



FORT MASSEY STAR



Advent-Christmas

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www.fortmasseychurch.com

2010

Minister's Christmas Message

Advent - the season of waiting; a time to begin to think seriously about Christmas.

As I began to think about writing for our Christmas newsletter I came across this reflection:

What are you celebrating? In general, people ask Christmas to do too many things for them. They want it to strengthen their family bonds, give their spirits a lift in the dark days of winter, stimulate their compassion and generosity, help them keep tabs on far-flung friends, show off their skills as host and hostesses, confirm their deepest religious beliefs, the list goes on and on. No one celebration can do it all.

Think about how many things you will try to fit in throughout the holiday season. What are we celebrating? We in the church have some answers to that question, but as Charlie Brown says with a sigh, "Christmas is so commercialized."

I love that particular Christmas episode where Linus steps out on the stage and tells the true story of Christmas - the story of a mother and a baby, shepherds and a stable. For a moment we feel the hush within our souls and we

hear the words as if spoken for the first time, **Glory to God in highest heaven, And on earth peace to all in whom he delights.**

But those moments are rare. In most of our Christmas celebrations the words of the angels can hardly be heard amidst the noise and confusion of the season.

This Christmas may we take the time to hear the Christmas message, to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child come into our lives. May we celebrate Advent with a sense of hope for a Christmas with meaning.

Happy Christmas!

Rev. Trent

Please Note: Rev'd Trent has now a separate email address for confidential information that you may want to share fmminis-ter@eastlink.ca - for all other emails please use ftmassey@eastlink.ca



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*Wishing you a Christmas
filled
with beautiful moments*

Advent Worship Schedule



December 5th, Anniversary Sunday at 10:30 AM with Rev'd Diane MacVicar. Kirkin O' The Tartan - bring your favourite tartan cloth to be blessed. Come and stay for lunch;

December 8th, Christmas Concert with the Halifax Girls' Honour Choir (Freewill offering - also, bring an item for the Food Bank.), 7 PM;

December 12th, Advent Three, White Gift Service, Sacrament of Baptism, 10:30 AM;

December 19th, Advent Four, Music for the Season, 10:30 AM.

Christmas, Epiphany & New Year's Services

December 24th, Christmas Eve Family Service at 7 PM;

December 26th, Christmas Lessons & Carols, 10:30 AM;

January 2nd, Celebrating Epiphany, 10:30 AM;

January 9th, New Year's Communion, 10:30 AM.

Xmas or Christmas?

Canadian Winter

"Since at least the late 19th century, "Xmas" has been in use in various other English-language nations."

*Christmas gift suggestions:
To your enemy,
forgiveness;
To an opponent,
tolerance;
To a friend,
your heart;
To a customer,
service;
To all, charity;
To every child,
a good example;
To yourself,
Respect!*

~Oren Arnold

Recently, the Fort Massey Church sign on the corner of Queen & Tobin had the 'Xmas' Tea & Sale advertised. Someone commented that it should read 'Christ'mas.

According to Wikipedia ...

"Xmas" is a common abbreviation of the word "Christmas." It is sometimes pronounced 'eksməs, but it, and variants such as "Xtemass", originated as handwriting abbreviations for the typical pronunciation, 'krɪsməs'. The "-mas" part is from the Latin-derived Old English word for "mass" (the weekly Roman Catholic Service in which communion is observed), while the "X" comes from the Greek letter Chi, which is the first letter of the Greek word Χριστός, translated as "Christ".

In the United Kingdom and among the English, use of "Xmas" is found in a letter from George Woodward in 1753. Lord Byron used

the term in 1811, as did Samuel Coleridge (1801) and Lewis Carroll (1864). In the United States, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. used the term in a letter dated 1923. Since at least the late 19th century, "Xmas" has been in use in various other English-language nations. Quotations with the word can be found in texts written in Canada, and the word has been used in Australia, and in the Caribbean. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* stated that modern use of the term is largely limited to advertisements, headlines and banners, where its conciseness is valued. The association with commerce "has done nothing for its reputation", according to the dictionary.

*Submitted by Trent
Cleveland-Thompson*

It's winter in Canada
And the gentle breezes
blow,
Seventy miles an hour
At thirty-five below!

Oh, how I love
Canada,
When the snow's up to
your butt;
You take a breath of
winter,
And your nose gets
frozen shut.

Yes, the weather here
is wonderful,
Suppose I'll hang around.
I could never
leave Canada,
Cuz I'm frozen to the
ground!

*Submitted by
Ruth MacKenzie*



Tuesday, Nov 23, 2010 was a Big Day for Khursunoi Juraeva who arrived in Halifax in 2006 as a refugee from Uzbekistan. She has struggled to learn English and become familiar with living in Canada. She is all alone, her husband died and her 4 children remain in various former Soviet countries. She lives in Fort Massey neighborhood and our Outreach Committee help her with transportation, dental care etc as needed. Nov 23rd Khursunoi proudly became a Canadian citizen--now she will have a Canadian passport and it will be possible for her to travel to visit her family. She is shown here following the welcoming ceremony at Citizenship Court with friend and supporter Carol Kowcun. Carol has taught herself some of the Uzbek language so she is a big help with translation and interpretation. Many of us see Khursunoi as she walks around the neighborhood collecting recyclables -- most of the money is sent to family and friends back home who are living in poverty. Congratulations to a remarkable lady!

Helping the Counters

This church, through the finance committee, is very appreciative of financial donations made to it, regardless of how they are given or received! However, we would like to clarify/explain the use of donation envelopes. The donation envelopes are used not only for the convenience of donors and to allow a tracking for the annual tax receipts, but also to ease the volunteer counters of the service givings and to provide a paper/logistic/audit trail.

Some individuals receive a box of envelopes for their use in their weekly givings of the year. Some use PAR

(Preauthorized remittance). Others place their donations in the 'pew' envelopes, others place cheques in the donation plate, and other cash.

The recording and counting of donations received at services is done by a variety of volunteers. In order to make the system a bit more efficient and less complicated for the volunteer counters, the Finance committee is asking if donors could please consider placing their donations in an envelope (either from the annual box they receive) or by using a 'pew' envelope (with their name noted on the outside). Also, where donors may be submitting

more than one 'weekly' envelope in at any time, it is asked whether they could consider amalgamating the donation and placing it in a single envelope.

If you should wish to receive an annual box of envelopes, please contact Ruth MacKenzie, envelope secretary, either at the church or by calling 477-5365 or emailing her at raem@ns.sympatico.ca.

Thank you!

Submitted by Ruth MacKenzie

"The recording and counting of donations received at services is done by a variety of volunteers."



UCW News & Upcoming Events

Once again the Fort Massey 'Christmas Tea & Sale' was a huge success. The 'tea room' was full from 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM. The entertainment music was lovely with Kevin Robarts on piano and flute and Andrea Dale on flute, as well. Paul Betuik did a wonderful job as "Head Waiter." The tables were beautifully decorated by Gwen Smith-Dockrill and her sister, Diane. All the servers did a wonderful job and there were many compliments. The "Sale Tables" went very well, too. The "Pantry Ta-

ble" was a big hit, as usual. We raised \$2,500. Again many, many thanks to all volunteers. You made it work!

The UCW will once again be making up fruit baskets for our shut-ins - Margaret Grant, Marie Clouter, Marjorie Macleod, Archie Rasley, Francis Harvey, Judy Grant and Joan Hyslop.

Upcoming Dates to Remember in 2011:

Valentine Tea, February 12th, 2011;

Book Sale, April 23rd, 2011;

Flea Market, April 30th, 2011;

Harvest Tea, October 15th, 2011;

Christmas Tea & Sale, November 19th, 2011.

Submitted by Irene Parks



Concert

The Halifax Girls Honour Choir will be in concert here at Fort Massey Church on Wednesday, Dec. 8, at 7 PM.

As well as an opportunity to listen to one of Halifax's finer school choirs, you will also have an opportunity to sing some carols.

A free will offering will be received for the choir's upcoming tour, and non-perishable food items for the Food Bank will be gratefully received.

A Wonderful Parable

A woman came out of her house and saw 3 old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them. She said "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat." "Is the man of the house home?" they asked. "No", she replied. "He's out." "Then we cannot come in", they replied.

In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what had happened. "Go tell them I am home and invite them in!" The woman went out and invited the men in. "We do not go into a House together," they replied. "Why is that?" she asked.

One of the old men explained: "His name is

Wealth," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said pointing to another one, "He is Success, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The woman went in and told her husband what was said. Her husband was overjoyed. "How nice!!" he said. "Since that is the case, let us invite Wealth. Let him come and fill our home with wealth!" His wife disagreed. "My dear, why don't we invite Success?"

Their daughter-in-law was listening from the other corner of the house. She jumped in with her own suggestion: "Would it not be better to invite Love? Our home will then be filled with

love!" "Let us heed our daughter-in-law's advice," said the husband to his wife. "Go out and invite Love to be our guest." The woman went out and asked the 3 old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest." Love got up and started walking toward the house.

The other 2 also got up and followed him. Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, Why are you coming in?" The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would've stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever He goes, we go with him. Wherever there is Love, there is also Wealth

MY WISH FOR YOU...

Where there is pain, I wish you peace and mercy;

Where there is self-doubting, I wish you a renewed confidence in your ability to work through it;

Where there is tiredness, or exhaustion, I wish you understanding, patience, and renewed strength;

Where there is fear, I wish you love, and courage!

Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's learning how to dance in the rain! We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails!

Submitted by Ruth MacKenzie

A Story From India

When we lived in India, where my parents were United Church of Canada missionaries, there were those in the Christian community who were converts from the Hindu tradition.

One such man, who lived on the mission compound where we lived, continued the Hindu practice of calling on God by saying "Ram, Ram" (the repetition of the name of the incarnation of the Hindu god, Vishnu, in the form of the hero of the Ramayana). This practice was used to call for God's help in times of trial or

when suffering an injury, which might in our part of the world call for the voicing of an oath.

My father spoke to this man, suggesting that, since he was now a Christian, it was not appropriate for him to be using the name of a Hindu god when calling for help and strength in times of trial.

One day this man came up to our house in happy excitement. He was extremely pleased with something that had just occurred and wanted to share it with

my father. (I don't remember specifically what had happened and so have described him relating a plausible scenario.) He came running to the house, saying, "Sahib. Sahib, I just bumped my head and I didn't say "Ram, Ram!" I said, "Jesus Christ!"

For us, here in Canada, the calling out of an oath or vulgarity when we bump our head, hit our finger with a hammer, or do something else of this sort or experience frustration or anger it is common to hear words such as "Jesus Christ!" or

some other phrase (including various vulgarities).

We seem to have never had the appreciation that we can call on God through Jesus Christ at any times of trial or weakness in a sincere and appropriate form of short prayer by simply calling Jesus' name. So long as we use God's name as a call for help we are not using it in vain.

By Ian MacDonald



Nomad - A Story of Hope

WOW! Ayann is a woman of influence of the century; a rose blooming from out of the desert tribes of Somalia. She left her family and has adopted a Western ethos in her head but her heart still struggles with the tribe and genealogy of her family. The Magan family was and is extremely dysfunctional and full of pain, jealousy, and vengeance.

Why is she still so connected with her Magan patriarchal line and her matri-

archal loyalty? Is it okay to walk away from toxic relationships? Is she still reaching back because she is healthy enough to reconnect on her own terms? Hope is in reflecting and redefining relationship.

There are 12 knowledge seekers meeting on Thursday morning at 10:30. We are teasing out the questions in her book around family dynamics. Ayann is Muslim and yet here problems have parallels in our communi-

ties. Do we ever really leave our childhood behind? We see differences in the culture of her past and her Western culture by adoption and yet it would be a stretch to tar a culture by this book.

Her book has some advice for our institutions with respect to immigration. She says, 'I believe there are three institutions in Western society that could ease the transition into Western citizenship of these millions of nomads from the tribal cul-

tures they are leaving. They are public education, the feminist movement, and our spiritual centers.' Ayaan works to combat several types of crimes against women through education, outreach and dissemination of knowledge.

*By Ruth McArthur
Student Minister*



Living With Simplicity in Our World

'True Godliness does not turn people out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but to set it upon a table in a candlestick'. William Penn, 1682.

The world right now is hard to live in for some people. It is too busy and too lonely; feast or famine. We endeavor to mend the world by sharing food and blankets with people in from the cold. We visit those without family.

Sometimes families get together but it is not always our turn. Shopping takes too much time. Soon thousands of students will leave Halifax for home communities. Travel costs are double in this season. All our hope and excitement is concentrated on a day, a week, a

season. But the presents and emotions cannot fill us; there can never be enough and the void is dark and lonely.

God wants to help us live in this busy world of Christmas. But how? Every year it is the same; missing loved ones or activities that leave our candles burnt and our light dimly twinkling under a basket. How can we learn to live simply? How can we ensure we do not live beyond our financial and emotional means?

Penn says it starts with our candlestick. Candlesticks can hold one or more candles and can be used for illumination, rituals, or decorative purposes. Candles can be simple hand spun pottery or a fancy golden candelabra, however without a candle the candle-

stick is an empty vessel.

Jesus came into the world to fill the empty vessel, the darkness that comes with resources and emotions out of control. How will Jesus illuminate your life for living in the world? Which rituals bring you excitement and better life? How will you decorate the community with your values? Let's fill our hearts with Jesus and focus on small kindness and simple joys.

What kind of candle stick are you putting your light in this season?

Jesus asked God, 'I do not pray you take them out of this world, but to keep them from the evil.' John 17:15.

*By Ruth McArthur
Student Minister*

"Jesus came into the world to fill the empty vessel, the darkness that comes with resources and emotions out of control."

"The best of all gifts around any Christmas tree: the presence of a happy family all wrapped up in each other."

~Burton Hillis

Eulogy for Graham Thomas

I will say a few words about our dad/granddad/husband/friend, Graham McGee Thomas. As you are aware such homilies tend to idealize and oversimplify. In advance I apologize for unabashedly continuing this tradition.

Dad was an engineer and liked patterns and relatedness - things like having worn the number 13 playing hockey as a youth, then having 13 grandchildren. So since his name starts with a "G", I will discuss his "H" attributes - makes sense right?

Dad was honest, particularly in his dealings with others. He didn't take advantage of people. Things had to be fair. As I age, I more and more see the importance of honesty, at multiple levels, in my life, and also what a struggle it is to live up to his ideal.

Not surprisingly this sense of fairness applied to his children - he was very careful in his attentions not to show favourites, even though there were lots of times when some of us certainly were undeserving of such equanimity. Even as Parkinson's ravished his mind he would obsess about making sure we all had an equal share of things - who has my drivers? That piece of furniture? the Readers Digests?

Dad was honourable and loyal to his wife Julie, his co-workers and his, at times, intransigent offspring. In

recent encounters with people dad worked with 40 to 50 years ago they still speak warmly of their work with him in light of these qualities.

Frugality, which I realize starts not with the letter after but the one before "G", was another asset/fault. Having grown up in the depression with a scotch mother who's motto "waste not, want not", bargains, sale coupons, turning off light switches, bathing in one inch of tepid water and comments like "close the door - are you trying to heat the outdoors or cool the inside?" were the norm. Restaurant choice was determined not by the food review column but by the availability of two-for-one coupons.

Dad was remarkably humble. The only tales of his past with which he was forthcoming with were self-deprecatory: how he failed university chemistry 5 times and only passed in the end because by that time, he claims, the professor was so old he couldn't see anymore; how as a teen he got a prominent crook in his nose when it was the first body part to encounter the lamp-post he failed to notice as he was ogling some girl walking the other way. He did, however, take great pride in his family and their doings. As he aged this would always bring tears to his eyes, and often ours. This emotional aspect, though seemingly incongruent with what many

saw as a serious at times stern man was often apparent. Sally confesses taking advantage of this prior to her wedding with George. She dragged him into a dress shop, slipped into her desired wedding gown knowing full well as she reappeared from the change booth he would smirk, tear up and pull out the wallet, which is what happened. Life was certainly not all about him.

Finally Dad was humorous, which may come as a shock to many, especially his grandchildren, who mostly knew the man ravaged by the rigidity and expressionless face of Parkinson's. But Graham Thomas was quite a goofball in his day. Two of my brothers-in-law first met him prancing in his underwear - Rob arriving while Dad was chasing Jamie and me, similarly clad, up the stairs. And when Alan, raised a good Baptist, first visited our house to see Wendy, Dad, thinking it was Wendy ringing the doorbell, jumped out from behind the front door shouting "surprise", which I think it was to all involved. I often wonder if that is the event that sealed the marriage contract.

And there are lots of "Grahamisms" - An act of clumsiness would elicit "nice play Shakespeare"; when things weren't going so well, instead of correctly saying "c'est la vie", he would say "c'est le guerre" or when heading to work in

the morning, he would call to Mom "aujord oui", instead of "au revoir", to which Mom would reply, "De rien!" - such a bilingual fellow! "Don't talk with your mouth full unless you do it with good taste". And even, when trying to discipline us for mischief, there would be our favourite, "wipe that smirk off your face" as he tried to do the same but would often break into guffaws ruining all attempts at a proper upbringing.

It is for all these things and so much more that we gather here today to pay homage to and thank Graham McGee Thomas - husband, father, grandfather, friend - who tried through his life to show us by excellent example how best to lead ours.

And Dad's death, like all death, raises questions so I will leave you with this one:

"Since death alone is certain, And the time of death uncertain, how should we act?"

*Given by his son,
Ross Thomas*

Graham served as an elder in three United Church congregations (22 years), manager in two (16 years) and trustee in one (17 years). At Fort Massey he served as Chairman of the Board of Management six times and as Chairman of the Congregation 10 times. For his overall contribution to the life and work of the Fort Massey congregation, Graham was designated Elder Emeritus in 2004.

An Update From Outreach



Within the past year, a group of community-minded citizens and agency representatives, including myself representing our Brunswick Street Mission, worked together to create *Halifax Connects*; a one-day event aimed to help those who are living in poverty or without a home, connect to on-site and referral-based services and resources in the HRM.

The event was held on Sunday October 24th at the Halifax Armouries (donated by the Armed Forces) between 9:00 am -2:00 pm. The space was transformed into a warm, colourful and welcoming place with help from Global Convention Services and our volunteer tee-shirts were produced by the youth of ARK - an inner city support centre for homeless youth.

It was an event that welcomed all age groups and that brought together the people, resources and organizations that make a difference in the lives of participants. The event, built on the foundation of respect and dignity, provided participants with a fun and engaging day where they received on-site access to services and resources such as hair cuts, clothing and comfort kits, wellness ser-

vices including a general medical check-up, diabetes screening, foot care, blood testing, vision care, nutrition counselling, mental health and addiction services, dental assessments, photographs, information about housing options, financial services, income assistance, education and employment, local shelters and agencies, and identification resources.

In addition, participants received a wholesome and deliciously prepared meal by the World Trade and Convention Centre and were served in a separate dining room equipped with white linen table cloths, waiters, and musicians who entertained them for over 3 hours. Free bus passes had been provided to local agencies to attract clients from across HRM.

We relied on the cooperation of local agencies, donors, and public and private organizations and many local businesses and government agencies committed to this event. The outcome was overwhelming in many ways. We thought we might have as many as 300 clients but we had over 500 individuals and families - and we continue to hear stories of the impact *Halifax Connects* has made well beyond the day itself.

It is our intention to host another event in the Spring of 2011 so stay tuned!

*Submitted by
Leslie McLean*

Christmas Travellers

Christmas recalls the story of travelers propelled by the unhurried rhythm of their animals:

*We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain,
moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.*

Why did these wise men undertake such a journey?

An astronomer advisor to the Persian king, springs from his midnight vigil in the palace courtyard. "Casper, come! Look along the rod I've sighted toward the constellation of the Jews." Casper peers into the blackness. "Do you see it? That brilliant star is new tonight! It must signify the birth of a mighty king."

A soft whistle escapes him as he spots it. "There it is!" He's talking rapidly now. "I've read ancient Hebrew scriptures which tell of this ruler's star." Rising, he announces, "We must see him. We must go!"

Traversing the caravan routes of Persia, Babylon, and Syria for 1,200 miles, they ford broad rivers, pass ancient cities, cross barren deserts. Three months they trek westward, day after day, "following yonder star."

In Jerusalem they inquire, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." [2] Worship? So the Babe is more than a king!

Now they follow the shin-

ing star till it rests over a simple Bethlehem home. At early dawn neighbours gather to watch the richly-robed travelers dismount. Joseph meets them at the door.

"We've come to see the child, the King." The wise men fall before the Babe, worshipping the Christ child. Outside, their servants unload weighty chests from the camels and set gifts before the King. Heavy fragrances of frankincense and myrrh mingle to fill the room as one by one the boxes are opened.

A touch of the boy-child's tiny fingers, a final longing look, and the men rise to go. Camel bells soon fade in the brisk morning air.

We, too, travel at Christmas, visiting family and friends. Yet, like the wise men, the most important journey we make these hectic holidays is to draw nigh Jesus himself with the gift of our hearts.

This Christmas is going to be extra-special for our family as we are all going to be together on Christmas morning for the first time ever! Alan's oldest son Chuck, is making the journey from London, Ontario to be with us and Dane, Shandelle and our grandson, Braiden, will travel from Timberlea, NS. We wish all our Fort Massey family a very Merry Christmas and good things in 2011.

~Holly, Alan & Family