

December 1, 2020



Pastor's Parable

The images were stark and reminiscent of other places around the world. Protesters lined the streets waving signs and shouting at passing cars. Arguments inside stores were initiated by persons standing at checkout counters and screaming of personal rights. One "shopper" dressed conspicuously with a hat covering his face preventing others from checking out. His unspoken message was clear, "He was opposed to the mask policy enacted by the store, feeling that his personal rights were being violated."

The cries of protest seem to be growing across our city and Canada, certainly throughout the regions of our southern neighbours and into the streets of Great Britain. The cries are the same, "We are tired of mask mandates. We are tired of lock downs. We are tired of isolation and closures." They cry of government overreach and personal rights. Far too often lately are two opposing groups locked into shouting matches about what each perceives to be the truth.

On what can we agree? We are tired. Tired of life that is radically different than we knew only 10 months ago. We are tired of staying home, our isolation from family and friends and from stringent guidelines that seem unending. We are afraid that life may never return to "normal". We are afraid for those most vulnerable. We are angry at those who scream, "You don't understand our frustration. You aren't listening. This is simple if you just follow these guidelines. Please stop the world; I want to get off. I just need a hug but can't have a hug."

Today is the First Week of Advent. Yesterday we lit (virtually) the first candle marking this season of waiting and anticipation. (We should be quite good at waiting by now!). Advent marks a season of focusing upon what God will do next. Today's reading was from Isaiah 65. "I will create a new heaven and a new earth. The things that have happened before will not be remembered. They will not even enter your minds. Be glad because of what I will create." The prophet encourages us to see beyond our current frustrations and growing cynicism.

But we protest, we are at the edge of our coping! God hears our pain and understands our cries. In our Advent waiting we are called to embrace a hope that is not ours to create but grasps a power beyond ourselves. This power is the antidote to our fatigue and cynicism. It is the good news to our spent self-sufficiency.

And so we pray, "Surprising God, overcome our weary Christmas with an Advent miracle of a power that lies beyond us. Show us a new vision and set us free from a world that we no longer recognize. Bring us to new hope which will set us free from the imprisonment of this world and allow us to embrace your new vision for us. Amen.



[Click here](#) to sing along with Christine to the hymn "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace".

The words to this song reflect the prayer that is often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. Although the words are not found in the writings of St. Francis himself, they do reflect Franciscan viewpoints and writings of Giles of Assisi- a close companion of St. Francis.

Preserves



Every year Ann Lambie makes preserves for our annual church bazaar. We won't be able to host the bazaar in-person this year but we have an opportunity for you to support the church and get some yummy jams, marmalade and more! Ann has worked hard to help us with this fundraiser so please consider ordering soon. These preserves make great stocking stuffers or basket stuffers or are delightful to enjoy at home. [Click here to fill out an order form](#) for delivery of preserves right to your door

Wartime Christmas: Christmas Underground 1940

Christmas of 1940 in cities like London and Birmingham took place during the middle of the "Blitz". From September to November, London had been bombed on 52 consecutive nights. Many lives and homes had been lost. People were frightened, devastated and tired.

At first, people had been discouraged from going underground to sleep in tube stations, cave systems and storage areas as there was fear that driving citizens underground would disrupt the economy. The people persisted though as sleeping and even living in under the city was preferable to the alternative. Eventually the government got behind the use of public and private facilities as large scale shelters and by December 30th The Times reported that over 1,000,000 people spent Christmas underground.



A Shelter in Camden Town under a Brewery:
Christmas Eve, 1940, water colour by Olga Lehmann.

By many accounts it was an uncomfortable affair. While some shelters like the one pictured in the water colour by Olga Lehmann were damp yet specious, others were crowded with the sounds and smells of hundreds of people sharing cramped quarters with little airflow. Flatulent causing "potato beer" certainly did not help!

However, as is often the case when times are hard, people found ways to make the most of the situation. Skits were performed, songs were sung, games were played. Even the shelter wardens got into the spirit as seen in the photo.



Shelter Warden Station at Christmas, 1940

We are blessed to be living mostly comfortably above ground this winter. However, many will be facing a Christmas season that comes with the opposite problem to a crowded air raid shelter- a time of isolation and loneliness. Let us remember to make the most of what we have. Phone, email or write Christmas cards. Tell stories of your own Christmas memories both the good and the difficult. No one needs to be alone as even when we are apart when we are all in this together.

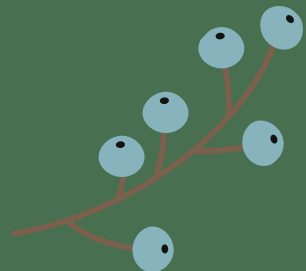
Read From Your Bible This Week

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8



Advent

the season of expectation



The Rev. Kenn Stright of the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee writes:

"Light is important in many religions and festivals throughout the world. It is most often the symbol of the divine who brings light into the world... "Let there be light!" (Genesis 1:3). Being such a religiously diverse and multicultural nation, Canada and Canadians have many wonderful opportunities to "celebrate the light.""

Here are a few ways our neighbours celebrate light in the darkness:

Diwali- This is the festival of lights, celebrated by millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Jains across the world with each candle symbolizing the power of light to conquer darkness.

Hanukkah- A festival celebrated in Judaism. It is observed for a period of eight nights and days anywhere between the end of November and December. It all starts with lighting candles.

Sacred Fire- In First Nations communities, the fire is one of the ways to start a ceremony or any sacred event. The light of the fire is a spiritual doorway that opens to a spiritual realm. The sacred fire is never left alone, it is watched and attended to by a Fire Keeper.

Yule- Yule is the indigenous mid-winter festival of the Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. Many yule traditions such as decorating with greenery and lighting a log fire became part of our well known Christmastide celebrations.

Kwanzaa- An African-American celebration that isn't religious in origin, yet incorporates practices of ancient spirituality from Africa and elsewhere. Light is used in this celebration as a symbol of seven principles where each principle is symbolized with a candle. Some of the principals are unity, collective work, faith, and creativity.



This year our Christmas Eve service will be offered as a video filled with music from Christine, members of our community and harpist McKenna Jennings . The service will be made available in some form to our entire congregation, even those shut-in without computers so that everyone at St. Andrew's as well as our extended family and friends can worship safely together on Christmas Eve, no matter where we are, while we need to be physically apart.

The Advent Bible Study continues on December, 7, 14 and 21 at 7:00 pm. [Click here for the zoom link](#) to the first bible study. Remember that you can also access a zoom meeting by phone. [Click here](#) to find a call-in phone number for Canadian participants. The meeting ID is

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There is willingness from the session to open the church on the night of Christmas Eve for people to listen to prerecorded carols in the sanctuary at 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm.* Volunteers would be needed to help at the door and to spray pew cushions, wipe all hard surfaces and clean bathrooms both between these sittings and after. Potential volunteers may contact the office. ***This would only go ahead if gatherings are once again allowed by provincial mandate**

You can still donate towards our Share the Joy of Christmas campaign for turkeys and gifts for the residents at Our Place.

Send a check to the church, donate to the church online or contacts Debra Verwey at 250-383-1009

or Brian Titus at 250-382-2387 for more information.