



Dear Friends,

On my evening walks with Mocha, our corgi, I have noticed in our neighborhood that homes have more Christmas lights and decorations up. They also seemed to go up a lot earlier than other years. I believe this is happening in many places. My wife noticed as soon as the Halloween candy went on clearance, Christmas merchandise was quickly filling the shelves. I wonder if many are searching for ways to brighten their spirits this year, and “retail therapy” is prevalent at the holidays. Marketing professionals know that buying and spending releases dopamine in the brain. There is a neuroscience in marketing products. Some people try to fill loneliness, emptiness or fear with things. I sense there is a deeper longing for something that is missing in our shared human experience.

We drive downtown and see people in tents at this time of year in Nova Scotia. People are working full-time but can’t afford an apartment in this city. In November our radio announces that there

is a water shortage in the reservoir. City officials are asking people to cut back on their consumption of water. Severe weather is devastating entire communities around the world. We turn on the evening news to see people searching desperately for survivors in the rubble left after the latest air strike in the Middle East.

Some days it seems that no matter where we turn, we are confronted with another disaster or image that will disturb our sleep. We are left longing for a time “when our world made sense.” Maybe life seemed simpler without all of the technological advances and social media. Every generation has faced challenges in human history. Life has never been simple. Often we forget the struggles of the past for the achievements and freedoms we treasure today. Ironically, with all the advances in technology for good, we have also become more divided (politically, economically, etc.) and we are often feeling alone or separated.

The ancient prophets knew this feeling well.

Isaiah offers the exiles in Babylon a word of comfort as they face the hardships and burdens of daily life. The promise is that God is with them and will strengthen and care for them. God will shepherd them as they return to their homeland.

The prophet Micah is given the vision of a world where God “shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken” (4:3-4).

The challenging issues of our time, often leave us feeling powerless to address them or indeed even knowing where to begin. Yet others see a need and plant a seed that grows. I recently saw a story on CBC news about a group of teenagers at Northumberland Regional



High School in Westville. Since 2019, 40 students have played different roles, from handing out supplies to applying for grants and gathering donations as part of the Karma Closet initiative. Last month, the group was awarded the Nova

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Scotia Human Rights Youth Award and is hoping that other schools in Canada will follow in its footsteps. It was inspiring to see and hear their vision of “barrier free access” to healthy food at the school. In other words, those in need are not visible as a group set apart...all can be together regardless of need or income level to enjoy healthy food. It has had an impact of better attention span for learning, and the morale at the school has been uplifted over the span of just a few years. The bright faces on the volunteers and students said it all.

“In South Africa, prior to the abolition of apartheid, people used to light a candle and place it in their windows as a sign of hope, a sign that one day this evil would be overcome. At one point, this was declared illegal, just as illegal as carrying a gun. The children used to joke about this, saying: “Our government is scared of lit candles!” Eventually, as we know, apartheid was overcome. Reflecting upon what ultimately brought its demise, it is fair to suggest that “lit candles” (which the government so wisely feared) were considerably more powerful than were guns.”” (Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*).

Small simple actions have a way of changing the world around us. Jesus taught us that when he accepted the gift of two small fish and five barley loaves (St. John 6:1-14). Each one of us can bear the light of Christ into the darkness of our world. My hope at Christmas and in the year to come, is that each of us will reflect on that “longing for what is missing in our lives” because that gift came to us in Bethlehem.

Yours in Christ,
Edwin



Our Christmas Eve Services

4 p.m. Family Eucharist (BAS)

Christmas Day Service

10 a.m. Holy Eucharist (B.A.S.)

Those who attend are invited to bring one of their small gifts for “Show and Tell.”

Sunday, December 29, 2024

10 a.m. Stations of Christmas & Holy Eucharist



“The Wishing Tree” by Meika Hashimoto

A unique story will be shared with children at the Christmas Eve service at 4pm. It is especially relevant this year with a central theme of bringing joy to others and finding harmony in our world. A special thank you to Ethel Nelson, Judith Evans, Sylvia Glennie and Arlene Hallett who were wonderful “elves” helping to paint the tree ornaments for the children to take home to remember the story this year. The book will be added to our new Southdale Spirit Little Free Library for others to enjoy!



Mothers' Union

Since the last Parish Patter, our group has been busy. Six of our members attended the Fall Rally held at St. John the Evangelist in Lower Sackville. The guest speaker spoke on the subject of gender-based violence. On November 5 we spent part of the meeting discussing all aspects of funeral planning and the Celebration of Life. The presenters were Blythe Blois and Jeannie Patterson from Mattatall's Funeral Home, Dartmouth. On November 14 we welcomed Veronica Marsman who gave us in great detail what AKUMA is all about. She described the development, present and future, of the land on which the Home for Coloured Children once stood in Westphal. Our group presented our guest with a cheque to help with their endeavours. Each year Mothers' Union members collect personal care products for the youth living in Brockwell House and Edwards House. These items were delivered in time for Christmas. We ended the year with a Christmas Lunch at the home of Laraine MacDonald and revealed our "secret prayer friends" for the year. Mothers' Union wishes everyone a safe, happy and healthy Christmas and New Year. Respectfully submitted, Linda Greene, Branch Leader.



A.C.W. / Projects

The members of the A.C.W./Projects held a successful Chili Take-out, Bake Sale, Book Sale, Craft Table and New-to-You Sale on October 19. We also served a variety of short bread cookies on December 1 following Family Eucharist to honour St. Andrew. A Christmas Cookie Sale is planned for December 15.



PWRDF

The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

Please give a gift of hope this Christmas when you purchase Christmas cards or donate to P.W.R.D.F. A package of 12 Christmas cards is available from Rita Colbert, (902-434-5122) for a suggested donation of \$25. Donations of \$25 or more qualifies for a tax receipt.

Thank you, Rita Colbert, Parish Representative.

The PWRDF is moving to a new name, **Alongside Hope**. For more information please see <https://pwrdf.org/our-new-name/>

St. Mary of Bethany Altar Guild

Our numbers are few but our enthusiasm for our duties remains the same. The Christmas season is upon us and we will decorate the church on December 21 at 10 a.m. Anyone wishing to join us is certainly welcome. Christmas Blessings to all, Linda Greene, Directress.



Fundraiser

Have you ever reached for a pen and it wasn't there? We have the solution—a pen by the phone, one near the grocery list, one by the computer, one by your favourite crossword, and one in your purse or pocket—we have them all. New pens with our church name. See an example on the table, and to order, speak with Marie (902-463-4769). Just \$3.00 each. Handy to have and great Christmas gifts.

Church Property Ryan Ferguson was a great help this summer and fall. He kept the lawns mowed, tended to the Courtyard, assisted with the A.C.W.'s Chili Take-out, and Sale and helped plant 48 spring bulbs in the Courtyard..

Christmas Memorials—Now is the time to be thinking about your Christmas memorial gifts. Please complete the form included with this letter and place it on the offering plate or place it in the church mail slot. Please include the name of the person(s) being remembered so acknowledgement can be placed in the Christmas bulletin. If you are unable to attend church you could mail it to the attention of the secretary, Marie George, at the church at 1 Regency Drive, B2Y 1Z7. Thank you.

Offering Envelopes The church weekly contribution envelopes for 2025 are in the vestibule now. If you do not have envelopes and would like to contribute to the Church on a regular basis, please call the envelope secretary, Marie George, 902-463-4769 or put a note on the offering plate.

Pre-Authorized Remittance is an excellent way to support your church. It helps you to know that the same amount is set aside for the church in your monthly budget whether you are in town or at the cottage. It also helps the church to know that there is a steady income to pay the bills of the church, such as priest's salary, power, insurance, etc. In addition to your weekly contribution, you may also designate amounts to the Building and Maintenance Fund, PWRDF, etc. You may discontinue or change your amounts at any time. We now have 31 members. Why not join us? Speak to Marie after church or give her a call at 902-463-4769 to make arrangements with the Diocesan Office.

Income Tax Receipts Please remember that to receive credit for all your 2024 donations the offerings must be received or post marked on or before December 31, 2024. All offerings after that date will be credited to the year 2025. Thank you.

Annual Meeting The Annual Meeting for the Parish is tentatively set for Sunday, February 2, 2025 following Family Eucharist.

Annual Meeting Reports As is our custom, the Annual Meeting Reports must be ready for distribution one week before the Annual Meeting. That means they should be ready for pick up by January 26, 2025. All committees are requested to have their reports submitted to the secretary, Marie George by January 19. Thank you.

Postal Strike At the time of this writing we are still dealing with a postal strike. If you have not received your Advent/Christmas Parish Patter yet, we will mail it to you when the strike is over. Bring your Christmas donation to the Christmas service or you can mail it to the church when the strike is over.



CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS

Donations are now being accepted for Christmas Memorials. Please mark your envelope clearly "Christmas Memorials" and include the following form, then put your envelope on the offering plate or in the mail slot at the church.

From _____ Env. No./ PAR _____ Amount _____

In Memory of _____ Donation for _____
Thank you.