



Message from Fr. Stephen

Is Christmas a time for getting or a time for giving?

Is Christmas a time for getting or a time for giving? Often, children answer this question one way, and adults another. So, what is the answer? I think it is both, but in a certain order. Christmas is about getting first and then giving from what you have been given.

Just think about it. There are signs around to remind us of this. “Jesus is the reason for the season”, one will say. Another reads, “Put Christ back into Christmas”. These make good sense. So if Christmas, at its most basic meaning, is about God’s gift of Jesus Christ to the world, then it is about getting. The gift of salvation in Jesus is not gained by us giving something. It is simply about opening our minds and our hearts to receive this precious gift from God. But what do we do about this gift? How do we “use it”? That’s where the giving comes in.

This Christmas, I encourage all of us to consider what the gift of Jesus means in our lives. How does it change our understanding of the past? How does it alter our living in the present? How does it shape our hope for the future? Once we complete those things, then it all falls into place. We see that living the love, peace, hope and joy of the Christmas promise made real in Jesus are a radical way of being in our self-centered world.

So, accept the gift of Christmas and live it. That is the proper order of things. That is the working out of our salvation. That is the “meaning of life” for us as Christians.

Stephen+

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Sign of the Times



Spiritual Development Committee

The spiritual disciplines of Christian Faith: Discerning God's Presence in Creation and History

On Saturday, **February 16th**, we will be holding our annual **Quiet Day Retreat** at St. John's.

This year, we are honoured to have **the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada**, lead us in exploring God's presence both in creation and in history. A wonderful speaker, he has had a long and varied ministry in both Canada and the United States.

The day will run from 9:30 a.m. to about 4 p.m. and will include worship services, several talks, quiet time and a delicious lunch. Everyone is welcome. Watch the weekly bulletins for details or contact Claudia (e-mail: dagostino.ac@sympatico.ca | phone: 905-885-4824) to sign-up.

Recent Highlights

This past summer's **"Walk With Us"** spiritual walks, led by Shane Watson and Lyn Bradshaw, were held in both Port Hope and Cobourg. The evenings were pleasant and the themes: Letters in my mailbox, Trash in the ditch, Dry creek bed, and Walking in the dark were thought provoking, prompting good discussion. Thanks to all who joined us!

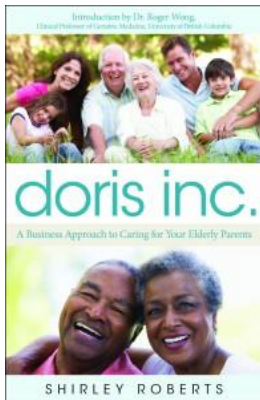


"The Year of Living Biblically" by A.J. Jacobs was the first selection of the recently formed **St. John's Book Club**. In most cases, the book was ordered through the Port Hope Library. Discussion took place on 2 Sunday mornings between services in the Noah's Ark room. So much fun and we even had a special visitor at the second discussion! Watch for our next book selection or for more information contact Claudia. Everyone is welcome to join!

St. John's book Club had a special visitor!

Our recent **Bible Fair** was well received, resulting in 10 Bibles being purchased. Thanks to Searchlight Books on Division Street in Cobourg who loaned us the Bibles for the fair and gave the church back a percentage of the sales.

2 New Additions to the Library



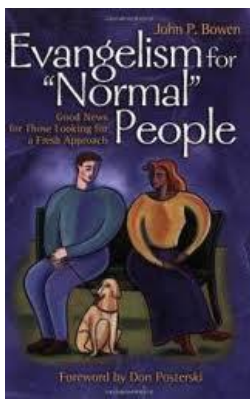
1) DORIS INC. is about taking a business approach to caring for elderly parents. The author Shirley Roberts wrote this book as a guide to keeping one's life in balance while maximizing the quality of life of an elderly loved one. Shirley Roberts shares the strategies that worked so well for her family including:

- Concrete advice about making tough decisions
- Help navigating the health-care maze (in Ontario)
- Financial pitfalls and ways to avoid them
- How to get help in a crisis
- Tips on planning for your own golden years

Shirley's mother, a former member of St. Peter's Church in Cobourg, was a resident at Port Hope Extencicare for several years. The author's experience of caring for her ailing mother encouraged her to tell of the experiences encountered while moving her mother from her home through the process of residency to a long term care facility.

-Diane Fraser

2) EVANGELISM FOR "NORMAL" PEOPLE



Noted author and teacher John Bowen takes a unique look at what it means to witness to one's faith. Evangelism is something that all Christians can do as a "normal" part of being a follower of Jesus. Witty, wise, and biblically grounded, the book challenges in a gentle way.

*St. Timothy's North Toronto hosted a seminar led by John Bowen and a few St. John's parishioners were in attendance. He shared many excerpts from his book, challenging us all in an often amusing way. John was clear that in the secular world we evangelize every day as brand evangelists, social media evangelists, etc. When you recommend a restaurant or a movie you are being an evangelist. Similarly, evangelism is something that all Christians can do as a "normal" part of being a follower of Jesus. **GOOD NEWS** is at the heart of our discipleship.

Christmas Bazaar

People looking for a great deals for home baked pies, cookies and cakes, clothing, dishes, pottery or even home made candy, jams, marmalade and sweet pop corn were in attendance at St. John's Parish Hall Sat. Nov. 10 to attend our yearly fund raising bazaar. All this along with a silent auction and topped off with a great lunch of soup, sandwiches, sweets and beverage.

Penny Purcell and her wonderful staff of volunteers spent many hours making sandwiches and assorted sweets to serve the bazaar customers in the Sunday School room in the basement of the Hall. Debbie Irwin, once again took on the responsibility of running the bazaar section of the fund raiser. She and her many volunteers spent Thursday and Friday setting up merchandise displays with the main item for sale being the old and revered Celtic Cross that adorned the old St. John's Steeple.

At our 9:00 Sunday morning service on November 11th, Debbie announced that the total sales for the one day bazaar was \$7000.00 that will make its way into the church coffers.

Congratulations and thanks to all concerned for making the bazaar such a great success.

JAM (Jesus and Me) Youth Group

Since June JAM numbers have dropped (Alex and Paige are now attending University) and this has caused us to rethink how we do things as a group and how to increase our numbers in the future. After much thought JAM has a new look. JAM originally was for youth in our parish/community aged 13-19 years old. JAM activities have expanded to include some of our younger parish children and potential JAM members. JAM no longer meets on a regular basis but there are opportunities for all JAM members to participate in a variety of activities.

Most recently our younger JAM members made chocolate covered Rice Krispy squares on a stick with sprinkles and sold them at the Tea and Bazaar. 30 bags with 4 Rice Krispy squares on a stick in each sold out in 45min. These tasty treats made a \$9 profit, which was donated to the Kids Club Globe Fund. Since September JAM has participated in back to church Sunday (September 30th), October was the Parish Halloween Party (October 26th), thanks to Colin Sears for supervising the Popcorn station and ensuring quality control. In November JAM had the opportunity to attend a concert (November 9th), Manic Drive (<http://manicdrive.com>) at Calvary Pentecostal Church in Port Hope. Kids Club and JAM joined forces and attended the Bethlehem Walk (November 16th) and enjoyed food and fellowship following the walk. Another concert opportunity in Peterborough (November 24th), To Tell (<http://totell.ca/>). JAM once again sold gift cards (November 26th deadline). This year we raised \$250 from the gift cards sales this money was used for the Christmas Hampers/Gift Basket program. JAM will also be collecting your empty alcohol bottles (December/early January), please contact Karen Watson, 905-885-8622 or email watson.k@me.com to arrange for pick up. Money from our bottle drive will also be used to support the Christmas Hampers/Gift Baskets or will be used in the Rector's Discretionary Fund.

Upcoming JAM activities in the New Year will be our 3rd annual Cookie and Muffin Bake and delivery to those in our Parish who need a little ray of sunshine and a sweet treat; Lenten Study; 4 on 4 for Food Floor Hockey Tournament; movie night ("Hardflip") and of course our year end outing yet to be determined.

Follow us on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/JAM-Jesus-And-Me-St-Johns-Church-Youth-Group-Port-Hope/165066236853423?v=wall>



Bethlehem Walk

On Friday November 19th JAM and Kid's Club joined forces and attended the Bethlehem Walk in Cold Springs. This is the ninth year for the Bethlehem Walk and the third year JAM and Kid's Club have attended. The Bethlehem Walk takes about 6 live animals and more than 100 volunteers, some of the volunteers are in period costumes at a series of nine main stations. The Bethlehem Walk is representative of the Holy Family's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Christ was born in a stable. 22 JAM and Kid's Club children, their family and friends attended the walk and enjoyed pizza, ice cream and a movie back at the Parish Hall afterwards. Thanks to Marianne Woodward and Karen Watson for organizing the experience and opportunity for fellowship.



Halloween Party 2012

It was the end of the week and I just got out of school for the weekend. My dad and brother picked me up from school and we hurried home. Dad told me that we were going to a Halloween party at church and that I could get dressed up tonight. I was super excited because I was going to be Thomas the Tank Engine. Lucas was going to be Cookie Monster. We waited for Mom to get home from work and then we all got dressed. It was like a big race because we were in a rush with everyone running around trying to get ready. With everyone all dressed up, we got in our car and drove to the church.

We got to the church just after 6:00 and who should I see at the door, but a witch! A real live witch! Well, Dad actually said that the witch was really Bev Kelly. She welcomed us in and boy there was so much to see. There was popcorn popping, face painting, surprise fishing, guessing games, hot dogs and treats and my favourite...the balloon man! There were so many costumes too! I saw some more witches, and jedi knights, a sith lord, a construction worker, Dorothy from the Wizard of OZ, and so many others. Mom was Alice in Wonderland and Dad was the Madhatter, but he took his costume off because he was too warm. What a wimp! There must have been thousands of people there, but Mom and Dad said that throughout the night there was probably 120 people or so.

I started by getting some popcorn because it's my favourite and I don't get to eat it very often. Lucas liked mine so much that we got him a bag of his own. Then we went fishing! I was small so Dad lifted me up, while I held on to the fishing rod. All of a sudden I felt something bite and when I pulled the rod back, there were cars in the pumpkin! Lucas tried too and he got a car to play with like me! Next I got in line for the balloon man. He was making hats and swords and it was so cool! He made me a red sword because red is my favourite colour and he made my brother a blue sword. When they were done we had sword fights with the other kids who had swords. Some of them popped, but I got to bring mine home. After all of the excitement, we sat down and had a hot dog and some juice. They were yummy and after that we got some cookies and cup cakes. My belly was full. With all of the treats in my tummy, I ran around a lot with the other kids. It was really fun. Before we got to do much more, it was getting near bed time and both me and my brother were getting tired.

Mom and Dad told me to thank everyone who helped out with the party. Dad said there must have been 25 people who helped out Bev, so I'll say thank you to them here. It was so much fun and I can't wait for next year to go again.



A Farewell Letter

Dear Fr. Stephen:

We consider ourselves very fortunate that you have been our Rector for nearly 8 years. We have had the pleasure of your presence in our lives as you guided us through happy times and sad times, through trials and tribulations. You have been a constant for us in the midst of never-ending change.

Your cheery disposition and fun-loving style brought us lots of laughter and enjoyable conversations. You provided great leadership in the ways of the Church and with a positive attitude, you worked hard to try to find solutions to every problem that confronted the Parish.

So many of us have been encouraged by you to get involved in the functioning of the Parish, to be part of a group or to help out at an event. You always conveyed your hearty appreciation because you understand that the Parish depends on its volunteers to be successful. However, in your caring way, you also knew that the involvement would enrich us.

You have a remarkable talent for delivering the teachings of Christ by being able to speak easily and comfortably as you draw on your vast religious knowledge and personal experiences. At one time or another, we have probably all wondered where you had your speaking notes hidden; eventually, we realized that your sermons just flowed out of you naturally.

We wish you continued success in your career and we hope that you find peace and satisfaction in all that you do. We will miss you and Fiona and Thomas a great deal. Although you will no longer be our Rector, you will always be our friend. Please come back to visit whenever you can. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

The Congregation of St. John the Evangelist



Congratulations



Marriage of Amber Irwin and Brock Stephenson
on August 25, 2012



Marriage of Jackie Foote and Greg Sullivan
on September 15, 2012



Baptism of Simon Zinke
on September 16, 2012

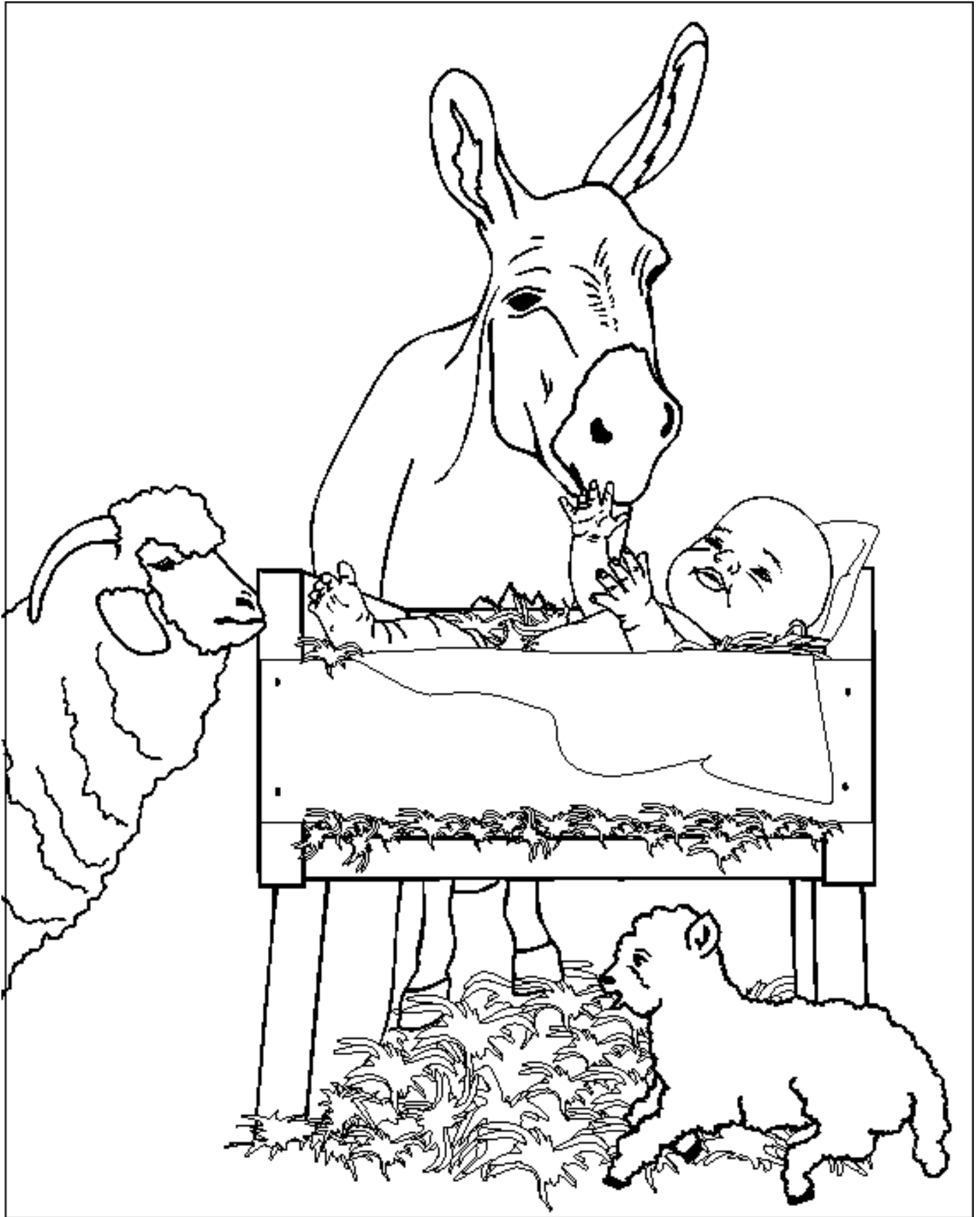


Baptism of Harper Mason
on November 4, 2012



Baptism of Beatrice Banzet
on November 4, 2012

Kid's Colouring Page



Dime A Day Campaign

I went to Tim Horton's a few Sundays back to pick up a treat for the boys. I ordered our usual 10 pack of Timbits and a small coffee. To most, the daily routine of going through the drive thru to pick up a medium double double coffee, and maybe a little treat, is as Canadian as maple syrup, hockey, bacon, or even the Mounties. I prefer Starbucks or McDonalds now, but will drink Tim's in a pinch. Prior to change of heart with Tim's, I could easily empty my car of every bit of change with my sometimes 3rd or 4th coffee of the day to feed that addiction that can often come with the Tim Horton's bug. Clearly, judging by the line ups in the drivethrus, at almost any hour of the day, there are others out there like I was. On this day I needed a little pick me up, as the boys can be a handful, so that was my order...10 timbits and a small coffee. It was \$3 and change.

When you put it into perspective, to the average Canadian family, \$3 in a day or certainly a week is not a large sum. According to Workopolis.com, in 2011 "The average salary in this country is roughly \$883 a week or \$46,000 a year." Many factors play into averages, and clearly there are some Canadians who are very wealthy and some who are very poor, but it's probably safe to say that overall, we can probably afford that cup of Tim's every now and then. It was on this same Sunday, November 4th, that Father Stephen preached on the Gospel of Mark 12:28-33 when the rabbis asked Jesus "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (Mark 12:28) Those of you who attended the 10:30 service that day will remember Stephen's sermon, and many of you no doubt know the story from previous years. To recap, "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)

To quote Keiskamma.org, "The Keiskamma Trust is a community organization, centered in Hamburg, a rural area of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, which works to foster hope and offer support for the most vulnerable. We strive to address the challenges of widespread poverty and disease through holistic and creative programmes and partnerships." The Dime A Day Campaign at St. John's contributes its proceeds to The Keiskamma Trust. Each dime, as small as it may seem, makes a very large contribution to the overall health of the Keiskamma project. The Keiskamma Health Programme brings health care treatment and education to an area suffering greatly from widespread HIV. The Keiskamma Art Project builds self reliance through art education and creation, which it can sell to bring much needed income to an area stricken with poverty. The Keiskamma Education Programme provides support for vulnerable children, adolescents and orphans, which is the majority of children in the area.

Many think of a neighbor as the person living next door, across the road or in an immediate neighborhood. Truthfully we have neighbors in surrounding communities, across our great nation and even throughout the world. Webster's Dictionary states that a neighbor is 1. one living or located near another and 2. fellow man. If an immediate neighbor knocked on our door in need of a cup of sugar or a couple of eggs, most of us would probably not hesitate in trying to help that person out. After all, it is the right thing to do. If we were in that same person's shoes, we would certainly appreciate the help. We are often asked by Stephen at some point in his sermons of how we are going to be more like Jesus in our lives and also what are we going to do after we leave the church on Sunday? A dime a day is a great start.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

In the last Eagle, I promised to give you some details on a couple of programs that the Outreach Committee supports.

The first is the Benevolent Society. This program helps many people in need by giving out food vouchers and all the churches in town support the Society.

The second is the Rector's Discretionary Fund. This fund is helping those in need from our own parish family and is looked after by Father Stephen. Assistance is given in many different ways depending on the family's needs.

I hope this gives you an idea how this Church is reaching out to the town in which we live.

Penny Burgess



St. John's Trinity group are again this year fundraising to support their initiative of giving funds to Canada's Council of the North. It includes the National Youth Ministries, to give young people the power to make faith-based life choices and to help nurture northern leaders serving God's people.

We will be taking orders our group made TASTY ALL BEEF MEAT PIES. Order forms will be available December 2/12 at the back of the church and must be returned by December 30/12.

Cost for individual pie \$4.50 or 5 for \$20.00

Also available are 8" pies for \$10.00.

All orders are to be prepaid. Please return order form to Diane Fraser or Pauline Carrick.

Delivery of pies will be Saturday January 12, 2013.

WATCH FOR OUR POSTER AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH

St. John's Men's Club Concludes

For the many years now, Scott Allison (president), Rob Hood (chief cook and purchaser of groceries) and Kevin Allison (assistant) have led the St. John's Men's Club. Faithfully, they organized the monthly breakfast, the annual Pancake Supper and the Church picnic year after year, providing enjoyable meals for many and all the while, raising money to help the Church. In recent years, money has been donated to the Rector's Discretionary Fund and the Save Our Steeple Fund. Scott gave a report about the Club's activities and its financial position at each breakfast meeting; eagerly anticipated was the amount of interest (usually a few cents) earned on the account balance.

The Men's Club was started in 1975 by founders Peter Huffman and George and Charlie Ling. Rob Hood was an original member. Others who participated in those early years included John Henley (the long time secretary), Mac Holton and Bob and Bruce Donnelly. With about 10 men involved, the monthly breakfasts were initially held in the lower kitchen of the Parish Hall. In the past, the Club featured social events such as an annual weekend at the Ling cottage and a golf tournament which was also open to men from other churches. Auctions were sometimes held to raise money and at one time, an annual children's skating party was sponsored. Sons, daughters and grandchildren of the members often attended the monthly breakfasts as did the incumbent and his assistants.

Scott, Rob and Kevin decided that the time had come to end the Club and the 2012 picnic which took place in June on the Church grounds was the last event. Many, many thanks to Scott, Rob and Kevin for your contributions to St. John's. We will miss your cooking and the camaraderie experienced at the functions.

Confirming Our Life Together in Christ

Over the past several months we have welcomed several new young members into God's family through the sacrament of baptism. Simon, Harper and Beatrice are not old enough to make the decision to be baptized on their own, but their parents and godparents have taken the baptismal covenant on their behalf and we as a church family have also vowed to help them raise these young people as Christ's own within our church family. When Simon, Harper and Beatrice are old enough they will each decide whether to continue in their journey as Christians and "confirm" the baptismal covenant that was once said on their behalf.

I currently have the privilege of guiding a group in our parish who are preparing to confirm their baptismal vows. Particularly for those who were baptized as infants or young children, confirmation is a significant and important milestone in our growth as followers of Christ. For those baptized as young adults or adults, (perhaps into a different Christian denomination) confirmation represents a reaffirmation of beliefs and reception into our holy catholic and apostolic church. Regardless of how each candidate approaches this important touchstone in their lives, it is a conscious decision that Jane, Clayton, Tasha, Penny and Laurie are each making.

Just as we celebrate when a young child is marked with the sign of the cross and as "Christ's own forever", so we celebrate those in our current confirmation class, that they will continue to be upheld in the service of Christ's kingdom. Although the decision is an individual one, the journey is not meant to be solitary.

The greatest spiritual growth in my own life has been through involvement in group studies, discussions and active participation in the life of the Church. I give much credit to Fr. Stephen for kick-starting my spiritual life, but it is truly the whole of our community that keeps me motivated. I doubt that my personal experience is unique. The earliest followers of Christ Jesus were a tight knit community, who with the power of the Holy Spirit, grew the Church from humble beginnings. Today we are entrusted with continuing to fulfil the mission of the Church. We each have a role to play and I believe we reach our fullest potential, both as individuals and as a community, when we embark on this undertaking together. We do this by supporting one another, sharing and learning from one another and aligning each of our individual callings around God's will.

Discussions in the current confirmation class session have reminded me of the importance of community in our individual spiritual growth. Each of you who have allowed me to share with you in discussions and studies, either as participant or leader, have influenced my spiritual development (thank-you) and collectively we have helped to deepen the spiritual structure of our Christian community. So do not underestimate the important role that you play in the spiritual lives of those around you. We each have a responsibility to uphold one another, a role that will become more important as Fr. Stephen leaves our parish at the end of December. No doubt each of us will feel the impacts of his departure, however, we have a strong community that has been increased in strength under the guidance of Fr. Stephen and the many other leaders in our parish. With this strong foundation and the support of Fr. Tim will be able to uphold one another and continue in our mission during this period of transition.

On January 13, when our confirmation candidates are presented, I encourage us to come together as a community and support them by joining with them in renewing our baptismal covenant. When we are asked during the service: "Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life with Christ?" I encourage us all to thoughtfully and earnestly commit that "we will" and carry that commitment

outside the service so that the collective “we will” continues into an undeniable “we do” that is felt throughout our community.

Shane Watson

Critical Communications

Welcome to the December 2012 edition of The Eagle. The Eagle is published three times annually (September, Christmas and Easter issues) and is managed by the parish communications committee, currently comprised of:

- Shane Watson (chairperson)
- David Goucher (Eagle/Eaglet editor)
- Rose Perry parish (calendar editor)
- Elaine Simmons (bulletin board management)
- Steve White
- Garry Curtis

Some changes to parish communications you may have noticed recently include the publication of a monthly mini-newsletter called The Eaglet. The Eaglet is produced in those months not covered by The Eagle. A monthly parish calendar has been created, there have been improvements to management of bulletin boards and weekly e-mail updates about key events in the parish are now being issued. If you have any questions about the committee’s activities or for assistance in promoting your parish event, please contact Shane Watson (905-885-8622 | shane.watson@me.com).

If you are reading a paper copy of this edition of the Eagle and you have e-mail access, please consider switching to the electronic edition by asking for your name to be added to the parish communications e-mail list. Your address will not be shared with others and will be used only for distribution of parish news and updates, including the Eagle, the Eaglet and weekly event reminders. Electronic distribution of news within the parish helps to keep our costs low and ensures you receive the latest information in full colour. To add your name, contact Shane Watson.

Letter To The Editor

Most likely you didn’t know that a portion of your offerings, from the apportionment we pay to the Diocese of Toronto, was included in the \$250,000 that our bishop sent to New Westminster diocese to cover legal fees. The Vancouver diocese needed help to recover several properties formerly belonging to Anglican parishes which had seceded because of the same-sex marriage issue. This was reported in the September issue of the Canadian Anglican Journal but was not, for obvious reasons, included in the accompanying Toronto Anglican newspaper. Not a penny for our steeple though!

Ted Heaven

The "War" on Christmas

by Daniel D. Brereton

I passed a storefront church the other day that had in its window a large painted sign with these words: Keep Christ in Christmas! I'm not sure who that sign was meant for. Likely it was meant for the secular culture in general, which is already stringing lights, putting up trees and pumping The Little Drummer Boy through retail loudspeakers. Perhaps it's meant for Christians, lest we decorate our homes and attend parties without thinking about Jesus. I'm still unsure.

"Christmas" has come to mean many different things to many different people. Those of other faiths will not be celebrating Christmas at all. I know Buddhists, Jews and Muslims who will exchange gifts, put up a tree and watch Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer on television, but what do any of those things have to do with the birth of Christ? Many people will even put out nativity scenes and play religious carols, but for them it is more a matter of tradition, than a statement of personal faith. For most people - even in the church - "Christmas" starts in November and ends December 25th and it is a season of celebrating many great things that have nothing to do with Jesus: office parties, year-end bonuses, an end to exams and visits home, gatherings with family and friends.

Throughout history, different cultures have responded to this season of increasing cold and darkness (in the north anyway) with celebrations of light, food, drink and gift-giving. Indeed many of our most cherished "Christmas traditions" are not Christian in origin at all but stem from such celebrations as the Roman Saturnalia (the rebirth of the sun) and the pagan Yule (winter solstice).

I am not offended by people who are celebrating – after all, Jesus loved a good party (see the "Wedding in Cana"). Putting up decorations in November does not constitute an attack on Christianity. Calling it a "holiday tree" is not particularly offensive to me since decorating with evergreens is really a pagan custom the Germans stole and made popular in England when Queen Victoria married Prince Albert. Besides almost everyone does and will continue to call it a Christmas tree anyway.

As far as I know, no one in North America is being thrown in jail for saying "Merry Christmas". An irritated rebuff to such a greeting from an atheist/ Muslim/ Jew or secular agnostic does not constitute "a war on Christmas" - and I know very few people of any of those groups who actually object to being wished Merry Christmas from a well-meaning, (if culturally insensitive) Christian. Public institutions and private corporations have every right (and many would say the obligation) to adopt a "multi-faith approach" to a season in which many religions celebrate different festivals. The point is, its not up to non-Christians to celebrate, protect, elevate or incorporate the observances, beliefs and rituals of the Church....that is up to Christians.

Is it actually "Christmas" Christians are mourning the loss of, or is it their cultural dominance? Because if its the latter they should re-read the actual Nativity stories in which none of the leading characters come close to dominating their culture.

You would think that after years of watching the Grinch try to steal Christmas from the Whos we'd know that if "Christmas" is something that can actually be taken away from you....that's not Christmas.

I am not concerned with keeping Christ in Christmas. It seems to me, our culture is actually pretty good at it with more people attending church on Christmas Eve than at any other time of year. Many people who couldn't give you details about the Passion story (which is actually far more central to the Gospel than the Nativity) still know the Christmas story by heart. For those who are Christian, and indeed for many who are not, Christ is still very much in Christmas...at least superficially. And maybe that's the issue. It's how superficial even Christians have become in their celebration of the Incarnation and in their insistence that this superficiality continue to be mirrored in the rest of the culture throughout December, as if carols and creches alone made a culture "Christian".

The concern I have is not "keeping Christ in Christmas" but whether we, who claim to follow Jesus, "keep Christ" beyond Christmas, once the decorations come down, the crèche is put away and the retailers are no longer serenading us with music about angels and wise men. When the rest of our society is no longer focused on the "spirit of the season" will we still be "keeping Christ" in the ways that actually matter: attending to the poor and marginalized (like Mary and Joseph); welcoming the stranger (like the magi); seeking justice for the oppressed and voiceless ones (like the shepherds); calling for peace on earth and good will among all people (like the angels).

Christmas is about the birth of "God-with-us", a God who entered our world to be light in the darkness and to enlighten all who believe, that they too might be lights in the darkness for others.

Let us stop defending Christmas and start living it.

Pictures of our Parish



Another sale at the Bazaar



Jeremiah Brown got a silver at the Olympics



A "Walk With Us" moment



The Tea Room at the Bazaar

ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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We're on the Web at
www.stjohnschurchph.ca

Parish Calendar

Event	Date	Time & Place
Parish Farewell Potluck Dinner For Father Stephen	December 15, 2012	6:00 pm in the Parish Hall
Trinity Group All Beef Pies Are ready for pick-up	January 12, 2013	Watch for announcements
Vestry Meeting	February 10, 2013	After the 10:30 AM service
Quiet Day	February 16, 2013	9:30 am to 4pm
Lenten Study	Wednesday evenings beginning February 20, 2013	In the Parish Hall