



KEEPING UP THE FAITH AT CHRISTMAS IN PRESCOTT

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

Christmas is a very busy time of year and sometimes the real meaning behind it gets lost in the hustle and bustle.

Reverend Brenda Bailey of St. Paul's United Church in Prescott and Johnstown United Church believes that Christmas is a time for reaching out to people in the community. Family and friends are visiting and it's a great time to be together. St. Paul's and Johnstown United churches are all about community, and this year they are extending a warm invitation to all families to put Christ back into their Christmas. That is why an intergenerational church service is one tradition from her past that Reverend Bailey would like to incorporate into her Christmas Eve service this year. This is where children, young people and adults participate in the service.

"This is an opportunity for ministers to show the younger generations, that church is evolving and changing, but more importantly, to remember family traditions that make families strong" commented Reverend Bailey.

Christmas is not always a happy time for people. According to Rev. Bailey, Christmas is also a time of nurturing, encouragement and supporting one another, especially for those who have suffered loss over the past year.

"As Christians, we follow the moving and touching nativity stories, where one finds an authentic description of Christmas. We contemplate the mystery of the child born. Right from the beginning, God created

many opportunities for us to encounter God. What a gift! God wants to partake in our life, with all our imperfections and weaknesses," commented Reverend Bailey.

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM REVEREND BAILEY

Spread the warmth of the Christmas season to all around you! May this season of Christmas awaken in us new faith in the truth of Emmanuel, God with us! Wishing you a peaceful Christmas that is full of the most important things, friendship and family.

Reverend Ian MacLean has been the minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Prescott and Spencerville for 19 years.

During that time, he has seen many changes during the Christmas season. In his early days, Reverend MacLean commented the church was full during Christmas Eve Service with members, visitors and children. He recalls a particular year where the children participated in a Christmas pageant down the centre of the church. One little girl rode a wooden donkey carrying a doll.

"It was simple but profound. They told the story in a language that people could understand. It was the children's version of a historical document. The children brought the innocence to it," said Reverend MacLean.

Nowadays, MacLean believes that people are too busy multitasking that they do not have time to focus on one thing for very long. He thinks that many people focus on the family at Christmas and this involves cooking the turkey, trimming the tree, putting up decorations and buying presents. They gloss over the focus on Jesus and his birth.



L-R: Pic of Pastor Roger March from the Seaway Christian Church in Prescott. Reverend Ian MacLean has been the minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Prescott & Spencerville for 19 years. Reverend Brenda Bailey of St. Paul's United Church in Prescott and Johnstown United Church

Therefore during his Christmas Eve Service, Reverend MacLean realizes he only has a short amount of time to connect with young families who may attend. MacLean finds seniors are more spiritual during this time of year.

One Christmas Eve Service tradition that Reverend MacLean finds moving is the living Christmas wreath. Everyone in the congregation lights a candle and forms a circle around the inside of the church. The lights are dimmed and everyone sings.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Prescott will be open on Christmas Day this year for their regular eleven o'clock service and everyone is welcome.

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM REVEREND MACLEAN

Merry Christmas, brings a certain amount of stress to me. A reminder that there is a timeline that has to be met, gifts to buy, parcels to send, cards to sign and mail.

So, as I wish you a Merry Christmas, it is not the stress, it is the quiet moment when you find that the real gift of Christmas is not

bought at Walmart, but is the hope born to a refugee family 2000 years ago and hope for our future. Merry Christmas from your Presbyterian family.

Pastor March from the Seaway Christian Church in Prescott not only has a Christmas Eve Service, but also gets his congregation involved in community activities during this season. Over the years the church, along with sponsors, have helped a family who is struggling to make ends meet at Christmas. This group buys groceries for Christmas dinner and gifts for the family members.

Congregational members also participate in Prescott's annual Santa Clause Parade. Their float depicts the birth of Jesus. Several members also walk beside the float spreading the word of God. This year the members will be handing out candles along the parade route with a message:

"Jesus is the light of the world. Hope this lights up your life. Think about it."

Pastor March, along with his family and other members of the congregation, will

be serving Christmas Dinner at South Grenville District High School at 1:00 p.m. on Christmas Day.

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM PASTOR MARCH

A Christmas Prayer

Lord, may each and everyone be loved and feel like they belong.

Lord, let this season bring lasting change in direction and destiny for all individuals.

And Lord, according to Your Word, help all of us to fulfill Hebrews 12:15a.

"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, Amen." LH

Editor's Note: Whether you are looking for fellowship, peace, light or hope this Christmas please visit and celebrate a joyous Christmas & Holiday Service at any of the local churches that serve parishioners and residents in our area.