



A Message from the Minister

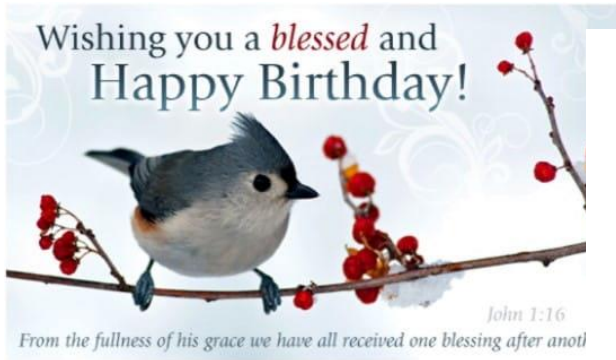
As I write this meditation, it is January 7th. The day the Christmas decorations have been put away for another year. I must admit that the absence of the tree in the living room and the candles in the windows is obvious. I miss the light and the colour. On January 7th, I think it is easy to understand why people are more eager to attend worship during the Christmas season. The lights, the music, the sense of joyous celebration, all contribute to a sense of wonder at Christmastime. Perhaps that is the same reason that people's Christmas lights seem to go up earlier and earlier each year; they long for the colourful lights to drive away the darkness of this time of year. Yet, however much we enjoy the Christmas decorations and the special traditions that are part of that season, we cannot remain there. Like the shepherds who had to return to their flocks, or the magi who returned to their own country, we too must return to our normal life with its regular patterns.

While the trappings of Christmas all too soon pass for another year, the reason for our celebrations, our rejoicing in the gift of God's love that came to us in Jesus Christ continues. The challenge for people of faith is to learn how to fit this ancient-new reality into our daily lives. Part of our understanding of our Christian faith is that our faith will never be perfect – we will never be perfect; yet, as the hymn says: "New every morning is [God's] love." During this season as we plan for a new year, it is good to remind ourselves that in our understanding of our faith we acknowledge that each year is a new year, each day a new day in which we can seek to deepen our faith. For this reason people begin new habits of devotion or prayer at this time of year, so that they might come to walk in nearer company with their God.

Once more, we begin this year filled with concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic and all its implications in people's lives. The pandemic has certainly introduced new challenges to all our lives, including how we sustain ourselves in faith. Gathering for worship has not been easy – and indeed at times it has not even been possible – and yet we have continued to look for and to declare God's love. We have worshiped online, or with masks. It has not always been easy, but this one thing we know: God is with us. The same Christ who is born at Christmas sustains and comforts us through all the challenges of life. What joy there is in our believing!

With God's Richest Blessings,

Robert



January and February Birthday Wishes

Happy birthday to those who celebrate in January: Grace Lattimer, Emily King, Ashley Mullin, Sarah Newton, Carolyn Wolff, Benjamin Woods-Chisholm, Bella Gwanyama, Abigail Esdale, Clarence Quan, Ken Ferguson, Leslie Foulds, Chuck Stewart, and Rita Trudell.

We wish all of those celebrating in February a very happy birthday as well: Donna Doyle, Elizabeth Adams, Linda Lee Barlow, Rhodes Brown, Katalin Kennedy, Earl Esdale, Jim Macfarlane, Debbie Plant, Kerry Adams, Janice Walker, and Ryan MacGregor.

We also send very happy birthday greetings to all those wishing to remain anonymous.

If we have made an error in your birthdate, or missed it entirely, please advise us so that we can update our records.

The Fay Moss Memorial Bursary

On March 3, 2020, Fay Moss was taken from her loving husband George, her family, and her faith family at St. John's Presbyterian Church. We know she is in the kind and gentle hands of our beloved Lord. One year later, on the anniversary of her death, George established the Fay Moss Memorial Bursary to honour the memory of Fay. The \$10,000 principal of the bursary will provide a \$500.00 cash award to a candidate who is a communicant member of St. John's, and who is enrolled in a Medical Doctorate program or is a Ministerial candidate, certified by the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry, and attending one the Presbyterian Church in Canada's theological colleges.



We are pleased to announce that Alex Plant, a long-time member of St. John's and Ministry student in Montreal, received the first Fay Moss Memorial Bursary. Pictured here is Alex, receiving the award from Reverend Adams on Sunday, December 26, 2021.

A special thank you to George for his generosity in establishing this bursary.



Hey Darlene and Jack!



John and I recently went to London to visit our granddaughter Ellie who is studying at Western University. We enjoyed some special Grandma and Grandpa time with her. We had arranged a visit beforehand with Jack and Darlene McMartin at their new home in Sarnia.

They have settled into their new home after a few renovations and are enjoying life close to their children and grandsons very much. Darlene served us a lovely lunch and we spent a few hours catching up with their news and also relaying news from St. John's Presbyterian Church.

After enjoying services in several churches they have settled in a church in downtown Sarnia, much like St. John's with a long history in the community. Darlene helped the ladies (making over 400 dozen shortbread cookies over a period of 2 days!). They have both been busy on committees in their retirement village as well. No surprise there!

It was wonderful to see them so happy and settled and as we left they asked us to convey Christmas wishes to their St. John's family.

Thank you to Jennifer and John Adams for sharing this news story.

Your chuckle for today...

Twas the night before Christmas, but Covid was here,
So we all had to stay extra cautious this year.
Our masks were all hung by the chimney with care
In case Santa forgot his and needed a spare.
With Covid, we couldn't leave cookies or cake
So we left Santa hand sanitizer to take.
The children were sleeping, the brave little tots
The ones over 5 had just had their first shots,
And mom in her kerchief and me in my cap
Had just settled in for a long winter's nap.
But we tossed and we turned all night in our beds
As visions of variants danced in our heads.
Gamma and Delta and now Omicron
These Covid mutations that go on and on
I thought to myself, "If this doesn't get better,
I'll soon be familiar with every Greek letter".
Then just as I started to drift off and doze
A clatter of noise from the front lawn arose.
I leapt from my bed and ran straight down the stair
I opened the door, and an old gent stood there.
His N 95 made him look pretty weird,



But I knew who he was by his red suit and beard.
 I kept six feet away but blurted out quick
 "What are you doing here, jolly Saint Nick?"
 Then I said, "Where's your presents, your reindeer and sleigh?
 Don't you know that tomorrow will be Christmas Day?"
 And Santa stood there looking sad in the snow
 As he started to tell me a long tale of woe.
 He said he'd been stuck at the North Pole alone
 All his white collar elves had been working from home,
 And most of the others said "Santa, don't hire us!
 We can live off the CERB now, thanks to the virus."
 Those left in the toyshop had little to do.
 With supply chain disruptions, they could make nothing new.
 And as for the reindeer, they'd all gone away.
 None of them left to pull on his sleigh.
 He said Dasher and Dancer were in quarantine,
 Prancer and Vixen refused the vaccine,
 Comet and Cupid were in ICU,
 So were Donner and Blitzen, they may not pull through.
 And Rudolph's career can't be resurrected.
 With his shiny red nose, they all think he's infected.
 Even with his old sleigh, Santa couldn't go far.
 Every border to cross needs a new PCR.
 Santa sighed as he told me how nice it would be
 If children could once again sit on his knee.
 He couldn't care less if they're naughty or nice
 But they'd have to show proof that they'd had their shot twice.
 But then the old twinkle returned to his eyes.
 And he said that he'd brought me a Christmas surprise.
 When I unwrapped the box and opened it wide,
 Starlight and rainbows streamed out from inside.
 Some letters whirled round and flew up to the sky
 And they spelled out a word that was 40 feet high.
 There first was an H, then an O, then a P,
 Then I saw it spelled HOPE when it added the E.
 "Christmas magic" said Santa as he smiled through his beard.
 Then suddenly all of the reindeer appeared.
 He jumped into his sleigh and he waved me good-bye,
 Then he soared o'er the rooftops and into the sky.
 I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight
 "Get your vaccines my friends, Merry Christmas, good-night."
 Then I went back to bed and a sweet Christmas dream
 Of a world when we'd finished with Covid 19!



Thank you to Charles Eadie for sharing our chuckle for the newsletter! Got a good joke, poem, or a funny covid or isolation story? Please share it with us. We will not reveal any names unless you give us permission to do so. Send your submission to: susan.macdonald5@sympatico.ca.



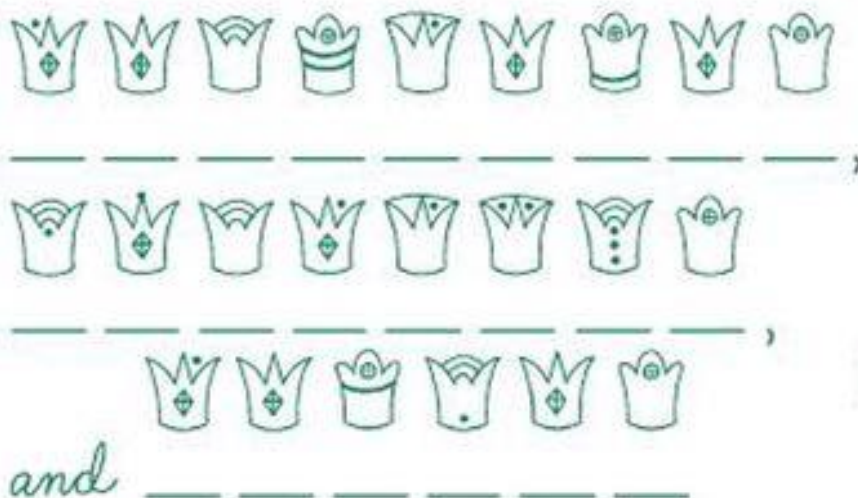
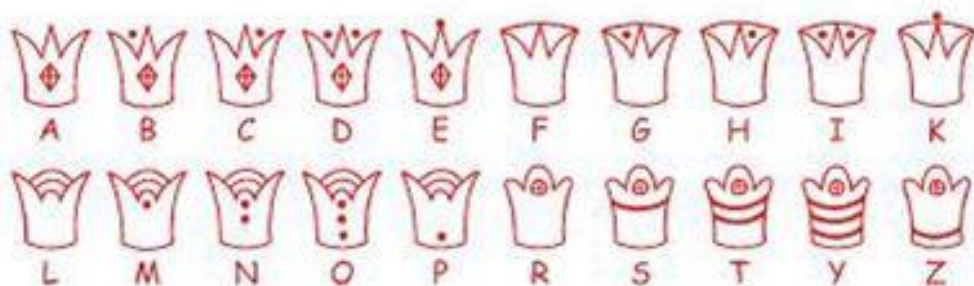
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Our annual Christmas pageant, called Waiting for the Gift, was held on December 12th, which coincided with White Gift Sunday. Many thanks to our dedicated performers, Angela Matthews and the Fourkiotis family, Kerry, Innes and Libbey Adams, Claire Choi, Hannah and Laura McFadzen, and our choir, Jennifer Vipond, Michele Alexis, Keppel Bharath and Reverend Adams. A big shout out to Trish Brown and the Christian Education team for putting this together for us, and a special thank you to Wes Libbey for taking the photos.



Kids' (and the young at heart) Corner Challenge

Calling all people of any age! We challenge you to complete the puzzle. The first person to correctly finish it and return it to Susan at: susan.macdonald5@sympatico.ca or drop it off at the church office will receive a prize. We will publish the name of the winner in the next newsletter.



BONUS: Use the same decoder to figure out what gifts the kings brought.

