical help of neighbours was greatly appreciated, including laundry support, help manning the pumps, and the offer of a shower or meal. An army of strangers on your property could also be overwhelming.

The immediate help of the army, along with the sandwich-making, sandbagging and debris-clearing

volunteers was applauded by those who received it. But some did not. And people are now on their own navigating the ongoing clean-up and rebuild, all while those unaffected see the disasters as long past.

There's room for the churches to step up in their role of acting as Christ would in afflicted communities. The call is to heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds, to feed the hungry. The churches are learning from the experiences of the past, so that they can be present in a real and practical way today, tomorrow and when needed.

Do you want to help in this process and share your experiences from the floods and tornado? Please contact the parish office at 613 623 3882

FIELD TRIP TO THE WEST CARLETON CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK GROWING PROJECT

SUBMITTED BY LISA PROBST

It was a beautifully sunny Fall day when we had Boa, a guest from Mozambique, and Nyambura and Andrew representing the CFGB visit the growing project and farm in Fitzroy Harbour. Gary and Pat Weir were the gracious hosts. Allan Braun, Tom Jones and "yours truly" joined them at St. George's and from there, we drove to the corn field.



L -> R: Andrew, Boa, Gary, Allan, Pat, Nyambura and Lisa (Tom took the picture)

Boa was here on a visitor's visa. He wanted to learn about a Canadian farm and is currently working on his PhD on farmer organisations in Southern Africa at the University in Lisbon, Portugal. After that, he is intending to return to his home country. Gary explained the whole growing process from seed to crop. He then took us to the farm and showed us the machinery/tractor used to prepare the field. At this point, everybody was sufficiently impressed. To top the experience off, Gary took us to a field of the farmer with the combine to illustrate the harvesting process.



But the best is yet to come! After returning to St. George's Amy Newell Hall there were delicious treats awaiting us. From local apples grown in Pat's uncle's orchard, she had prepared hot apple cider, apple crisp and a basket of fresh apples for us to take along. Aside from that, Pat had also prepared cranberry/banana bread and a generous cheese plate. We could all taste the love as the special ingredient. ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

Fall Fun in the Parish

Submitted by Lorraine Madore

Just yesterday It has been a busy fall for Fitzroy Parish! The blessing of the animals and the trucks was appreciated by those who attended, especially as we look to another winter with snowy roads!



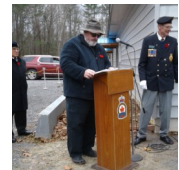
A special evensong was held at St. Thomas' in October, and beautifully sung by Vocata. It replaced services that were cancelled the following Sunday due to a planned power outage, that was also cancelled. Alas, the churches were not so lucky in



Fall Fun (cont'd)

December, as it stoically shivered through the rescheduled outage.

On a more solemn note, Fitzroy Parish was represented at the Remembrance Day held, as it is traditionally, the Saturday before November 11. Father John is the Padre for Legion branch and offered prayers during the ceremony.



Wreaths were laid from St. Thomas' and St. George's As is custom, special ceremonies were held in both churches the following Sunday. These included a reading of the names of parishioners who lives were lost during the First World War and the Second World War.

Holy Hops and Lasagna dinner was a sold-out success and combined the work of both churches in the parish. St. Thomas' provided home-made lasagna dinner, while St. George's offered the beer and cider tasting, silent auction and raffle prizes. A special thanks to Crooked Mile Brewery, Farmgate Cider and Ridge Rock Brewery.



St. George's was well-represented at the Fitzroy Harbour Craft Fair, providing food and table filled with baked goods.

The parishes of Fitzroy, Pakenham and Emmanuel, joined for a service and meal at Emmanuel Anglican Church in Arnprior.

The Advent season was kicked off with a weekly Bible Study, the annual cookie sale at St. Thomas', and a Community Coral Sing held at Bethel -St. Andrew's United Church.

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If you know
of or have
any pictures
of events

that you would like to have
included in the next newslet-
ter please send them to Cathy
or Lorraine

Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy would one
day walk on water?
Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy would
save our sons and daughters?
Did you know
that your Baby Boy has come
to make you new?
This Child that you delivered
will soon deliver you.



A Merry Christmas to us all.
God Bless us everyone

Tiny Tim, A Christmas Carol

The Parish of Fitzroy Harbour is a community inspired and strengthened by the Holy Spirit guided through spiritual discernment, to Support, Share and Serve in the World

St. George's and St. Thomas' are strong churches, beautifully warm sanctuaries brimming with history, love and devotion. The sacred religious traditions are carried out by Father John Stopa. The dedicated congregations, actively keep the church-going practices alive.

EMMANUEL, GOD IS WITH US

Excerpt by Ralph F Wilson Submitted by Lorraine Madore

The baby kicked in Mary's swelling abdomen. Emmanuel, God is with us. Why? How? Mary and Joseph rolled these questions around and around as they talked late into the nights. Why us? How could we have such a guest—such a holy guest—in our poor home? We have no silver platters for royalty, only chipped pottery bowls and a hard-packed clay floor to sit upon. She would carry the baby in her arms and a jug balanced on her head as she went for water to the village well. The lad grew up to women's chatter and the cacophony of vendors' calls on market day, Emmanuel, God is with us. He would watch his mother grind barley in a small stone mill, then

knead the daily dough. He would smell its yeasty aroma and press his tiny fingers into its spongy top to see if it were risen enough to bake.

God chose to send his Son Jesus to be born and raised among simple, common folk. God Himself in human flesh. No stranger was he to struggle and the ambiguities of life.

Jesus is no fair-haired golden boy who never ventured outside the palace walls. No, he is God with us, with callused hands and dust-caked feet. He has known the strain of poverty, the anguish of death's separation, the pain of rejection, the aching hurt of Nazareth's outcasts—and the joys of weddings and parties and friends.

This Christmas season he has come again to be Emmanuel to us. To be our Friend amidst the struggles we face. To lead us through the maze of moral grays and business temptations. To sit down in our cluttered living rooms and help fold the laundry with us as the kids shout at each other from the bedroom. No, he doesn't want to wait for us to be scrubbed and primped and at our best. As we are he loves us. As we are he died for our sins. As we are he wants to be with us and let us tell him about it. He knows how it is. He knows the way through it. And he has come to us. He has come to be our Emmanuel, God is with us. Our Lord, Emmanuel.

A BLESSING AS YOU GO

FROM JOHN O'DONOHUE

May the light of your soul guide you.

May the light of your soul bless the work

You do with the secret love and warmth of your heart.

May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.

May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light and renewal to those
Who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.

May your work never weary you.

May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment, inspiration and excitement.

May you be present in what you do.

May you never become lost in the bland absences.

May the day never burden you.

May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your new day with dreams,
Possibilities and promises.

May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.

May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected.

May your soul calm, console and renew you.