



FORT MASSEY



STAR



Advent/Christmas
2009

From the Pastor's Desk...

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Christmas is a time of peace and goodwill toward all. It is a time of harmony and tolerance *until* for most of us those "untils" happen much too often. *Until* we cannot find the right gift for someone; *until* we know that our parcels and cards may never arrive because of a postal strike;

until...

Many of us like to pretend that none of those "untils" happen in our lives. We try very hard to keep Christmas under control. We try to smile, to have our house properly decorated, to keep all of the traditions carefully, *until...*

Life is filled with the "untils".

The first Christmas, however, was not about "untils". It was about "in spite of." Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem and likely that was the last place where they wanted to be when Mary was almost about to give birth. Likely none of the Jewish people were too

excited about the census.

They were, after all, being counted as part of a foreign empire. They were no longer an independent nation and that, no doubt, infuriated them. But Mary and Joseph had even more reason than most to want to stay at home.

Yet Christmas, that first Christmas, happened *in spite of* everything. It happened *in spite of* being in the wrong place. It happened *in spite of* the census. It happened in a stable.

And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

From those few lines come all of the Christmas pageants with innkeepers slamming the door and with Mary and Joseph going around back to the stable. Out of those few lines comes

the story of our faith - God comes to us in unexpected ways. *In spite of us, in spite of our doubt, in spite of our fear, in spite of our reluctance, God is shown to be among us.*

During each Advent season we are asked to put aside all of the "untils" and to forget them. We are asked, *in spite of* ourselves, to celebrate. We are asked to come to the manger - and to leave with faith - ready to be different people.

This Christmas may we allow the message of Christmas to sweep over us. May we find ourselves hearing the voices of angels among us! May we capture for ourselves the message of Christmas as we approach the manger in faith.

Happy Christmas,

Rev. Trent



Phantoms of the Pipes

The night before Hallowe'en was a spooky one at Fort Massey. The occasion, that almost filled the church, was the twelfth annual performance of "PHANTOMS OF THE PIPES", in aid of the Royal Canadian College of Organists. Dr. Walter Kemp, in costume, was the witty Master of Ceremonies. The church lighting was adjusted to add some spine-chilling drama to the music played by organists from local churches and other instrumentalists and vocalists.

Right after the Rev. Trent welcomed the audience, organist Shawn Whynot remembered the late Allen Wayte, formerly organist at First Baptist, in a eulogy. Then he played "Hallowe'en Rondo", first performed by Allen, an initiator of this fund-raiser, at the inaugural "Phantoms" in 1997.

The two-hour program of musical talent, included a schoolboys' honour choir singing, among others, the theme from the TV series "The Addams Family". Then there was an organ duet, "Spooks in the Bell Tower". Our pianist Leah Collins Lipsett, caught the spirit with the Gershwin number,

"Dancing Goblins". A flute duo with Elizabeth Dubois MacCarthy and our own Kevin Robarts, played "Danse Macabre" by Saint-Saens; violinist Mark Lee was great with "Swirling Demons" by Brahms. Our assistant organist John Walter played the awesome "Phantom Phanhare Phuge". These are samples of what was an entertaining program by talented musicians.

Professor Pierre Perron's piece de resistance was hilarious. In costume, he hammed it up as Professor Emeritus Anonymous conducting his quartet of fine vocalists which included our sweet-toned soprano Valerie Bellamy, demonstrating an English madrigal by Purcell.

After that musical cornucopia, refreshments and mingling of audience and musicians were enjoyed in the church hall. It was a fun evening indeed and a big "Thank You" is due to the dedicated members of the Music Committee, ably assisted by some members of the Membership Development Committee and family members pressed into service. A good job,

well done.

By Angus McDonald



**Professor Pierre Perron,
aka Professor Emeritus Anonymous**



Dr. Walter Kemp, Master of Ceremonies



Ticket table workers, Roy George and Sharon Ross



Flute duo - Elizabeth Dubois MacCarthy and Kevin Robarts

Update from Outreach

The following is a progress report from Emily Tredger who has just completed her first two weeks of a three month project in Potosi, Bolivia. Emily is volunteering with a local organization through NGO Abroad and received a Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation grant with Fort Massey acting as her Canadian partner organization sponsor.

October 23, 2009

Hola from Bolivia! Currently I am in the city of Potosi, and I recently returned from a nine day stay in a remote village nearby. What an experience! But before I tell you about that, let me go back to the beginning.

Antonia and I arrived in Peru on Sep 2. We spent a month travelling through Peru to Bolivia, as we did some sightseeing and adjusted to the completely new culture. The best spent week was in Cuzco, an ancient Inca city, where we took a week of intensive Spanish lessons. This was exhausting, but absolutely essential. By the time we were done, we were able to converse slowly with the people we met.

We arrived in Potosi, Bolivia on September 30. We spent a few days adjusting to the altitude, and then met with Felipe, the director of our organization. We were very glad of our Spanish lessons then! Felipe is a perfect person to work with. He is full of energy, optimism, and ideas, backed up by extensive knowledge and experience. He is an economist by trade, but happily delves into engineering, medicine, and whatever else is needed.

Currently, the main ongoing projects are the construction of a health centre in the Tacobamba province, construction of bathrooms for a school in a town called Perigirapampa, and a trout farming project in a third town. We spent our first few days taking building supplies to Tacobamba with Felipe. This was a challenge due to the remoteness of Tacobamba, which is also why they need a health centre. Getting there and back was an all day project, which involved driving along rocky trails, through rivers, changing tires and other vehicle repairs. All I can say is I am glad I was not driving! The health centre is very close to done. Currently they are painting and tiling the inside. It looks like it's going to be a warm and welcoming space, and very necessary addition to the area.

Our long term project started last Wednesday. For 9 days, we lived in the village of Pegirapampa, teaching music and health education. It was a constant adventure, as we dealt with challenges such as communicating with people who spoke only Quechua and cooking and cleaning when there was only water every other day.

Within our first day, we realized we had to reassess our plans. Without a common language, going from house to house and explaining health practices was just not possible. We also realized quite quickly that the way they think about health is quite different from us. For example, while there is rampant chronic diarrhoea among the children, it's not something they list as a health

problem. After a challenging first few days, we came up with three specific goals. The first was to conspicuously wash our hands every time we ate, including when we visited people in their homes. We didn't expect that this would directly encourage people to wash their hands before eating. I think this concept is just too new for them. But, we hoped that it would at least introduce the idea, and convince them that some people actually do do this. Our second goal was to find out what we could about the current state of health in the village, and particularly what the people thought about health. I think this is extremely important, because no one will try to change a situation that they don't think is problematic. Our third goal was to attempt to share information with people when it seemed appropriate.

During our stay, we gathered quite a bit of information about health in the village. Each year, three or four children die, primarily from respiratory illnesses. Very few if any people are trained in first aid, and there are no first aid kits. The nearest place with a doctor or antibiotics is Tacobamba (an 8 hour walk away) so even mild infections are very dangerous. Because of this, many people die from broken bones or cuts, and death from miscarriages is also very common. Dental hygiene is nonexistent, so no-one over the age of 40 has many teeth left. We observed many eye infections, which we believe lead to blindness over time. People wash themselves (or say they wash themselves) once a week.

(Continued on page 4)

Update from Outreach ...continued

Finally, everyone's immune system is generally run down. This is partly due to poor nutrition because it is nearly impossible to grow any vegetables besides carrots and onions, and even these are in short supply. Also, the weather is generally quite cold and there are rarely enough blankets for everyone in the family.

The information we gathered gave us a much better understanding of the health situation. The situation is daunting, but we still believe there are things we can do. Though we may not be able to do much about miscarriages, for example, but we believe that some basic health improvements such as better sanitation could lead to fewer problems becoming life-threatening. Next week we will be returning to Peregirapampa for another week, and our goal is to continue to expose the people to improved sanitation and home treatment for cuts and colds through pictures, talking to the people who speak Spanish, and songs and games with the children in the school. I'm sure it will be challenging, but I'm looking forward to it.

Thank you to everyone for your prayers and thoughts!

Hasta Luego,

Emily

Fort Massey Music on the Web

To enjoy some of the wonderful music from Fort Massey United Church, please visit the website at:

www.fortmasseychurch.com

Click on the 'Worship & Music' tab, then click on 'Music & Choir.' Here, you will be able to choose from a selection of online videos. Much appreciation is owed to Kevin Roberts for his ongoing input and support of this initiative.

Submitted by Ruth MacKenzie

Notes from UCW

🌿 The "Harvest Tea," in October, was a great success. We raised over \$450.

🌿 The "Christmas Tea & Sale," in November, was also very successful. The attendance was up but sales were down a bit. We raised over \$2,300. Thank You Everyone!

🌿 In "December" we eat again! A "Pot Luck Luncheon" will be held on Saturday December 5th at 12 noon. All women are welcome. A short business meeting will follow.

🌿 The week before Christmas we will be making up Christmas Baskets for shut-ins.

**Merry Christmas & Happy
New Year Everyone,**

Submitted by Irene Parks

God is Watching!

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The head sister had made a note and posted it on the apple tray: "Take only one - God is watching."

Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate cookies. There on the tray one clever child had written a note: "Take all the cookies you want, God is watching the apples."

A Note of Thanks to the Congregation

Thank you for the many kind expressions of sympathy I received over the death of my father. Your thoughtfulness was of great comfort to me and my family.

Sincerely,

Trent Cleveland-Thompson



Wasn't That Us? It Sure Was!

A little house with three bedrooms, one bathroom and one car on the street. A mower that you had to push to make the grass look neat. In the kitchen on the wall we only had one phone, And no need for recording things, someone was always home. We only had a living room where we would congregate, Unless it was at mealtime in the kitchen where we ate. We had no need for family rooms or extra rooms to dine, When meeting as a family those two rooms would work out fine.

We only had one TV set, and channels maybe two, But always there was one of them with something worth the view. For snacks we had potato chips that tasted like a chip, And if you wanted flavour there was Lipton's onion dip. Store-bought snacks were rare because my mother liked to cook, And nothing can compare to snacks in Betty Crocker's book.

Weekends were for family trips or staying home to play, We all did things together -- even go to church to pray.

When we did our weekend trips depending on the weather, No one stayed at home because we liked to be together.

Sometimes we would separate to do things on our own, But we knew where the others were without our own cell phone. Then there were the movies with your favourite movie star, And nothing can compare to watching movies in your car.

Then there were the picnics at the peak of summer season, Pack a lunch and find some trees and never need a reason.

Get a baseball game together with all the friends you know, Have real action playing ball -- and no game video.

Remember when the doctor used to be the family friend, And didn't need insurance or a lawyer to defend? The way that he took care of you or what he had to do, Because he took an oath and strived to do the best for you. Remember going to the store and shopping casually, And when you went to pay for it you used your own money?

Nothing that you had to swipe or punch in some amount, Remember when the cashier person had to really count?

The milkman used to go from door to door, And it was just a few cents more than going to the store.

There was a time when mailed letters came right to your door, Without a lot of junk mail ads sent out by every store. The mailman knew each house by name and knew where it was sent; There were not loads of mail addressed to "present occupant."

There was a time when just one glance was all that it would take, And you would know the kind of car, the model and the make. They didn't look like turtles trying to squeeze out every mile; They were streamlined, white walls, fins, and really had some style. One time the music that you played whenever you would jive, was from a vinyl, big-holed record called a forty-five. The record player had a post to keep them all in line, And then the records would drop down and play one at a time.

Oh sure, we had our problems then, just like we do today, And always we were striving, trying for a better way. Oh, the simple life we lived still seems like so much fun, How can you explain a game, just kick the can and run?

And why would boys put baseball cards between bicycle spokes, and for a nickel red machines had little bottled Cokes?

This life seemed so much easier and slower in some ways, The new technology is "neat," but I sure miss those days. So time moves on and so do we, and nothing stays the same, But I sure love to reminisce and walk down memory lane.

~Anonymous

Submitted by Carol Robinson



THE DAYS OF WAITING

The History of the Advent Calendar

Some form of the Advent Calendar has been used for more than 150 years and becomes increasingly popular every year. From traditional calendars to calendars that feature popular collectibles and themes.

The origin of the calendar, like so many of our Christmas traditions, started in Germany in the 19th century. Different methods of counting down the days to the celebration of Christmas were used.

The first printed calendar was produced by Gerhard Lang in Germany. When he was a child, his mother attached little candies to a piece of cardboard and each day Gerhard would take one off. His first printed calendar consisted of miniature colored pictures that would be attached to a piece of cardboard each day in December. Later Advent calendars were made with little doors to open on each day. The child might find a small piece of candy, a Christmas picture, a religious picture or a bible verse.

The German calendars were sold until World War II, at which time production was stopped due to the war shortages. After the war, the production of calendars resumed in 1946 by Richard Selmer. Selmer credits President Eisenhower with helping the tradition grow in the United States during his term of office. A newspaper article at the time showed the Eisenhower grandchildren with 'The Little Town' Advent calendar.

Advent calendars are based on 24 days with Christmas Eve as the last night to either put up a picture or take a candy.

Advent Calendars can be found everywhere Christmas is celebrated and have been made with many different themes.

Our family Advent Calendar tradition that dates back almost twenty years, when I made a wooden tree Advent Calendar, complete with 24 painted wooden ornaments. I have included a photo. Each day another ornament is chosen to be added to the tree and all family members take turns adding an ornament. On Christmas Eve, the star tree topper is finally added. It is a tradition looked forward to every December.

It's not too late to start a tradition like this for your family, one that will become a real treasure in the years to come.

May the Spirit of Christmas light up your hearts with warmth and happiness!

Holly, Alan & Sons



December 20, 2008. Just four more ornaments to put on the tree!

It's Christmas Time Again!

Put your problems on probation
Run your troubles off the track,
Throw your worries out the window

Get the monkeys off your back.
Silence all your inner critics
With your conscience make amends,
And allow yourself some happiness
It's Christmas time again!

Call a truce with those who bother you

Let all the fighting cease,
Give your differences a breather
And declare a time of peace,
Don't let angry feelings taint
The precious time you have to spend,
And allow yourself some happiness
It's Christmas time again!

Like some cool refreshing water
Or a gentle summer breeze,
Like a fresh bouquet of flowers
Or the smell of autumn leaves,
It's a banquet for the spirit
Filled with family, food and friends,
So allow yourself some happiness
It's Christmas time again!

By Bob Lazzar-Atwood

