



# **THE BURNING BUSH**

101 COBURG STREET, SAINT JOHN, N.B. E2L 3J8

## **GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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## **Advent 2013**

**MINISTER: THE REV. DR. JOHN CRAWFORD, B.A., M.Div., D.Min.**

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The people of that time were being heavily taxed, and faced every prospect of a sharp increase to cover expanding military expenses. The threat of world domination by a cruel, ungodly, power intoxicated band of men was ever just below the threshold of consciousness. Moral deterioration had corrupted the upper levels of society and was moving rapidly into the broad base of the populace. Intense nationalistic feeling was clashing openly with new and sinister forms of imperialism. Conformity was the spirit of the age. Government handouts were being used with increasing lavishness to keep the population from rising up and throwing out the leaders. Interest rates were spiraling upward in the midst of an inflated economy. External religious observances were considered a political asset, and abnormal emphasis was being placed upon sports and athletic competition. Racial tensions were at the breaking point. In such a time, and amid such a people, a child was born to a migrant couple who just signed up for a fresh round of taxation, and who were soon to become political exiles. And the child who was born was called, among other things, Immanuel, God with us.

- Sherwood Wirt

When I look at our country as understood from its political, secular, religious, economic and social mores and dictums I am troubled. Why? Because I see growing parallels between Canada and our world as it relates to Wirt's reflection of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine under Roman rule. Many may take issue with my gloomy statement and wonder why I may identify with Wirt's analysis, but we must remember that Wirt was speaking of the Roman world as a global power that stretched throughout the known world and the problems of Palestine were also the problems of Gaul or Alexandria. The Pax Romana was not real peace but a thorough colonization of foreign civilizations through the sanitization of their religions, cultures, politico-economic, social and military independence.

The peace of Rome was like a wheel that turned only one way and that was toward the triumph of all things Roman. The political schema Rome employed in Israel was to allow a form of Judaism that compromised itself on the principle of accepting foreign rule by a Roman Caesar who claimed divinity. This was perhaps one of Israel's darkest spiritual winters.

I will only ask you to observe Wirt's statement and answer one question. Do you believe a reasonable person could by inference between the time of Jesus and our world and see any congruence?

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ came in the midst of Israel's darkest spiritual winter. The spiritual light of Israel was going out but there in a stable in Bethlehem the Son of God was born. The holy family did not birth a philosophy or ideology but the Divine in human flesh coming to redeem Israel from Rome and renew their hearts for God and the world. John the Apostle wrote, "What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people." The Light began to shine in that tiny village and nothing could put that light out.

This Light soon began to illumine the hearts and minds of people near and far so that what John the Apostle wrote became realized, "in him was life and the life was the light of all people and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." Christians became known as "The People of the Way" because they knew their way was found only in the light of Christ – that is to say in the one who was born a Saviour, a Prince of Peace, a Mighty King, and a Wonderful Counsellor.

Go through the season of Advent considering these things. Wonder about them as you wander through the significance of God with us.

May you have a merry Christmas and joyous New Year,

John Crawford

## **CHURCH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The CMC would like to thank all those in the congregation who have been taking a part in the Joyful Abundance program. This program will do a lot to help balance the budget for this coming year. We are also grateful as well to the late Debbie Chapman for her gift to the church and are thankful for her volunteering for so many things over so many years.

Debbie was always there to lend a helping hand in her quiet and pleasant way. We as a congregation were blessed with having her as a member of our congregation for over forty years, and for all that she has done for the life of the church.

I would also like to thank Ian Webster for securing the large garbage dumpster now located at the far end of the parking lot at the back of the church. The dumpster will save us over \$100.00 per month in garbage fees

Laurie Hossack

CMC Chairperson

## **WOMEN'S GROUP**

The Women's Group participated in the Ministry Fair where we gave samples of soup which we make all during the year on alternate Tuesdays for Romero House. We also showed a couple of things which we do as well. One of them is to give money and Laundry Detergent – detergent is our own personal donation – to Stone Wash Laundry. There you can wash and dry a garbage bag of clothes for one dollar. Can you imagine their electric bill! We have just made a donation of money and 12-15 jugs of laundry detergent. We also gave money to the Lunch Connection.

We now earn our money mostly through donations from Funeral Receptions. In the past, we have held dinners, made 100 apple pies, and 75 tins of cookies (homemade) in decorated tins at Christmas. However, we find that although we like to think we are still 25 or even 45, we aren't anymore. In the little booklet "These Days", an elderly gentleman 97 years old was asked how he was feeling. "Fine" he said, "But I just can't kick as high as I used to". Maybe that's us. With help from people like YOU, we could again do more.

As an example, we have been asked to cater to a dinner for 85 people in February. We cannot do it alone. Perhaps you could help. We will need help to set up tables, wash dishes, serve, maybe cut vegetables. The menu is not yet set nor if indeed we will do it.

Respectfully submitted  
May Megaw  
Vivian MacDonald

## **AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM**

December is an exciting but difficult and worrisome month for children in the After School program. Many of them worry whether Christmas will happen at their house.

We involve them in the giving spirit of Christmas. For a few years now we have been making Christmas cards and decorating Christmas bags for gifts that the Children make for shut-ins. The children look forward to this time and were very pleased when I took pictures of some recipients last year and posted them with thank-you notes. It certainly made it more realistic for them and I heard some of the older children last week cautioning younger ones to do their best as they worked on a craft because, "We want some nice things for the senior's Christmas." Of course the children have opportunities to make special items for themselves and enjoy their Christmas party mid-month with a tree, games, gifts, and special food.

In addition to high school volunteers I am pleased to have supportive mothers who help whenever possible. One mother shows up unmasked regardless of the cold to make sure all the girls and boys get home safely. I think she deserves a special treat at Christmas. It means a lot to me that in the dark month of December the children are arriving home safely.

## **CO-OP KITCHEN**

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> the girls met for their annual Turkey Dinner. Since 2 turkeys were cooked, everyone had plenty to take home for their evening dinner. There was a variety of vegetables, homemade pickles, and apple pie. Everyone left feeling happy and satisfied. Congratulations to Wendy and Danielle who planned the menu and organized the shopping for a job well done; and many thanks to Diane who offered the grace.

The girls have divided into teams this year with each team taking turns with menu planning, searching flyers for the best sales and then assisting in shopping.

In December we will gather to do Christmas baking and then finish off the day with our Christmas party. Our two little ones in the nursery will join us for the fun.

Those of us in the program are so grateful for all the congregation provides for us: the crib, the clothes, the wonderful books, Lego and the hand knit mitts and socks that will accompany their Christmas gifts, and will warm the cold fingers and toes during the coming months. Everything is appreciated.

## **BOOKS AND BLANKETS**

This program has been well attended with a variety of ages in the children (from 3 to 14). Older children are supportive of the younger ones and we supply a variety of age appropriate activities in attempting to tweak every ones interests.

Undoubtedly, the giveaway books the end of the day are a big hit. I have a couple of children who would curl up right on the spot and start reading. It's rewarding to watch them progress in their levels.

We have at least one blanket to make before Christmas and it is usually this group that trims the tree in the Church Hall. The children all know the program will provide them with a book for Christmas.

Glenda Hossack

## **NURSING HOME NEWS**

Guess what? It's that time of the year again. It's the season of anticipation as we prepare and wait for the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Children everywhere are trying to be patient and good as the excitement builds. Outside lights are bright and bring a sense of joy during this dark time of year. Christmas trees will be decorated soon and presents will appear underneath. This sense of anticipation and excitement is also growing at our nursing home. Garlands, lights and decorations are going up. Christmas tours will start soon as residents are driven around the city to see outdoor light displays. Some residents were able to see the SJ Christmas Parade a few weeks ago.

Residents prepare for Christmas and get as excited as everyone else. There's special baking to do and local groups and choirs come in to entertain. Favourite Christmas movies are shown on the big screen TV in the Activities room. The big event of the season before the 25th is the Candlelight dinner that will be held on December 12th. It is a wonderful time for residents to sit down to a yummy Christmas meal with family and friends. Staff and volunteer pull out all the stops to make this a special occasion. If you would like to help out and experience this wonderful event please call Nicky Hamburg at 643-6116. You will be rewarded with big smiles, a fun time and a Christmas dinner yourself afterwards. No one goes home hungry, just ask John Crawford!

As well, at this time of year, during Advent, we remember those residents who don't have family or friends. We will have White Gift Sunday on December 8th. This is an opportunity for us as members of the congregation to provide small, meaningful gifts to these residents. Suggestions include: window ornaments, low scent body lotions, playing cards with large numbers, small packages of candy (mints, etc), large print books shaving cream, after shave, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, non-skid socks, mitts/gloves, slippers, lap rugs, scarves, and leather belts for men. Please consider the residents when you are out gathering gifts for loved ones. Wrap the gifts simply or place in gift bags with a small tag indicating what the contents are and size (if applicable) and bring them to church on that Sunday.

If you have an extra hour here or there and would like to volunteer, the nursing home is always looking for help! There will be a workshop in the New Year to give you more information. We also have pamphlets available in the vestibule. Residents, especially the ones that aren't very mobile, love to have visitors. Playing cards, reading a book, helping with transport, participating in a sing-along and going out on excursions are just some of the activities at the home. Maybe you have a special talent that you would like to share. Anything you can offer is greatly appreciated.

I must also mention that the 'more mature' ladies of the church were treated to a tea party at St Andrew's Lounge on November 9<sup>th</sup>. It was an opportunity to thank these women who have done so much and given generously to the church. Finger food, sweets, tea and coffee were served and there was lots of fun and laughter. As it was Remembrance weekend, we had a walk down memory lane and some recollected their experiences of WWII. We finished up with a great sing-along. One lady mentioned that when she and her friends sang 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' they used to sing 'It's a long way to tickle Mary' instead! Many thanks to Netta Chase and Brenda deForest for organizing this.

- Janet Soper

**Dates to remember:**

December 8: White Gift Sunday

December 12: Candle Light dinner @ 4:30 (call 643-6116 to volunteer)

December 24: Christmas Eve service @ 2:00 in St Andrew's Lounge

## Announcements

**2014 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA CALENDARS** are now available for purchase for \$5. They will be in the vestibule before and after worship. Proceeds from the sale of calendars go toward Mission.

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT** - Park Avenue United presents "Celebrate the Season with the Friars Family and Friends" on **Sunday Dec 1st at 7:00pm**. Featuring Tracy Friars, The Friars Sisters, The Celebrate Choir and other local entertainment. A Free Will Offering will be received.

**20<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GALA AT THE IMPERIAL Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:30pm**. Featuring the Saint John Chorale, 3<sup>rd</sup>. Field Regiment Band, Before the Mast, Music from the Heart, Port City Dance Academy, Paul Bustin, Chris Buckley, SJHS Choir, the Hallelujah Chorus along with CBC's Hance Colburne and a fun Christmas Sing-a-long. Tickets are \$10 to \$27, available at the Imperial Box Office or contact Helen Humphreys at 696-1071.

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT** - "Our Wish for You This Christmas" presented by the Carleton Choristers on **Tuesday, December 3 at 7:30pm** at Grace Presbyterian Church. Tickets are \$12 and are available at the door.

**HANSEL & GRETEL: THE PANTO** - InterAction School of Performing Arts presents a holiday treat for the entire family- Hansel & Gretel: The Panto. Visit Fairy Tale Land in the 1990's for a hilarious and rockin' good time as Hansel & Gretel and the rest of the gang from the Advanced Performance Company including Grace Presbyterian members: Isaac Taylor, Alex Taylor, and Ian McGill entertain you with song, dance, and comedy skills. **Dates and times: Dec. 6th - 7 pm, Dec. 7th- 1 pm & 7 pm, Dec. 13th- 7 pm, and Dec. 14th- 1 pm and 7 pm.** All performances take place at the Sanctuary Theatre (former Germain St. Baptist church). Tickets are \$15 adults and \$10 for children and can be purchased at the door or by contacting IACTSPA at 674-9192. There are 100 tickets available per show so purchase your tickets early.

**Feed, Drink & Be Merry!** in support of KV Food Basket, **Thursday, December 5th from 6-9pm** at Island View Lion's Club, Quispamsis. Come out for a fun evening of shopping, with over 30 vendors, live auction, and bar service. Admission is a non-perishable food item, or \$2. For info, contact [feeddrinkandbemerry@hotmail.com](mailto:feeddrinkandbemerry@hotmail.com)

**CONCERT** - "FESTIVE SOUNDS!" a concert featuring St. Mary's Band and The Rotary Boys Choir will be held at St. Luke's Anglican Church, corner of Main St. and Lansdowne Ave., Saint John on **Thursday, December 5 at 7 pm**. Admission at the door will be \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 10 and under. Come and enjoy festive music and songs of the season and join in the carol sing! Proceeds to St. Mary's Band and St. Luke's ministries.

**BREAKFAST AND CRAFT SALE – Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> from 8 to 11am** at Church of St. John the Baptist and St. Clement's church hall. Cost - \$6. Donations accepted for the North End Food Bank.

**Treble Clef Christmas! Monday December 9th~ 7pm** at Silver Falls United Church 840 Loch Lomond Rd, East. Light Refreshments served after event. Tickets \$10 in advance or at the door.

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT** – "Christmas with the Sopranos & Friends" **Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm** at Saint David's United Church, Rothesay. Tickets \$15 at the door or call 847-0909.

### ADVENT SCHEDULE

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|---------------------------|--|
| December 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Celebration of Holy Communion  |
| December 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Deck the Halls" Come help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas   |
| December 8 <sup>th</sup>  | White Gift Sunday (for residents of Nursing Home – a small gift wrapped with a detachable tag indicating Female or Male and contents.) |
| December 15 <sup>th</sup> | Children's Christmas play during worship<br>Children's Christmas party after worship   |
| December 21 <sup>st</sup> | Christmas Hampers  |
| December 24 <sup>th</sup> | Christmas Eve Service – 6:30pm   |
| December 24 <sup>th</sup> | Christmas Eve Service – 11:30pm  |
| December 25 <sup>th</sup> | Christmas Day Service – 10:00am  |

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The deadline for the Lent 2014 edition of The Burning Bush will be March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Please contact me at 849-8934 or [nancyhossack@hotmail.com](mailto:nancyhossack@hotmail.com) to submit articles at any time up to that date. Please pass along news of graduations, anniversaries, or things that the congregation would be interested in reading about.

- Nancy Hossack

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