

Dear St. Simon's NV friends,

It is a joy to serve you, to share Jesus with you, especially during the Advent/Christmas time of year. Advent is all about preparation and getting ready; more than just preparing the Christmas tree. It's about preparing our hearts for the two comings of our King (the first coming remembered at Christmas, and the second coming still to come).

The two greatest celebrations in the Christian year are Resurrection Sunday (Easter) and Christmas (Incarnation). That the Word who is God would become flesh and dwell among us is such an amazing truth. Thank God for the Christmas Carols that celebrate that rich mystery, that God the Son would visit our desolate planet and bring new life.

Thank you so much for your prayers, generosity, and love during the past year. It is greatly appreciated.

Ed, Janice, and boys



Please note that the Hird family will be on Christmas Holidays from Wednesday, December 26th to Saturday, December 29th. Ed+ will only be available for emergencies.

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THE BLESSED CHILD IS COMING

Did you know Jesus Christ fulfilled hundreds of prophecies about his coming?

Did you realize that even in the book of Genesis there is a reference to him defeating Satan?

Do you know why Joseph and Mary were travelling while Mary was pregnant?

Studying God's word is a fascinating experience which enriches our understanding of everything we believe about our faith. Small Home Groups offer a safe place to delve into the difficult questions. They also offer

a warm welcoming friendship with fellow believers who struggle with the same problems of living in a broken world. You may have wondered if you would fit into one of the groups. You may have questions you have been longing to ask and never found the right moment to ask them. We would love to hear from you and find the right group for you.

You can contact Alex and Jo Yule at 604 985 4028 or by e-mail to: alexanderyule@shaw.ca



Monday

7:00 pm - The Gathering Group for young adults. For more information, please send an e-mail to: ss.thegathering@gmail.com

Tuesday

7:00 am at the Pantry Restaurant (Holiday Inn). Men and women are welcome. Topic: Decisions - Seeking God's Will. Call Jennifer Odendaal at 604-929-9815 or Peter Turner at 604-929-4224 for more information.

10:00 am at the home of Maria Waller, a women's fellowship, studying the book of Phillipians. Call 604-980-9469 for more info. Address is # 315-1150 East 29th St, North Vancouver.

7:30 pm at Sid and Marina Ireland's home. Studying Prophecy in Context - The book of Revelation. Call 604-929-6570; 697 Plymouth Dr. North Vancouver.

7:30 pm - Men's Fellowship meets at the home of Richard Campbell. All men are welcome. Call Richard at 604-879-4662 for more information.

Thursday

10:00 am at the home of Gloria Thomson. Rev Ed leads in a study of the lesson for the upcoming Sunday. Call Gloria 604-929-8467. Group meets at 877 Roche Pt Drive, North Vancouver.

KIDS CLUB

*Tuesdays from 7-8:30 pm.
Games, Crafts, Prizes, Skits and more.*

Thursday (cont'd)

10:00 am at the home of Alex and Jo Yule; studying the book of Joshua. For more info call 604-985-4028. Address: #101-120 East 2nd St., North Vancouver.

10:30-12:00 - Christian Women's Club at Banff Court. Studying book of Ruth. For more information call Megan Allsop at 604-929-1496.

7:00 pm at the home of Val and Bill Hall, call 604-980-0861 or Hillary King 604-929-1837. Studying Great Prayers of the Bible. Address is 429 East 18th St. Nth Vancouver

7:30 pm at 543 Powell Street, Vancouver. Christian 12-Step support group, studying the principles of the 12-Step program. Call Roger Adams 604-929-3552 or Elsie Quick 604-215-0335.

Friday

9:30 am - Young Mothers Group led by Christina Hodson and Jo Yule at #101- 120 East 2nd St. Studying "Becoming a Women of Freedom". Call 604-831-5706 for more info.

Saturday

8:00 am at the Pantry Restaurant (Holiday Inn). Men's breakfast every 1st and 3rd of the month. For more information call Ron Gibbs at 1-604-896-1618 or Alex Yule 604-985-4028.

Choir Practice under the direction of Janice Hird is held Tuesday evenings at 6:45 pm at the home of Sid and Marina Ireland. Call 604-929-6570 for more info. New members are always welcome

Young Hearts At Christmas

“What’s this?” (Reading) Find the true meaning of Christmas. Win money, money, money. Spectacular, super colossal, neighbourhood Christmas lights and display contest.” (Charlie Brown, “Charlie Brown’s Christmas”)

When the children were asked what Christmas meant to them, my heart was warmed by their answers: “It’s about Jesus and giving and presents, of course!”, “It’s about baby Jesus”, “It’s when Jesus came to be a baby”, “it’s all about Jesus!...and presents!”

As the children have already begun their “Journey into Bethlehem” there is an evident pull to this event in history that has the children spell-bound at each stage of the event. Last week, the children heard of how the Angel Gabriel told Mary and Joseph about their special gift, being entrusted to take care of “Jesus Christ, King of Heaven and Earth”. When I asked the children about what they thought was difficult for Mary to do, after hearing that she would be the mother of the Son of God, the children stated: “for Mary to take care of Jesus and to make sure that He was safe and ok”.

This answer lead me to reflect on how simple and beautiful the heart of a child is and that that is the reason why Jesus calls us to mirror that child-like faith in ourselves. To guard our hearts, because it is the well-spring of life and to guard the life of Jesus in our hearts, will direct our attention up to God. And so the challenge that has been given to them is to spend five minutes per day with Jesus, getting to know Him well and how to take care of Him in their hearts.

Please pray with myself and with the Sunday School leaders for the children to guard the life of Jesus in their hearts, as they continue their “Journey into Bethlehem”. Pray that the children would realize that “all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘the Virgin will be with child, and they will call him Immanuel’ -which means, ‘God with us’.” Please pray for those who don’t know Jesus as Saviour, that they would be intrigued to join us as we journey together to meet the Christ child.

*Many blessings and peace,
Christina Hodson
Children’s Pastor*



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MEMBER OF THE ACIC**



UPCOMING EVENTS

1st of Advent - December 2nd
3rd Anniversary Celebration at LGCA
Joint Service at St Simon's NV
Service starts at 10:00 am

2nd of Advent - December 9th
Traditional Service 9:00 am
Contemporary Service 10:30 am

3rd of Advent - December 16th
Joint Choir Carol Service
& Christmas Pageant
Service starts at 10:00

4th of Advent - December 23rd
Traditional Service 9:00 am
Contemporary Service 10:30 am

Christmas Eve - December 24th
Communion Service at 8:00 pm (Monday)
St Simon's NV at LGCA.

Christmas Day - December 25th
Joint Service St. Simon's NV with
St. Timothy's at LGCA
Rev Ken Bell preaching
Rev Ed Hird presiding at Communion
Service starts at 10:00 am (Tuesday)

St Simon's NV Discipleship Workshop
January 12, 2008
Led by Alex and Jo Yule
Lions Manor - Bowrons Court
North Vancouver

AMiA Winter Conference
January 23-26, 2008 at Dallas, Texas.
Many Global South Primates will be attending,
and meeting with our Canadian ACiC Coalition
along with our Bishop Sandy Greene. For more
information, check out the AMiA website:
<http://www.amia.org>

Missions Fest 2008
January 25-27, 2008
Theme: *"For Such A Time As This"*
Location: Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre
(Co-sponsored by St. Simon's Church North Vancouver.)
Over 35,000 people are expected to attend.
Admission is free. Please keep your calendar clear.
This will be the 25th Anniversary for Missions Fest.



Joint Service & AGM

February 25, 2008
St Simon's NV 9:00 am & 10:30 am services will be
combined for a joint service at 10:00 am.
St Simon's NV Annual General Meeting to follow
afterwards at 11:45 am.

21st Annual St. Simon's NV Renewal Mission 2008

February 29th (Fri 7pm) to March 2nd, 2008.
Guest Speaker:
The Rev William Beasley,
AMiA Network Leader for Chicago.
Theme: Light The Fire Again
Lessons from Rwanda's Thousand Hills
Location: Lions Gate Christian Academy
For more information contact Elsbeth Turner (Renewal
Mission Co-ordinator) at 604-929-4224 or by e-mail to
Elsbeth.Turner@telus.net

Advance Notice

35th Annual BC Christian Ashram Retreat

July 25-28, 2008 (Friday to Monday)
The Evangelist will be the Rev Dr. Jerry Vogt from
Kansas City, the International United Christian
Ashram Board Chair, and the Bible teacher will be
the Rev. Ken Bell, Rector of St Timothy's Church,
North Shore (ACiC).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Kiwanis Communion Service

4th Wednesday of each month at 1:30pm. Join
Ed Hird+ and Ron Gibbs+ as they reach out to
the seniors at the KCC.

December 19th will be the Annual Christmas
Communion Service at 10:30 am. This will
be followed by caroling in the hallways of the
Kiwanis Community Centre with the ladies from
the ACW, the Choir from St Simon's NV and any
others who would like to join in.

Healing Rooms

1675 Kingsway, Sunshine Plaza in Vancouver.
Trained teams of Christians are available to pray
for the sick and injured; no appointment needed; for
more info, call 604-434-8328. Maureen Harrison at
St. Simon's NV is one of the prayer team members.

Visit their website at:
<http://www.healingroomscanada.ca/>

Dear Friends in St. Simon's,

I love the Christmas season. It is probably the most "open" season of the year in which we can share the gospel and it is received as good news.



One of the wonderful features of the Christmas story is that it is the story of the ordinary people and the extraordinary way God reaches out to them and uses them for good. The angels came to the "plain folk" of the day, the shepherds, and shared God's good news with them. The shepherds were poor. They didn't have great clothes or wonderful houses in which to live. They were the common labourers of their time doing the work in society that others didn't want to do. They were people with no influence in their society. They were nobody. Yet it was to these people that God sent an angel the night Jesus was born to tell them **"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."** (From Luke 2)

Christmas is for everyone, but especially for those who feel little, who feel poor, who feel vulnerable. It's to US that Jesus is born. **"Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given."** (From Isaiah 9) Into our ordinary lives Jesus comes and says, "I have good news for you. Do not be afraid. Your life can influence your world in amazing and wonderful ways. You don't have to be rich. You don't have to be a 'pretty one.' You don't have to be a person with a powerful place of influence." You simply need to be yourself and be open to the good news of my love for you. Share that and see what an amazing gift it will be to others and what an incredible influence it will have for good.

Sometimes we feel we're even less than a simple ordinary person. We are very much aware of our character defects. We wonder how a person with our history, our problems, our addictions could possibly do amazing things. It's at such times that amusing songs like, "Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer" have a wonderful lesson for us to hear. Rudolph's glaring problem was a big red nose. It was something that brought ridicule and laughter from the other reindeer around him. Yet it was his nose, as the story goes, that was useful to Santa in guiding the sleigh on Christmas Eve night. The wonderful spiritual principle is that God can use even our character defects, when they are transformed by His loving power and put to use in His loving plan. **"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."** (Romans 8:28)

We are Partners in Hope; particularly evident during the Christmas season because we've been changed and transformed by God living and working in us. Thank you to all in St. Simon's NV who come alongside with prayer and encouragement, with practical helps and finances, with your friendship and yourselves. God bless you at this Christmas season.

In His love,
Elsie

For all of us at Partners in Hope

Items still needed for Christmas packages:

- energy bars
- lip balms
- apple cider packets
- toothpaste
- deodorant
- shampoo

Preparing Gifts and Packages

Partners In Hope Recovery Society
557 E. 21st Avenue,
Vancouver, BC V5V 1R5
Phone: 604-215-0335

Each gift in the packages is wrapped. Come and help us cut, fold, wrap, and sort.

December 4 & 5 (Tuesday & Wednesday) – 7pm
December 11 & 12 (Tuesday & Wednesday) – 7pm



"FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS...."

Twenty five years ago, six churches felt the need to host an event that would help raise awareness of needs around the world and the opportunities to serve. Missions Fest was born. What started with six churches and an attendance of 3,500 people has grown to over 150 churches and over 35,000 people! Every year people pray, speakers are booked, programmes are planned. At conference time over 1,000 volunteers arrive and God works a miracle. Lives are impacted and people respond to the great commission.

Dwayne Buhler, Director of Missions Fest Vancouver writes "As you hear the stories of men and women who live on the front lines of a world which needs to see God's compassion and love, be reminded that there are still people who have not heard the name of Jesus. Recall that as followers of Christ we exist for such a time as this, and that you may just be in the right place at the right time."

Write the dates in your 2008 calendar, January 25, 26 & 27 and plan to be there.

FROM THIRD TRIMESTER TO BIRTH: Advent as our Final Prenatal Contemplation of Christ

One of the earliest views of salvation in the Church was that of Irenaeus. He recognized that God took up residence on earth as the man Jesus of Nazareth and did what no one else could do: live in perfect obedience to God. He called this recapitulation, or as we use the word these days, recap. Jesus the God-man summed up the story of humanity in his life, death, resurrection. Ever since Christians have meditated on His earthly existence not only to discover who God is, but also to discover what it means to be human. How are we to act? Who are we to be? We look at Jesus.

Early on the Church took this to heart and formed a yearly calendar based on the earthly ministry of Jesus. Most Anglicans, as well as many other liturgical churches, find it useful to continue this practice. It keeps the church (us) focused on Jesus and wraps up our identity with His identity.

When we want to know about God we consider Jesus; when we want to know about humanity we reflect on Jesus. It was a way of keeping us honest, reminding us yearly and weekly what we're doing when we gather together. We are all fellow travellers reliving the life of Christ. We can because He did.

This is the time of year where we anticipate reliving the beginning of His story on earth. We think of Joseph and Mary and mangers

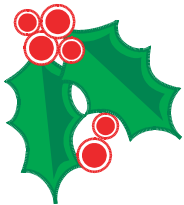
and all the other things in the Nativity scene. Personally I think the symbols have lost a lot of their oomph, though maybe this is more a reflection on myself than on the early scene itself. If I had my way I'd put up a sonogram on the screen with a fetus at 36 weeks of age in its mother's womb and count down from there until Christmas.

It's the shock of the Incarnation, of God becoming man. Jesus knocked against the belly of Mary, threw his elbows at her ribs and probably hiccuped in utero as most babies do. This season of Advent is the last four weeks of the third trimester and we're invited every year to relive it and to reflect and to wonder. We already know the end: there was no C-section or complications other than a lack of socialized medicine and latex gloves. He was born, it was messy, and there was blood. All this so He could live, die, and resurrect in full submission to the Father for the sake of all who are willing to follow after him.



May God bless your reflections of Him in the midst of all this birthday anticipation.

Peace and love,
Josh Wilton
Newcomers Pastor



CHRISTMAS JOURNEY

This past week, the youth and I went out and bought our first Christmas decorations of the year! It was a fun time as we looked for a tree, garland, and wall hangings. It seemed early (mid November when we went), but our new Kidz Club series was about to begin, and it needed a new set. Over the coming weeks up until Christmas, the youth are working with the children at Kidz Club and taking them through an "Elf training program." But these aren't your traditional elves. These are ELFs, Ever Loving Friends. We wanted our youth group to help the children have the chance to become people who are making a difference around them.

We will be doing a food drive for the local food bank, and helping the children see why it really is "better to give than to receive." We aren't hoping to teach them this through some elaborate program, but rather through experience. The children will get to see a video of the local food bank and what they provide to the less fortunate, and then will get to participate by collecting non-perishable food items to donate. They will be encouraged to involve their friends, family, and neighbours in this Christmas effort.

We are excited about the chance to re-install the true values of Christmas. As we celebrate the God who gave, we are invited to also give! Of our talents, our time, and our treasure! We will be journeying with the children as we look at the teachings and life of Jesus, centered around loving others radically. The children will also get opportunities to write a meaningful card to someone they recognize needs encouragement, as well as look for someone who they can help out during the holiday season.

Can we invite you to come on this journey with us? Christmas is a great time to reflect on the year, and remind ourselves of the heartbeat of God. As we look to help the children grow, we are committed to engaging in the same challenges with our youth. And we want to pass it on! Whose day can you brighten today?

Merry Christmas and much love,
from Rebecca and the Youth Team.



The Wonderful Story of Christmas

This Christmas we will all read or hear once again, the old familiar stories of Jesus' conception and birth. Some of us have read the nativity story every Christmas throughout our lives; for others it may still be a fairly new experience. But the wonderful thing about scripture is that no matter how many times we may have read or heard a passage, God, through His Holy Spirit, always wants to speak to us in a fresh way and to reveal to us something new that we didn't see or hear before.

This will be my seventh Advent and Christmas season in the Lord, and as advent approaches, I am reading and rereading the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke with an open and expectant heart. Advent is a wonderful time of anticipation as we celebrate the coming of Christ into the world as a baby. It's also a time of looking forward to His coming again. But what I love most about advent is that each year we have the opportunity to invite Christ to come into our hearts and our lives in a new and deeper way. That is my prayer as I read the nativity stories. I feel a sense of excitement and wonder and my heart swells with love for the Baby Jesus, our Lord, and with joy at His coming into the world. I also feel a sense of admiration for the woman who bore Him and raised Him, and for the man who was used by God to protect her and the newborn Christ child.

Why did God choose Mary and Joseph above all other people to be the earthly parents of His One and Only Son? From a human perspective there was nothing special or extraordinary about either of them; they were poor and simple people. It's obvious that God looked on the hearts (1 Samuel 16:7) of both Mary and Joseph and favored them greatly (Luke 1:28). From the text we can assume that some of the character qualities He saw in them were faith, righteousness, obedience, vision, and most of all humility.

When God called to them through His angel, both Joseph and Mary believed Him and obeyed. Although the text doesn't tell us much about their thought processes, they must have considered the cost. Mary's untimely pregnancy would have raised an outcry among their family members. They would certainly have been the subject of gossip, scorn, and perhaps even ridicule among their neighbors. Yet, for both Mary and Joseph, their reputation and what others thought of them was not the main concern. Although they were unable to understand what God

was going to do through this strange and seemingly scandalous plan, they chose to obey God and to trust Him. Their hearts were completely surrendered to God and to His will for their lives. Mary's response to the message the angel brought was, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Luke 1:38 (KJV)

We would do well to imitate the character qualities of Mary and Joseph, for we too have been given the life of Jesus Christ, the One and Only Son of God, to carry within us, to nurture and to raise up to maturity. And, like Mary and Joseph, God has a plan to use each one of us. But if, as the world teaches us, we are always looking out for our own interests, we render ourselves unusable and ineffective for God's Kingdom purposes. I love the way Rick Warren starts his book "The Purpose Driven Life". The first line is short and shocking - "It's not about you." It shocks us because we are so used to thinking of ourselves first, and our motive for reading the book may be self-centered. The question that's uppermost in our minds is often, "What's in it for me?" or perhaps it is, "What can I do for God?" Neither Mary nor Joseph asked these questions. Their first thought was not for themselves.

Philippians 2:4-11 tells us what our heart attitude should be: that of Christ's. If we were to live our lives with this heart attitude; if we were to imitate Mary and Joseph, being filled with faith and humbled by the majesty of God; if we were to wait and watch for the Lord to direct us and respond to His guidance with obedience instead of taking the initiative ourselves, He would be able to use us in amazing ways to reach those who are still lost. This is His plan and His purpose for every one of us: to be used by Him to reach out to the lost. It was His plan and His purpose for Mary and for Joseph. Although they could never have imagined the impact their obedience would have on the rest of the world throughout history, they did understand that it wasn't about them. They were in the habit of praising and glorifying the Living God, and The Magnificat, or Mary's Song, gives witness to this (Luke 1:46-55). As we behold God in all His glory and majesty, we are humbled. The more we time we spend beholding the glory and majesty of God, the more we want to worship and to praise Him and the more we want to serve Him and obey Him; our lives are transformed into Christlikeness (Philippians 2:4-11),

and people will be drawn to us because we reflect His glory in an ever increasing degree (2 Corinthians 3:18).

As we journey through this advent season, we can make a commitment to behold and experience the majesty and glory of God anew; and as we do, the life of Christ with which we have been impregnated will grow within us. When we humble ourselves before God and allow His Spirit to work in our lives; when we obey Him and trust Him even when we don't understand what He is doing, God will use us to advance His Kingdom here on earth. He will send people to us, just as He sent the shepherds to Mary, Joseph and the Christ child, and like the shepherds, they too will be encouraged and transformed by the life of Christ in us.

The story of Jesus' birth fills us with wonder each year because it is so astonishing. To think that God would send His One and Only Son into the world to be born to poor and lowly parents and then laid in a manger for His bed! To think that the people God sent His angelic host to proclaim the news of Christ's birth to were poor shepherds - the lowest of the low - watching over their flocks on the hills around Bethlehem! Because of His action through these events, it's obvious that God sent His Son into the world for the sake of those who are poor and despised by the rest of the world; that He loves and blesses and even uses those who are humble and lowly. In His Sermon on the Mount, the first thing Jesus teaches is that the poor in spirit are blessed of God because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them. This is the story of the first Christmas. It was for people who know their "humble estate", as Mary's Song calls it, that God sent His Son into the world, and it was people of humble estate that God chose to birth Him and raise Him to manhood.

What an awesome God we have! May we remember daily to surrender our wills and our lives to Him and to give Him all of our worship; may we always remember that it's not about us; and may we all be filled with wonder at the glory, the majesty, and the goodness of our Father in Heaven and His perfect plan to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14 ESV)

Captain Catherine Morris
Church Army Canada

**Greetings from:
WEC International:
Gateway Missionary Training Centre**

I had never thought of this scripture as a reference to Christmas, until I began to think about what Christmas means to those living far away from family, friends and culture - like missionaries, or our international students. For many of them, a lot of the things that are associated with Christmas - people, food, events, are missing.

For some it may mean celebrating in a hot and dusty climate, with strange food and even stranger customs. For others it may mean just another work day because they are in a land which does not celebrate a Christian feast. For most it means being far way from their family and friends. So is that what Christmas is all about?

Well of course, the true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of Jesus birth and the implementation of God's plan of salvation for us. Still, we can become disappointed with Christmas because it is not what we are used to. That does not just apply to missionaries. For some of us, Christmas may be "different" this year - because of the absence of loved ones or our circumstances. But one thing we can do, is to look past those circumstances to the one who controls them. We can "rejoice the Lord always," and that includes Christmas - wherever we are or however it is celebrated!

Blessings,
Rev. John & Bev Lombard
Margie Knapp

**"Rejoice in the Lord always!"
Philippians 4:4**



"We are now ten months on from the day Paul was taken so seriously ill. The cardiologist is delighted that his heart is virtually back to normal with no sign of any damage. Neurologically, however, his ability to encode information and lay down new memory paths is still very slow. ...

Uncertainty as far as the future is concerned gives rise to fear; the battle is always in the mind. ... Last January, in Jacksonville Florida, our family literally walked through the valley of the shadow of death. But we fear no evil because God is with us and our lives are precious to Him.

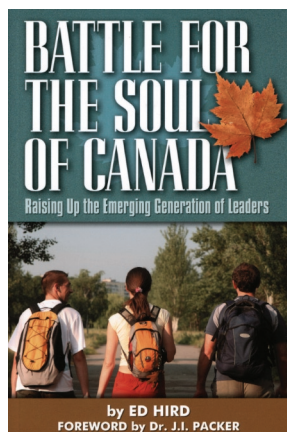
Thank you for the continued outpouring of love and support for us and we ask for your ongoing persistent prayer.

With our love

Paul and Lois, Naomi, Susannah and Sarah-Louise

A big thanks to my church family who have been praying for me during my recent illness and while I undergo treatment for cancer. The many expressions of encouragement, phone calls and home care have been a source of blessing to me.

Lorna McLachlan



To purchase a copy of "Battle for the Soul of Canada" for yourself or others, just send a cheque for \$18.50 (includes shipping and handing) to:

Rev. Ed Hird
#1008-555 West 28th Street
North Vancouver BC
V7N 2J7

Mention "Christmas 2007 Offer" and received \$2.00 discount.

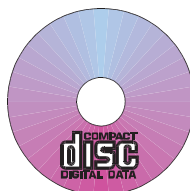
DVDs of our 20th Annual Renewal Mission 2007 can be purchased online at:

<http://www.reason-for-hope.com/>

or by e-mail to:

stuart@lightspeed.ca (Attention: Stuart Spani)

Stuart has also recently produced a DVD entitled 'Celebration of Joy' that includes Diane Andrew's healing; Canon Ellis Brust's sermon at St. Simon's NV on the '5 F's'; Bishop TJ's sermons at the Noah's Ark dedication as well as the recent confirmation service. This production also includes a commentary by Roger Adams.



Greetings From Newfoundland

Dear Friends and Family of St. Simon's,

We wish to extend the blessings of God our Father and His gracious gifts to all during this wonderful time of year. It is our prayer that in the coming New Year that He continues to see His will being done in and through the Parish of St. Simon's NV. It is our plan to be in Vancouver this Christmas Season. We are very excited to be seeing all of you and sharing in the Love of our Lord Jesus' birth. It was the Christmas time of 2001 when Betty and I first met and went caroling with Elsie and the gang downtown. We are thrilled with the opportunity to be part of that ministry once again.



We have recently organized a Caring For Ex-Offender Conference here in St. John's. This was a first time event and hopefully it will be an annual gathering. You can read the local article at this site– <http://www.thetelegram.com/index.cfm?sid=74036&sc=85>. It was an opportunity for all the small groups and organizations to get together and see how we can better minister to the men and women that are returning to our communities. We wish to thank you for allowing us to have Elsie Quick come and give a talk on Boundaries. The Superintendent of Her Majesty's Penitentiary allowed us the privilege of holding it in the gymnasium of the prison. We even gained the permission to allow Bill Baird (ex-offender staying with us) to attend and give personal testimony to some of the major fears and challenges that many face when returning to society. In recent years all the denominational clergy that minister in the prison have seen a revival. Many of the bible studies, alpha groups and Christian discussions are standing room only. We are having a difficult time keeping up with the demand for Christian books for their library. Praise the Lord!!!

We wish to thank you for your continued prayers and support as we seek to understand and do God's will here on the East Coast, and once again we are looking forward with joy to be in Vancouver for Christmas.

Blessings to all,
Steven and Betty Nagle



MARANATHA, COME LORD JESUS

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2)

Darkness is not what we usually associate with the Christmas season and yet the prophet Isaiah refuses to gloss over the darkness in which we all find ourselves engulfed in. Our newspaper headlines scream of the evil which permeates our society.

- innocent men gunned down in gang warfare
- vulnerable children abused
- the poor pushed aside as public nuisances
- God mocked and his name used as a swear word

Only when we recognize the darkness can we rejoice with Isaiah that the light that will dispel all darkness is coming. This anticipation creates a deep yearning within our being. This is why the church sets aside a period of "waiting". Advent is a time of great expectation. He is coming! Jesus Christ the light of the world will overcome all evil

When we embrace this mighty truth the words of comfort spring from the page,

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelations 21:4)

Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus

Jo Yule



ADVENT/CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS FOR GROWNUPS

The first three Sundays of Advent speak of an adult Christ and the future reign of God, not of an infant born in the past. Only on the fourth Sunday of Advent do we turn back to the event of the annunciation, and then on Christmas Eve to the birth of the Christ child.

It must have been like that for the earliest Christians: at first they were entirely focused on the resurrection, the gift of the Spirit and the eagerly expected Second Coming; then, as the time lengthened, they began to reflect with wonder and no little curiosity about the divine origin and human beginnings of their Lord. It may be helpful for us to remember this sequence as we try to make sense of Christmas in view of the multicultural “holiday” that now threatens to swallow up the Christian holy day. The readings for Advent and Christmas reveal that the adult Messiah is primary. The climactic reading for the services of Christmas is not the nativity from Luke but the prologue of John: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The divine quality of this text will not be lost on children as they grow, but it clearly does not fit our idea of a reading designed for them.

Many Christians, especially those from our tradition who observe Advent scrupulously, not decorating the church or singing carols until Christmas Eve, find themselves playing two games simultaneously during this season. On the one hand there is the usual frantic shopping, wreath hanging, tree trimming, partygoing and overeating. On the other hand there is the deepening mood of Advent, which calls us to a mature, clear-sighted and steadfast faith. A similar split in our sensibility is apparent in Christian bookstores and church gift shops where an austere Byzantine icon will be displayed next to an angel that looks like a Barbie doll. Christmas cards with medieval illustrations sit cheek-by-jowl with designs of Santas playing golf.

It seems to me that this aesthetic confusion contributes to theological immaturity. Grown-up people seem to become befuddled at this season as they try to recapture their lost

childhoods. One leading mail-order company put this verse on its Christmas shipping boxes a couple of years ago: “May you find among the gifts / Spread beneath your tree / The most welcome gift of all / The child you used to be.”

Harmless, you say. But in a culture like ours, where parents have very little time to spend with their children, and where an obsessive pursuit of youth has caused an 800 percent increase in cosmetic surgical procedures in ten years, a focus on becoming childlike at Christmas seems guaranteed to skew the message of the incarnation.

One of the most dramatic changes in our denomination is the shift away from the adult midnight service on Christmas Eve to a popular “family” service at an earlier hour, which by its very nature cannot offer much in the way of a sermon or more challenging music. I don’t want to be misunderstood here; Christmas ritual can indeed be beneficial for the developing faith of children. However, if the children get the idea that Christmas is entirely for them, that there are no privileges reserved for their maturity, it does not seem likely that their faith will unfold in the direction of Good Friday.

In these stress-filled times virtually all of us, as we get older, will seek relief by visiting, in our imaginations; a childhood Christmas of impossible perfection. These longings are powerful and can easily deceive us into grasping for a new toy, a new car, a new house, a new spouse to fill up the empty spaces where unconventional love belongs. Our longings are powerful, our needs bottomless, our cravings insatiable, our follies numberless. For those who cannot or will not look deeply into the human condition, sentiment and nostalgia can masquerade as strategies for coping, quite successfully for a while – but because it is all based on illusion and unreality, it cannot be a lasting foundation for generations to come.

Have a blessed Advent and Christmas,
Ron+



If you know of someone who is ill and in the hospital, please let Rev. Ed know, as clergy no longer receives this information from Lions Gate Hospital.



If you or someone you know is in need of prayer, call both Diane Andrews (604-324-4779) and Megan Allsopp (604-929-1496) and your request will be passed onto the prayer chain members. Please also phone the prayer chain to give thanks for healings and other answers to prayer.

Thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord in tithing your first 10% and in sacrificial offering.

All St. Simon’s Church North Vancouver members are encouraged to use offertory envelopes for their regular tithes and offerings.

Please contact Nathan Landberg by sending an email to: nathan71@shaw.ca or call 604-980-7769 to receive offertory envelopes. You may also fill out a request form in the Sunday leaflet and put it in the offertory plate.

Alpha And Christmas

Even at the worst of times Christmas has been a wonderful time for me: even without knowing Jesus. I remember waking up one Christmas morning at a work camp in the Western Australian tropics. Someone gave me a beer in my cot and I drank it in bed. That was a first for me, and the last! We, about one thousand construction workers, had Christmas breakfast in the company canteen, and a funny tasting turkey dinner a bit later. Some of us went for a swim in the shark, snake, and deadly stonefish infested ocean to celebrate that this was not just another day. That was probably my worst Christmas.

I wonder how many of us remember our first Christmas? I would have been 11 months on my first Christmas and the event slips my memory completely! What about our first Christmas in Christ? I was one month a born again Christian on that first Christmas: I remember it vividly as it was like a first Christmas to me, and my best. While on a back-to-earth farming experience, after I successfully contemplated a sermon preached by a farmer in our new community, my wife had led me to Christ. Everything seemed new after that prayer and that newness continued for years. Now knowing the purpose, and magnitude, of the very first ever Christmas we were celebrating, and making it a religious holiday, made a profound difference to me. Now having our new Christian friends celebrate with us by opening their home to us was hugely important. There were also some young children there, some foster children, enjoying Christmas. This gave me my first Christmas thinking of other's enjoyment as part of my own.

During Christmas 2007 there will be some new Christians as a result of St. Simon's NV ministries. A few come from the Alpha ministry led by Josh and I, and well supported by many, many with food, prayer and their giving to the church. I hope that few become more by Christmas. There may be some who have brushed up on their Christian basics. Also there will undoubtedly be some individuals who have renewed their relationships with Christ, or who have had a major encounter with the Holy Spirit, and are spiritually rekindled. This is marvelous to think about and I intend to stop and think of these newcomers and other beneficiaries of the Alpha ministry and rejoice that they are in the Kingdom of God this Christmas. What a Christmas present for us all.

Stephen



Launching a New Season

Ten years ago this month, at the Lord's direction, I moved back to Canada from the UK. It was a challenging move. A lifetime heart for Europe, especially the UK, combined with a life-changing re-direction into missions, literally as I moved to the UK 4 years earlier. Then it all seemed to be behind me. But God said move.

Ten years ago, at the Lord's direction, I came to St Simon's for the first time. I immediately sensed that this was the church I was to be a part of; God said. Ten years later, I'm back in Europe. Ten years of pressing in on a calling whose time had not quite come. Ten years of foundation building. Then, this January, a slight stirring of the wind of change. Now in November, there is quite a strong breeze, and God is clearly saying the wind is rapidly shifting. It's almost time.

For two years now I have been building network relationships in the north European Church centering around frontier missions and the Tibetan world. More and more doors have been opening inside and outside of YWAM. This autumn I have been taking an online university course, Collaborative Approaches to Ministry, through Fuller Theological Seminary. A watershed in my life, the course brings tools, perspective and clarity to my calling, and confirms that this is the season for collaborative facilitators such as me. I am excited to see what the new year will bring as God's breeze continues to strengthen. Much more travel is certainly in the horizon, starting in February, both within Europe and to Asia. Thank you St Simons for your faithful walk in this ministry with me. You are such a blessing.



Jane Holloway

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 many different subpages as
 well as links to resources such
 as to articles listed in Deep
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*(built with the talents of Jonathan Williams and
 contributions from Josh Wilton)*



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For more info call 778-558-9037

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Pray for Rev. Paul Carter, Rev. Jen Isaak and Immanuel Church

