



## The Anglican Regional Ministry of Saugeen Shores, Tara and Chatsworth

### Reverend Carrie writes ...

Dear Friends,

In this Advent Newsletter we are sharing our memories of Christmas past, revealing a little of our own story in the telling, and it is a precious gift that we offer one another - a gift of equal value to gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is a gift that reflects in very human ways, the modelling of Christ's love for us, as he shares himself with us, and for us. Our memories offer a glimpse of who we are deep inside, hidden away and given only to those who we trust and love the most. Thank you for that wonderful gift.

My own memory of a Christmas past is one that I have shared before, but in the midst of an Advent season like no other, I find myself again pondering that evening 28 years ago. In some ways, there are similarities in the season for me as I think about the challenges of Christmas amid a global pandemic. I was far away from my home and family, in a strange land, feeling lonely and isolated, lamenting how this Christmas would be so very different than any I could imagine. We were living in Kuwait. John was working incredibly long hours. I did not speak the language of the country and I had a three-month-old baby and a 17-month-old baby to care for. We were living in a high-rise apartment building on top of the Muthanna Centre in downtown Kuwait just after the end of the Iraqi Invasion and the country was in deep mourning for their POW's and murdered citizens. Music was outlawed, there were no Christian worshipping communities, and the courtyard 10 stories below our apartment window felt as deep and dark as the desert expanse that surrounded the city.



It was Christmas Eve. John was still at work and as I looked out the open window that overlooked that central courtyard, surrounded by seven towers of apartments, I saw a tiny flicker of light from a candle across the way and heard the whisper of a carol being played. Within minutes, other candles were lit and additional whisps of music could be heard. I raced to find my own candle to join in this almost silent moment of exquisite worship where dozens of faceless strangers came together to bear witness to the birth of a child who would save us all! It lasted only minutes, but its effect on me has lasted decades! I cannot look at a candle without being transported back to that moment, where I felt the divine whisper linger over me.

A Turkish writer and thinker Mehmet Murat ildan wrote these words; "What distinguishes candlelight from other lights is that it appeals to our souls, not our eyes." How true this is. In those brief moments when I stood by that open window on a hot desert night long ago in Kuwait, my soul was drawn not only to this act of communal worship that was like no other I have ever experienced, but also to a presence of the divine that has never quite left me. My Advent prayer for you is that the soft flicker of candlelight that glows in all of us will burn bright and true, for you to see in others and for others to see in you, as we reflect the love of God.

May the Spirit of the Lord surround you, and fill you with God's light as you walk and wait for his coming!

*Blessings,  
Carriet*

## **Church Calendars are Available Now!**

Have you got your 2021 church calendar yet? If not, call a member of the Chancel Guild. You are welcome to make a donation to help defray expenses if you wish.



## **Our Regional Ministry Has Moved into the Technological Era!**

Ever since March, when in-person services ended abruptly due to the pandemic, we have been blessed to have other options to allow our services to continue. Thanks to Youtube, our website—**BestEverAnglicans.com**, our Facebook page—**The Anglican Regional Ministry of Saugeen Shores, Tara and Chatsworth**, and the Zoom platform, we have been able to gather virtually in our home worship spaces, while Rev. Carrie streamed the services from her dining room. We started out using an iPhone and an iPad. Two devices were used because the one being used for Facebook could not be uploaded to our website. Lots of ingenuity, duct tape, paint stir sticks and other strategies were used to



successfully stream the services. Occasionally, they appeared sideways on our screens. We laughed, and Rev. Carrie prevailed. It was a STEEP learning curve! This same technology has been used to allow Tuesday Morning Prayer, Bible study, daily reflections, and Saturday Children's Focus. We even offered an online Vacation Bible School, created by Elspeth Irwin. No stone was left unturned in attempts to maintain spiritual contact with you. More recently however, our congregations have purchased state-of-the-art equipment, including high-resolution cameras, amplifiers, audio mixers, dedicated computers and speakers to allow for easy streaming into your homes within the Regional Ministry, and to others around the world. We are very appreciative of the generous donations given to allow this wonderful transformation. We are also very thankful for the technical skills of Bryan Mombourquette, a congregant who researched what we needed, made the purchases, and expertly completed the installation. Thank you! Even when things return to "normal", streamed services may be the choice of many. **We are ready for the future!**

## Advent Journal Excerpt – December 2020

Instead of reviewing one of our St. Paul's library resources (during this period of time when fewer folks are accessing our library), I will offer an excerpt from my journal-writing desk:

I have been attempting to think positively about the imposed solitude created by the protocols and restrictions that challenge our lives these days. During the Advent Season we are invited to prepare our hearts anew to receive the gift of Jesus – the Christ child who came to visit us in human history. The phrase, Fallow Time materialized amid my ponderings.

Could we imagine our souls to be like fields which have been allowed to rest for a whole year? During fallow time there is no farm activity to be seen on the land, no crops to harvest, and yet so much is happening beneath the clover and grasses that are allowed to grow uninhibited. Vital nutrients are replenished as the soil absorbs what is offered from the sun and rain and all manner of wild and greening things.

The Psalmist knew all about the soul-restoring nature of green pastures and still waters. And the importance of REST! I am grateful for this fallow time during which there has been no hectic schedule to satisfy. There has been space to read and walk, to study Scripture and other spiritual writings, to pray and daydream. There has been time to listen to the whispers arising from my own Centre, and to hear the stirrings from the hearts of others – while keeping a safe distance and wearing face-masks, of course! And the Holy Spirit has gently come to speak grace into these conversations, reminding us: ***You are not alone! I can be found in all things. Trust Me, rest in Me. I am the One who will come to you again and again. Wait expectantly for Me with the eyes and ears of your heart open to receive Me.***

Might the ground be ready now to receive some new seeds which will hopefully begin to germinate and mature? Am I open to accepting what is planted in me by God? Am I willing to cherish and protect the new life that is growing in my soul? And in the fullness of time, am I willing to birth something of God's transforming energy into the world?

*"Our spiritual life depends on his perpetual coming to us, far more than on our going to him. Every time a channel is made for him he comes, every time our hearts are open to him he enters, bringing a fresh gift of his very life, and on that life we depend. We should think of the whole power and splendour of God as always pressing in upon our small souls."* ~ Evelyn Underhill

Ready my heart for the birth of Immanuel

Ready my soul for the Prince of Peace

Heap the straw of my life

For his body to lie on

Light the candle of hope

Let the child come in.

Alleluia, alleluia

Alleluia, Christ the Saviour is born

Mine is the home that is poor and is barren

Mine is the stable of cold and stone

Break the light to each corner

Of doubt and of darkness

Now the Word is made flesh

For the birth of me.

Alleluia, alleluia

Alleluia, Christ the Saviour is born" ~ Music and Lyrics by Lois Shuford

*Becky Peters*

St. Paul's Resource Centre librarian





## ***From the Priest Assistant's Pew***

The phrase "what a year it has been" has been over-used, but is still really one that hits home for all of us. We have tried to maintain a sense of "normalcy" during this challenging, unprecedented time but there remain the worries and "what if's" that we carry each day. We have spent more time thinking about how our lives interact with each other more than we ever have. I think this is a good thing.

This Christmas Season will look more different than it has in our collective memories. We will have to adapt to special dinners and meetings and handle carol singing and for some experience church on line. We are still going to have Christmas. We are still going to have New Year's Eve and 2021 will come along and we can hopefully see some light at the end of the tunnel. We just hope we don't trip before we get to that light!

I've been reflecting on how different my Christmas celebrations are now than they were just a few years ago. From the beginning of time (Ann's chronological time) it was the parents and me in the car on December 24<sup>th</sup> driving to Guelph to have lunch at my mother's sister's with her side of the family there. My mother's brother would make a big production of presenting each of the nieces and nephews with their "envelope". I was told my grandfather used to do the same thing. Family tradition is there for sure.

After that lunch we'd pile into the car for the trip to London. For many years Christmas was held at my cousin's huge farmhouse outside of Lambeth where I would be bunked in with the other younger cousins in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor attic room. I remember the fire lit in the living room, lots of food, a ping pong table in the basement and a cata-

logue of farm animals in the barn (even Jimmy John the mule) to keep us occupied in the afternoon and evening. The steadfast rule was that you couldn't get your stocking until the morning when it was close to daylight. Of course my three cousins and I always tried to calculate when that really was. Try as we might to get them earlier, we were



usually put off by someone snoring in the lazy-boy chair by the fire place. The day was filled with many family members (the largest number we ever had was 36) and a gigantic turkey, and mounds of all the other goodies. On Boxing Day we drove into London to visit one of my mother's university friends for lunch, and then finally headed home. Three days of family togetherness is a lot

for a very small family!

You may have noticed that church was never part of the equation. Between the travelling and not being able to drive myself, it didn't happen. It was only in recent years that the desire to be part of a Christmas Eve service was something I needed for me. Perhaps it was the chaos of so many family members in one place. Perhaps it was the need to hear the hymns and sing them too. Perhaps it was because we spent time in Advent waiting for the Messiah to come that I felt that I missed out if I wasn't part of the service to celebrate that! I am grateful this year to have the opportunity to celebrate in new ways. No, it won't be the same, but perhaps it's the beginning of some new traditions.

May this season greet you with the joy that we remember from years past, the hope of the year to come and the peace that we have being safe at home!

Be well.

*Rev. Annie*

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**Christ Church**, 56 Bruce Road 17, Tara, ON, N0H 2N0

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