



THE BURNING BUSH

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

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Advent 2014

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

I write my Christmas letter on a beautiful and unseasonably warm December day. Today I am writing to tell you how grateful and thankful I am that I am the first minister of Word and Sacraments to serve at Grace Presbyterian. I want to take this opportunity to thank some individuals and groups (always a risk of forgetting a person or group) who have made this year an exciting year of ministry. I want to express my thanks to the clerk of Session and the Session of the Church who continue to provide spiritual guidance to the congregation. To the groups and activity coordinators of the church: The Women's Group, Aird-Shaw-Sinclair AMS, Sunday School Coordinator, Co-Op kitchen/after school coordinator, Sanctuary Guild, Board of Management, Quilt Group, nursing home volunteers, my long suffering Church Office Coordinator and Burning Bush coordinator.

A special thank-you to The Rev. Dr. Philip Lee for his ongoing support, wisdom and kindness shared to me and the congregation would be remiss if this was not mentioned. I remember the scripture, "Be ye not weary in well-doing, for in due season you will reap a great harvest if you faint not" (Galatians 6:9) is very appropriate for all of us to consider as we carry forth our Christian duty.

As we begin the season of Advent it is my prayer that your activities and festivities are full of mirth and joy, for Advent and Christmas is the season in which our Saviour was born into our world. The thoughts of the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth ring as true as the Cathedral bells of St. Paul's in London when peeling on Christmas morning when he wrote, "Grace and gratitude go together like heaven and earth". Do we choose to extend grace into our world's sadness and brokenness? Do we dare extend to other's grace enough to forgive debts, restore another who has wounded us? Can we be a community which blesses, and lightens the burdens of others? To live the Incarnation is to be a small light of the True Light in the darkness and brokenness of a world that is losing its sense of compassion, community, and love for the simple and kind expressions of what it means to be human.

Our gratitude to God for the Incarnation should be like the spontaneous mirth of one who has heard a delicious humour, or as Dickens makes bold to write in *A Christmas Carol*, "It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour." Be that person whose gratitude is a wonderful contagion of laughter and good humour. Spread this cheer at Christmas with others for surely this is the greatest gift we can share today. Merry Christmas to one and all

John Crawford +

WOMEN'S GROUP

Since having the reception for Anne Sewell's ordination, we have continued to make soup for Romero House on alternate Tuesdays. We are looking for two women who would be willing to buy the meat and vegetables for the soup, make the stock, and either have it at the Church on the day you have volunteered by 8:30 – 9am or bring it to the Church on the Sunday before.

We continue to support Stone Wash Laundry by giving them money and detergent. Stone Church allows people to wash and dry a garbage bag of clothes for one dollar. Can you imagine their electric bill? We also contribute money to the Inner City Youth Ministry (formerly Chicken Noodle Club).

We have just had a ham dinner for the congregation and a bake sale along with it. Everyone enjoyed the dinner – several people saying it was the best ham they had ever eaten. Ken Nice, chef at the Nursing Home, cooked and carved the ham for us and also made the rolls. What a great cook! We made \$1000 to give the Church toward the heating bill.

Thanks for heating your kitchens to help heat our Church. Thanks to the three great ladies who looked after the sale. Thanks also to the young people who helped with the dinner and to the dishwashers, always a big help. Special thanks to George for putting up all the tables. Thanks to all who came to eat, to buy, and to enjoy the company.

Respectfully submitted
May Megaw
Vivian MacDonald

CHURCH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Church Management Committee would like to thank the Ladies Group for raising \$1,000.00 towards the heating bill this winter. The ham dinner was delicious and everyone enjoyed the fellowship during the meal as well.

I would like to share a few financial figures with you. The cost for running the church is approximately \$650.00 per day. The cost for heating the building is approximately \$18,000.00 depending on how cold the winter is.

In an effort to save on the heating bill the board is installing programmable thermostats in several areas in the church. If you would like to contribute to the purchase of a thermostat please place your name on an envelope and place it in the collection plate and in this way you will receive a tax credit for your contribution.

At this time of year we want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

Laurie Hossack
Chairperson CMC

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Each week attendance increases in this program, as does the excitement. Most people who work with Children watch the tempo increase in this march towards Christmas, and our crowd is no different. In fact, in some cases, stress from the home is reflected in the children who are sensitive enough to understand how tight finances are there.

We try to bring relief through sports, crafts, dance, etc. and most importantly, a meal which almost every child asks about when they arrive.

The children will be beginning their work on gifts for shut-ins before advent actually starts. This is something they all enjoy doing, and, of course, there's always a craft for themselves.

Mike Woodhouse, a high school student has joined us in a volunteer position leading sports. Tina Bartholot will be leader in the craft room for the next month. Wendy and I are very grateful for this added help, just as every week I say a prayer of gratitude for Alex from Family Plus who always has a smile and just the right word for each and every child when she leaves with her little charge.

BOOKS AND BLANKETS

Usually, this program with its focus on reading, is held in the mezzanine lounge / classroom and is more subdued. It is a cozy atmosphere that lends itself to conversation and laughter. Ages range from 5 to 15; kindergarten-to High School, but amazingly they are comfortable with each other and interact well.

This group will be doing their own crafts for the Christmas Season, reading advent stories and probably building a Christmas Scene from Lego. Last week, they built a complex with a pool, a spa, changing room, exercise room and a place for Tommy to park his army tank when he came to work out.

When the program is nearly done they all become anxious to find a book to take home. I have seen them use the word "BOOKS" in a hangman game as a subtle reminder that it's time to get on with this important part of the day. I search for known favourites at Value Village and am so grateful for all those that the congregation donates. They go like hotcakes. This aspect of the program I am sure, is a feature that leads to the improvement in each child's reading ability, and hopefully involves a parent as well.

CO-OP KITCHEN

On Nov 28th our group will gather to prepare and serve a turkey dinner at our monthly meeting. We will have a few special guests and take time to enjoy each other's company.

There will be sufficient turkey for each girl to take home for the family's evening meal, as well as vegetables, salad ingredients, apples and 2 L of milk. Produce is usually quite expensive and therefore a challenge for the girls to keep on hand. When we find these items on sale they are our first choice when we purchase items for them to take home in accompaniment with their evening meal.

December will find us gathering to bake for the Christmas Season. It is also our party day - a busy day indeed, but as we gather around the Christmas tree we take time to savour the good in our lives, enjoy the food and give thanks for the gifts.

Christmas Hampers

Those of us who do the household grocery shopping are aware that food prices keep rising. According to the globe and Mail food prices in Canada have risen by 19% over the last five years. We're speaking of basics here: eggs rose by 25%, meat 18%, and fresh vegetables by 12.6%. Meat is expected to rise by yet another 4.5% to 6.5% this year.

It is increasingly difficult for lower income families and those on social assistance to buy food for their families. Trust me; their incomes have not kept pace.

This year we are once again raising funds through our Christmas Hampers program. We hope to provide for 20 families.

We have been fortunate to receive a supply of turkeys to hand out. Like many of the uptown churches we use the money you donate to purchase Superstore gift certificates (designated for food only) so families can purchase their choice of food for their special meal.

I hope you will be as generous as possible to this program. Please write your envelope # or name on an envelope so that you can receive credit for it for tax purposes, put it in the collection plate or mail it in to the church office.

Our Hamper program is a member of the Saint John Christmas Exchange. As such, Medicare numbers and names of all our applicants are recorded and submitted to this agency which insures that each family applying receives one Christmas basket. It also provides us with an idea of the total number of families in our city who need assistance. I would expect that number to rise this year.

Glenda Hossack

NURSING HOME NEWS

Welcome to December! It's the Advent season and there's anticipation in the air. November's cool weather, gray skies and snow have helped focus the attention of the residents and staff on the upcoming season. Activities are gearing up and the residents are eager to participate in all the opportunities as they wait for Christmas. They have already been to the Santa Claus parade. The van will soon be taking residents to see the outdoor light displays in the neighbourhood and beyond. The annual Christmas tree decorating contest will keep everyone engaged. The resident council will be raising funds to support local families in need.

The Candle Light Christmas dinner will be held on December 11th at 5:00. This special meal offers family and friends of residents a chance to enjoy a turkey dinner with their loved ones. It truly is a wonderful time of fellowship and joy. Every bit of available space is put to use. If you would like to volunteer and be a part of this occasion, please call Nicki Hamberg at 643-6116. Be at the Home for 4:30 so you can get your room assignment and instructions. For your effort you will be awarded with smiles and laughter and a turkey dinner with all the fixings at the end. You are guaranteed to go home with a warm heart and a full stomach!

The Home's monthly Supper Club has had three sittings so far. The successful turnouts have already provided benefits: the Home has been able to purchase new seating around the first floor nursing station. This club is an endeavour of the Home executive and our very own chef, Ken Nice, provides superb meals. He is a Red Seal chef. What is a Red Seal Chef?? I'm glad you asked! This designation is a universally recognized and highly prestigious certification of apprenticeship in Canada which endorses the skills and experience that an apprentice chef has acquired. It carries great prestige in Canada and is regarded by employers, peers and customers as the epitome of quality, creativity and professionalism. Ken works diligently at the Home to provide healthy homestyle cooking for our residents. He cooks as much as he can from scratch instead of depending on processed foods. Not only does he do this and the Supper Club but he also makes fresh rolls every Friday. If you're looking for fresh, you can't do any better and these are available at the very reasonable price of \$3.00 a dozen. Simply call the Home (643-6124), put in an order and pick them up on Friday.

White gift Sunday will be the second Sunday in Advent (December 7th). This is an opportunity to provide residents with personal care items. Not all residents have family or friends in the area and these small gifts give them a little something to look forward to on Christmas day. Members of the congregation are invited to bring small presents to the church. If you would like to contribute and bring a smile to the faces of those who live at our home, consider the following as suggestions: non-skid socks, playing cards with large numbers, shaving cream, bath gel, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, talcum powder, aftershave, deoderant, low scent body lotion, hair spray, pajamas, women's jewelry, hair clips, slippers, large print books, leather belts for men, hats and mitts/gloves. Residents are known to have a sweet tooth, too! Wrap the gifts simply or place in gift bags with a small gift tag indicating the contents and size, if applicable.

- Janet Soper

Dates to remember:

December 11 - Candle Light dinner at 5:00
December 24 - Christmas Eve service at 2:00
January 8 - Supper Club

Announcements

MARRIAGE: Cameron McLean Ough (son of Meredith Henderson) married Danielle Adair Griffin on June 17, 2014.

DEATH: Earl Moore - October 18th

2015 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA CALENDARS are now available for purchase for \$5. If you would like a calendar please speak to Judy Hetherington. Proceeds from the sale of the calendars go toward Mission.

CHURCH HOME SUPPER CLUB – Second Thursday of each month at 6pm at the Church of St. John & St. Stephen Nursing Home. A different menu each month prepared by Red Seal Chef. \$25 per person. Call 643-6007 to purchase tickets.

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS – We are now collecting monetary donations to be used for the Christmas Hampers our church provides for those in need. Please place your donations in an envelope marked "Christmas Hampers" and be sure to add your envelope # or name so you can receive a charitable receipt. If you have any questions, please speak to Glenda Hossack.

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEA: We have 6 beautiful pewter Celtic crosses on chains. These were made specifically for us in our Church and Nursing Home by Aitkens Pewter in Fredericton and sell for \$25.00 each. Please contact Heather Hatfield or Anne Murdoch.

TREBLE CLEF CHRISTMAS CONCERT! - *In the Mood for Christmas!* - Join us on **Monday, Dec. 08th** at Silver Falls United Church, 840 Loch Lomond Road in the Church Sanctuary at 7pm for a festive evening of beautiful music! Please purchase tickets in advance for \$10 from Silver Falls Church, choir members or at the door. Light refreshments to follow.

CONCERT - Mark your calendars for the Saint John Men's Chorus Christmas Concert on **Tuesday, Dec. 9, at 7:30 p.m.** at Portland United Church. The choir is directed by David Mitchell and accompanied by Charles Willett. The concert is presented in partnership with the Salvation Army Auxiliary. Special guests: "Still Waters". Tickets are available from choir members, auxiliary members and at the door. Ticket: \$15. For further information contact Eileen at 672-3092.

SAINT DAVID'S PRESENTS *FESTIVAL OF TREES* - December 12th, 4-6 pm & 13th, 9 am-6 pm, 2014 at 7 Gondola Pt. Rd., Rothesay. Spectacular tree display and silent auction, bake sale, children's activities, prizes for the top voted trees and door prizes! Admission: \$5/adult, \$2/child, \$12/family. Contact Andrea MacNeill, 651-8118, to register your tree or make a donation to the silent auction. Spread the word and challenge others!

ADVENT SCHEDULE

December 6 th	Deck the Halls" Come help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas
December 7 th	White Gift Sunday (for residents of Nursing Home – a small gift wrapped with a detachable tag indicating Female or Male and contents.) Celebration of Holy Communion
December 14 th	Children's Christmas play during worship
December 20 th	Christmas Hampers
December 21 st	Service of Lessons and Carols
December 24 th	Christmas Eve Service – 6:30pm
December 25 th	Christmas Day Service – 10:00am

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The deadline for the Lent 2014 edition of The Burning Bush will be February 15th. Please contact me at 849-8934 or 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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