



St. James Church

In the Heart of the Village



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Advent & Christmas

News & Views, Advent 2020

As we prepare to set up our Advent wreaths and Nativity scenes, we look back at how different the world was when we last saw those items. It's easy to feel that this year won't be as special. Some might even wonder if it's worth decorating or cooking a special meal when our houses won't be full with friends and family.

But prepare, and celebrate, we must.

Advent is the time we think about the arrival of Jesus, both his first incarnation as an infant and the promised second coming. It's not really a time to get ready for Christmas, although many of us

use it that way. It should be a time for increased prayer and Bible study. We can find time for that!

The Holy Day of Christmas has been celebrated for centuries through every kind of difficulty imaginable —times of war, economic depression, and political upheaval. It has been celebrated by Christians who are persecuted for their faith.

We cannot, must not, let Covid prevent us from preparing for, and celebrating, the arrival of Lord Jesus. This issue of News & Views will give you lots of ideas for what may be your smallest, but brightest Christmas ever.

From Father Chris – Fear not!

Perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4.18)

When God's angel announced the good news of the Saviour's birth to the trembling shepherds of Bethlehem, *Fear not!* was both a message of comfort and a powerful command. They were told, in effect, to get up off the ground and stop shielding their frightened faces. The *glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people* meant that fear's grip on human hearts was going to have to give way to the greater power of love.

We are currently living in a time of great fear: fear of the virus, fear for our loved ones who are vulnerable to infection, fear for our livelihood and finances, fear of isolation, fear of the cold, dark winter. These and other fears may be felt as despair, dread, discouragement, or despondency, but they are fears just the same; and they are ultimately rooted in the greatest fear of all, which is that of Death itself.

What is the *perfect love* that can cast out this fear?

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9).

The good news of Christmas is that God is *with us* – and not in some distant, sentimental way. In Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, God has truly become one of us, He has shared fully in our human condition. He has experienced and taken upon Himself our frail flesh, our fear, our isolation, our loss, our vulnerability, our suffering - and even Death itself. And by overcoming the power of Death, He has forever taken away all our reasons to live in fear.

But it will do us no good merely to believe this in our minds. This good news must work its way deep down and transform our hearts. In the words of what I regard to be the greatest Christmas carol of all, 'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,' Christ was 'born to give us second birth' and by His Holy Spirit can now be 'formed in each believing heart.'

This gift of God's love for us can only be received and formed within a surrendered, trusting heart, a heart that knows itself to be held in the palm of God's hand.

What this means, practically speaking, is that the only way to overcome our fear of Death is to live life in such a way that its meaning cannot be taken away by death. It means resisting the impulse to live for ourselves, instead of for others. It means cherishing our friends, neighbours, family members and strangers as gifts from God who bear His image. It means making the best use of our time, choosing to walk in love, as Christ Himself loved us. It means choosing generosity over greed. It means living humbly, rather than seeking power, honour, riches and fleeting pleasures. Finally, it means being ready to die again and again to ourselves so that we may live more and more in love for Christ and one another.

When we live for love, we will be able to meet any challenge that comes our way.

Therefore, although this year's holiday season will be different, it need not be altogether disappointing. May it be a time for us to receive and express God's love in ways both new and old. Thus will we know God's peace. And we will not be **afraid**.

Amy, Clara, Abigail, Hannah and I wish you and your loved ones near and far a very blessed Christmas.

In Advent hope,

Fr. Chris Dow



This article quotes from Johann Christoph Arnold, 'Be not afraid,' Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas (Plough, 2001), p. 150-155.

Advent and Christmas Services at St. James

St. James reopened mid September and successfully resumed two services per Sunday. A grant from the Diocese and some additional funds were used to purchase professional quality video equipment and a dedicated computer to manage streaming the 10:30 am service.

With the current Covid restrictions, **in-person worship is only available at the 9 am service. There are 9 spots available and you must phone to reserve a seat. The 10:30 service will only be live-streamed for the foreseeable future.**

Thanks to our new tech we can watch on-line, via the link on our website or through YouTube, and see a clear and consistent image during the service. In addition, the audio quality is much improved over our early broadcasts using Facebook Live or GotoMeeting. Thank you to our musicians Mary, Joanne, Amy and Sharon who have been providing lovely instrumental and vocal arrangements in places where we can no longer sing.

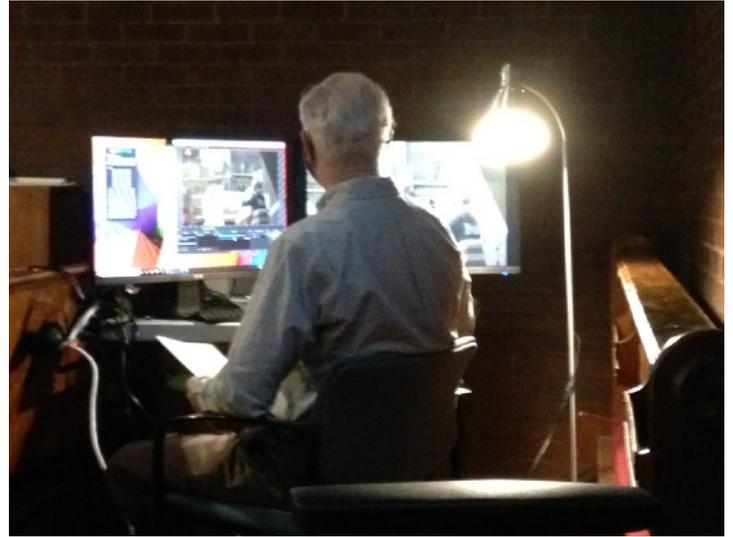
Father Chris, lay readers, intercessors, musicians and the tech crew will continue to work safely each Sunday to provide a worshipful experience for the rest of us.

Many people are disappointed to not be at St. James during the lovely seasons of Advent and Christmas. For many in the community, Christmas Eve at St. James is a family tradition which will be sorely missed.

However, we are offering several things to get us through to Epiphany.

The website will have Advent and Christmas-related content added, such as photos of previous Christmas pageants, and a guided tour of the Chrismon tree.

Christmas Eve services will be livestreamed.



Gordon Morton managing the video feed on a Sunday morning.

The early service at 4:00 pm will be a relaxed service ideal for families with young children; while the 8 pm service will be more traditional.

On Christmas Day, Fr. Chris will be live at 10:00 am. Given travel and other restrictions, this year might find you at home when you would normally be in the warmth of family. ***Please join us online for special prayers and beautiful music to comfort and uplift you.***

As the Corona virus situation in Peel changes, and our ability to offer in person worship changes, we will let you know immediately on Facebook and on our website.

In the meantime, Keep Calm and Watch On!



This is Spike, a bearded dragon lizard who lives with Shane and Sharon, watching his 'mom' with great interest! All creatures, great and small!

Lighting up the Heart of the Village

Used to be we could only share photos of the church in the winter as the roof could pass if it was snow covered. No longer! And thanks to Chris Mackey, we have beautiful lights adorning our trees and the two entrances.

Blue is the liturgical colour of Advent (it used to be purple) and it seemed to fit our moods this year. However, with the addition of new LED flood lights inside the church shining out, lights in the bell tower as well as the decorative lights, St. James is sending a positive message to the community. The light of God's love is beaming out from this place.



St. James cards

Send your best wishes to friends and family and support St. James. These beautiful cards feature a detail from our back window, a verse from the Gospel of Luke and have lots of room for your greeting. Sold in packages of 10. Each package is \$20.00 — all proceeds going the church. Please call the office at 905-584-9635 regarding curb-side pickup and payment.

Caring for others

Providing outreach has never been more necessary, or more complicated than it has been this fall.

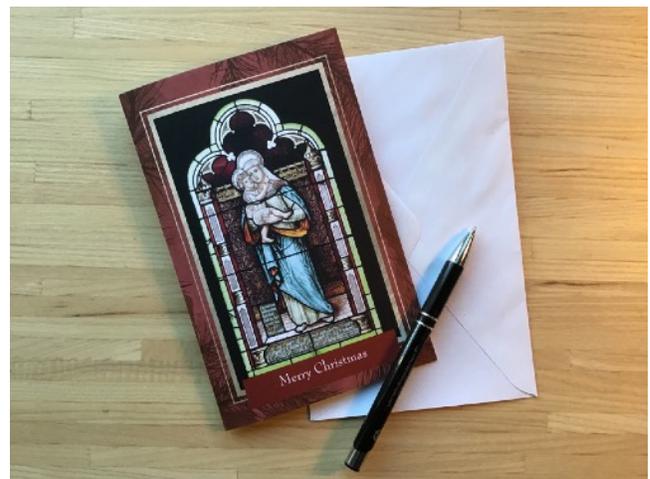
Unable to offer the parish the chance to participate in the Advent Giving Tree, Outreach Committee chair Valerie Jones created the 'Christmas Angel' program, offering parishioners the opportunity to connect with a fellow parishioner who is shut in, alone or in other need.

Dozens of lovely packages of goodies were prepared and delivered, brightening some dark days.

In addition, donations of money were funnelled to The Bridge Prison Ministry, The Elizabeth Fry Society and Choices Youth Shelter.

Alex McKinnon - Friend and Contributor

Long time parishioner Alex McKinnon died on Nov. 24 after a long illness. Alex was a key volunteer during the construction of our new Parish Hall and office area twenty years ago. Although he and Pam moved to Bolton some time ago they continued to worship here until illness prevented them attending. Our condolences to Pam and their family — Alex was a beloved 'character' and a deeply devoted Christian.



Your Nativity scenes

Did you know the first Nativity scene is credited to St. Francis of Assisi in 1223? Apparently Francis was a bit tired of the focus on gift giving (sound familiar?) so he set up a living tableau with people and animals in a cave. Eventually the living scenes were replaced with works of art, featuring characters and animals, usually depicted in a stable or barn.

Incredibly ornate scenes were favoured in the 19th century, particularly in the Roman Catholic church. Mass production in the 20th century and the resurgence of interest in handcrafts has led to a tremendous variety of Nativities available today, as these examples from the parish illustrate.

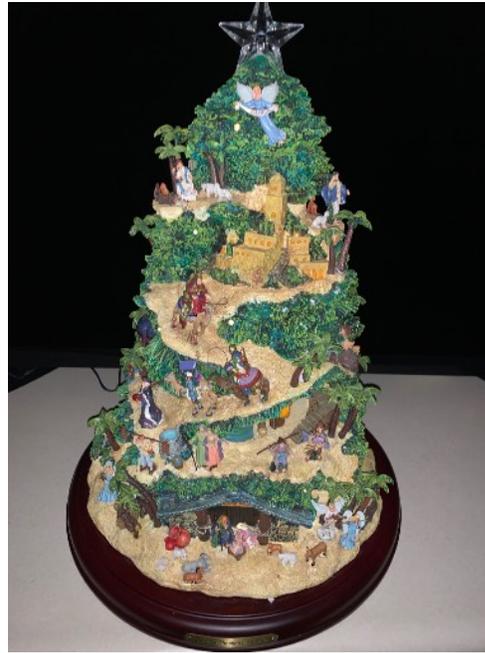
And a word to the wise - if you note from the manger scene we set up at church, the wise men ought not to make an appearance until Epiphany. However, if a glorious celebration of the Bible story with angels, shepherds, kings and a manger all at the same time fills your heart with joy, go for it!



Claire Olorenshaw's pure white Nativity adds a serene touch to her home.

This classic *Nativity* set was purchased by Todd Hillhouse and Chris Mackey for their first Christmas together - 23 years ago!





This Nativity tree was a gift from our daughter over 20 years ago. It plays Silent Night. Thomas Kinkaide's 'True Meaning of Christmas' displays Santa carving the Nativity and features Kincaide reading the story of Jesus' birth.

Muriel Jackson



Above left: Heather Whittier's Nativity was handcrafted in Mexico. Above right: The Nativity in the Robinson house features beautifully detailed large figures - look at that camel!



My mom bought this from Avon at least 40 years ago, and I was allowed to take it when I left home. We hide the Baby Jesus behind the greenery until Christmas morning! It's very simple but I love setting it up every year. Reminds me of a true stable. About 20 years ago I made the milkweed 'angel' from plants in the ravine near our house.

Sue Hollinger

I bought this from a store in Bramalea City Centre circa 1984 for \$29.99 (still got the label on the box!) and was a little aggrieved there was no angel!

It replaced a very beautifully printed card one that the kids and I carefully slotted together for an hour every Christmas til the tabs just finally fell off. That one had an angel, a stable and a magnificent star and we made straw out of ribbon. I miss the old one, but I've grown to love the 'new' one - and there are no tabs to fall off!

Gillian Lawrie



Here's a photo of my favourite nativity - it's from Spain, and has been part of my Christmas for many many years. The Three Kings are particularly significant as their arrival in Bethlehem is the focus of the Dia de los Reyes, huge celebrations in Spanish towns and villages on January 5th/6th.

Trudy Messer



I found these cheery figures in the dollar store a few years ago, but only with one king. The following year I was able to get the other kings but have never seen the figures again.

Diane Allengame





Left: This is the Nativity my parents bought when I was a little girl, so it's about 60 years old. It was handmade in Italy. It moved from Montreal to Toronto with us and now has a loving home with Karen, Dan, Meredith and Emilia in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. We replaced it with this beautiful scene.

Valerie Jones



Around 1994 when my boys were little Mom made us a lovely naturalistic nativity scene with cornhusk figures. Early one Advent, when the manger was guarded by a lone shepherd, marauding dinosaurs appeared and slaughtered the sheep. I documented the disaster before restoring order!

Diane Allengame



Above: Anne Allengame's Nativity was purchased in the 1960s. Jesus normally doesn't appear until Christmas Day. The Dow family are combining their Nativity with their Advent Wreath. Looks like those figures are 'kid-friendly'!

Chrismon Tree



No, it's not a typo — it is a Chrismon tree, not a Christmas tree. What's the difference? A Chrismon or Christogram is a symbol of Christian faith. Our tree is covered in beautiful white and gold Chrismons, handcrafted by a group of women at St. James. The idea was introduced to St. James in the late 1970s by Karen Booth, wife of the Rev. S. P. Booth. By the late 1990s many of the ornaments had begun to fall apart, so Ruth Sowrey led many workshops to replace and repair the intricately beaded and embellished symbols. Glass doves were the latest addition to the tree.

For the full story on the tree, including detailed photographs of the ornaments, see our website.

PS Ornaments can never be sold, so if you'd like to add something like this to your tree, you'll have to get out the glue gun and make your own!

Financial Update

As the church enters a new liturgical year, it also prepares for a new fiscal year. Work on the 2021 budget has been underway for months and a draft budget presented to the Advisory Board in November. Since then a sub-committee has met to review in detail the expenditure and income inputs to the budget.

Thanks to very shrewd management by the leadership team, St. James got through the summer without going into debt. We were able to take advantage of government assistance packages, the removal of our allotment payment to the Diocese for several months and several efficiencies and rebates discovered by Treasurer Todd Hillhouse. And a huge thank you to our parishioners who continued to support through givings, some even increasing their offering.

However, as positive as these measures were, they were not enough to offset the lack of income from hall rental, special events, the boutique and offerings. We will have to be very creative and generous in 2021 to build back our treasury and continue much needed work on the buildings and outreach to the community.

You'll be hearing more about the budget in January as we get ready for Vestry in February. If you normally 'top up' your givings in December, please continue to do so.

Ongoing at St. James

Father Chris continues to offer the *Christian Foundations* and *Following Jesus* courses over the internet. Please see the website for details.

Join Diane Allengame every Thursday night for *Prayers as the sun goes down*, a gentle and short pray service to end the day. You don't have to join Facebook in order to watch the service. It is also recorded and can be played back any time. A link to the event is posted in the weekly parish Eblast.



Parish Cheer

Although the pandemic restrictions are really holding back many of the things we normally do; Todd Hillhouse and Chris Mackey did not hold back on their extravagant display this year. The parish was invited to the tree lighting ceremony at the end of November. Each year people drive for miles to see the lights and often leave notes of appreciation in the mailbox. Thanks Todd and Chris for this wonderful uplifting display, and for your help beautifying the exterior of the church as well.

Looking ahead

We'll all be happy to say goodbye to 2020; but next year will present challenges of its own. Already in the works for St. James was strategic planning — coming up with a framework that articulates who we are, where we want to be and how we plan to get there. This process will impact all our decisions, particularly with regard to budget. Our annual general meeting, Vestry, will take place at the end of February, in person or virtually! Stay tuned for more information.

Stay in touch

Office Phone:
905-584-9635

Fr. Chris's email:

Priest-stjames
caledoneast@toronto.anglican.ca

Facebook:

St. James Anglican
Church, Caledon East

*(you don't need a
Facebook account to
see the page)*

Web:

stjamescaledoneast.ca

The website has current information on:

- Upcoming services and how to access them
- How to donate to the church
- Links to special events

Mail:

6025 Old Church Road,
Caledon East ON.
L7C 1H8

Silent Night

The beloved Christmas carol 'Silent Night' was born out of adversity, need, and in a time of thanksgiving more than 200 years ago.

The church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, Austria, was preparing for its annual Christmas story, presented by roving actors. To everyone's dismay, the pump organ failed, and the presentation was moved from the church to a nearby home.

Following the evening event, Father Joseph Mohr, a young priest at St. Nicholas, took the long way back to his home. He climbed a hill to look down upon the village, quiet and blanketed in snow. Europe was recovering from the Napoleonic Wars, and Mohr was overwhelmed with a feeling of peace emanating from the village.

Mohr rushed home and used his thoughts to finish a poem he had started years earlier. The next day was Christmas Eve, and he wanted to share his work as a carol, but with the organ out of commission, he needed some kind of musical accompaniment. Mohr consulted his organist Franz Gruber, who came up with a simple guitar setting, and on Christmas Eve, 1818 the carol debuted.

Whilst working on the defective organ, Karl Mauracher came across the arrangement and lyrics, and took a copy home to his village. The carol began to spread and was performed as "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht."

By 1839 it had made its way to North America; performed at Trinity Church in New York City. The carol was translated into English in 1863. There are now over 300 translations and many different arrangements. Perhaps most famously, it was sung simultaneously in French, German and English in the trenches of France during the Christmas Eve truce of 1914.

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar:
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, oh, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

