

The Parish Light

The Triune of Parishes Newsletter - December 2020

Parish of Athabasca, Living Waters and Northern Lights



A message from Bishop Larry Robinson:

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Luke 2 4 - 7

It was only about 145 kilometers, maybe a stop for a snack. About 3 hours tops by car, Nazareth to Bethlehem an easy ride for this young family. Wait a minute! In the beginning of the first century there were no cars, no trucks, not railroads, no motor bikes or even bicycles for that matter. There were no paved roads, not police to protect them. No gas stations or need of them. No MacDonald's, Tim Hortons or A & W along the way. Joseph and Mary traveled in a very different time and situation than what exists today in Israel.

Mary and Joseph, not being wealthy would have walked. The stories that Mary rode on a donkey are nice to think about but has no basis in scripture. Even if Mary rode, Joseph would have walked leading the donkey. The highways were not much more than a dirt road at best compared to today's standards. They would have likely detoured around Samaria to avoid possible trouble with the Samaritans. It was estimated that the couple might travel 30 – 35 kilometers a day at best. When you include the fact that Mary was very pregnant and would need more than the normal rest stops, it is estimated that the trip could have taken up to 10 days.

If you want to talk about stress, we have Joseph as a prime example. Mary, his wife to be, was very obviously pregnant. This would not have made him popular with the neighbours, or the local synagogue. On top of this, he was forced to make this trip taking Mary with him, putting her health and the health of the baby in danger. Along the way, the danger of being robbed or killed was a likely possibility. Then getting there, no decent place to stay. A stable, where the animals where kept, was all he could get, because the town would have possibly tripled in size for this census.

Stress was putting it mildly. How many times throughout this journey did Joseph hear the Jewish equivalent of “Hang in there, it will be ok” or “you should make it ok, maybe” or “won’t it be good when this is all over?” or “keep the faith, there is a light at the end of the tunnel”. Even worse was “I really wish I could help you but I’m very busy just now.” “Brother you got her into this, now you get her out.” “Nobody like that is coming in here”. “Maybe you should of thought of the consequences before you got her pregnant.” All this when Joseph was sick with worry for Mary. Not what he needed at the moment. Yet in spite of it all, God breaks into the world. In spite of it all, Joseph obedience to the voice of God and his love and care for Mary made it possible for God to burst into the world in a unique way, allowing a path way for the redemption of humanity.

It seems we live in a world of stress. The Covid 19 virus has heightened the stress level of us all. Sickness, death, unemployment, or hospitalization is closing in around us. There are masks, testing, and social distancing. School closings, the doors of the church building shut, shortages in stores, many stores closed. All these things cause us to worry, to wonder, where will it all end? Where is our hope for the future?

Then Jesus comes into our lives. He reveals his love for us, His care for us. He promises to walk beside us through the hard times; through the Covid times; through the unemployment; through the sickness, the separation and the loneliness. We remember the Psalm

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

We remember the words of Jesus **“lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”**

My Friends, as we enter this Christmas season let us take time to be with Jesus. Time to listen to him. In Jesus we can find peace in a troubled world. In Jesus we can find joy at a time that seemed barren of joy, and in Jesus we can find company in a world that seems alone. This Christmas may we find the truth of the word of the Saviour, who was born in a manger and died on the Cross for us.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

Sheila and I wish you a very Blessed Christmas.

Reach out to those you love, if only by phone and if you feel a need to talk, Rev Rose or myself are always ready to listen.

Bishop Larry Robertson, Priest in Charge, Triune of Parishes.



December 2020 Message from Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Dear Beloved of God, as a child I delighted in viewing CBC Hymn Sing on my grandparents black and white television screen with my identical twin and three younger siblings. I loved the arrangements of the familiar hymns, as well as the physical arrangement of the choir. Often at night for many years, my brother and I would sing the concluding Hymn Sing benediction before we closed our eyes. I was enthralled as the Von Trapp family sang during the movie, *The Sound of Music*. My siblings and I would break out into our own musical renditions often performing for family and friends. Together we sang for weddings and celebrations, with our mother at the piano. As children, our song favorite was a version of a hymn sung now at all family funerals, "Children of the Heavenly Father," with a simple descant line that soared into the heavens. And then, I began to play for worship. My piano playing often in duet fashion with the organ. Soon my cousin and I were leading the singing during Sunday School openings.

My love for music continued post-High School with piano performance serving as my second major. Accompanying college musicals and voice and instrumental majors, leading congregational song from the piano during chapel services, playing for convocations and graduations. And, playing for my own personal need - when I needed to vent, or weep, step away, or forget, or rest.

These past months I have returned again and again to music as a spiritual practice. Music has again become my prayer, for music is life-giving for me - body, mind, and spirit – a spiritual practice that grounds me, refreshes me, and quietens me when I am inclined to go madly off in all directions. I am reminded of Luther's words that, "next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." Music, in these past months, has served as a reminder to me of what it is that I believe. Music and text seep into my bones in ways that didactic information never will. Music sinks under my skin shaping the very way I perceive this world. Music, in these past months has been born anew in me, for music, profound music, is born at times when there is no other possible way for something to be expressed.

Here I am mindful of the words of Aldous Huxley, who in his magnificent essay titled, "The Rest is Silence," said: "After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music." Music, in these past months, has connected my experience with that of the people of God of all times and places. The incredible and moving performances of individuals, gathered around the world via technology to sing, to dance, to make music together. The grandmother cradling and humming gently to the child who is afraid. Those gathered to grieve and mourn the death of a church leader from this vicious virus and hearing the trumpet proclaim God's presence and resurrection promise. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma often shares the story of the first concert he played after September 11. In the face of that country's catastrophic loss, the orchestra members wondered: Do we play, or do we cancel? Together, they chose to continue with the performance as planned. Remembering that moment, he wrote, "Music will be the way that we will come together, because we're asserting ourselves as a community, as a people, as a city, as whatever. And we need to be together." Yes, together. Music as spiritual practice. Life-giving music.

Recently I have learned a new hymn which continues to make its entry into my life. "God of the Movements and Martyrs." This hymn was written by David LaMotte on a commission from the North Carolina Council of Churches in honor of their 85th Anniversary. It was arranged and recorded in six different styles by five different artists and premiered the week of June 15, 2020. Search the hymn title on YouTube. Please. The lyrics form images which come repeatedly to my mind. The melody is simple and memorable. The cadences locate me in God. I am grounded, refreshed and quietened. The hymn is life-giving. It shapes my perception of the world even in this time. It expresses profoundly what is not easily, if at all, able to be expressed. It connects my experience with others, bringing us together. Music as spiritual practice.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

In Christ Jesus – Shalom,

+Larry



Technology! Technology! Technology!

There are days when we seem to coast through life unhindered, carefree, and loving every moment, and then there are those days when we are forced to learn something new and learn it quickly.

Covid-19 has pushed some of us to our limits but for others it has allowed us time to step back, regroup, and realize the beauty of God, his children, and how precious you are. Yes, we are back to worshipping by Zoom. I must admit I was dreading this day. I was hoping and praying for the best and hoping that we could remain open especially since we are heading into the Advent and Christmas season.

I know back in March we were forced to look at Church in a new way. How do we have services? Will the Church survive? How can we continue to minister to those in our charge? And then came along this brilliant idea that we could hold services by Zoom. It would allow us to see each other and stay connected. And so, we were off and running to learn something new. With a purpose. All because we were desperate to stay connected; to be able to see each other and carry on being the family of God.

See, at no point did we stop being the Church. If anything, I feel we are more the Church today. So, here we are once again! Forced to face the reality that we cannot in person meet and worship together. No, I do not want to celebrate Christmas or any service by Zoom, but we are where we are.

We are once again trying to be creative in reaching out to everyone. This go around, we are trying to go live on Facebook while using Zoom.

Our first tempt was, well, as my mother always said, "If you got nothing good to say don't say anything." Although we had technical difficulties, we are trying to do our best. We are trying to reach out to as many as we can with as many different resources as possible.

We want you to come and join us on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am. Services will be either Morning Prayer or Holy Communion with Reserve Sacrament. We have not forgotten about those who do not have technology. We, Bishop Larry Robertson, and I are still available for home visits. In addition, we are setting up communion stations so those who cannot join us live can come to the church and receive. To help keep everyone safe, we are asking you to make an appointment. This will help alleviate any gatherings.

Stay Safe, stay tune, and continue being the church!

Rev. Rosemarie Howell

Associate Priest



Going live on



Christmas and Baker Lake, Nunavut.

Quviasugittsi Quviasuvingmi; This is how several of the Inuit dialects say "Merry Christmas". Literally it means "May you be happy at the time of happiness". There are other phrases used in some places, but this was by far the most common when I left the Arctic. It is also very appropriate. It expressed the atmosphere that seemed to come over a community at this time of year. Let me share with you some of the stories of Baker Lake, Nunavut - a community we lived in for 8 years and had the privilege to call home.

Baker was a community of 1500 people. Although there were 3 churches, the majority of the community was Anglican. On Sundays we would get over the 3 services, (2 Inuktitut speaking and 1 English speaking) an attendance of just under 300 throughout the winter. Add to that, 2 Sunday Schools of about 50 children, Sundays were busy times. Fortunately, I had 11 trained lay Readers and quite a few other helpers.

About mid-November you could feel the spirit of the community begin to rise. A group of hunters would go out to get the necessary caribou for the Christmas feasting. The Hudson Bay Store would bring out the toys, some that they had flown in, but also many that had been sitting in the warehouse since the barge came in during the summer. The Ladies began to sew for Christmas. Everyone had to have new Kamiks (boots made of canvas and leather, seal skin of the warmest caribou skin). Many got new coats made of brightly coloured duffel fabric and lots of beading. There would be new slippers, new hats and many other handmade items. After all, you had to look your best at Christmas! The pride of a woman was her family and she took great joy in outfitting her family.

Christmas Caroling

When we began planning for the holiday, I suggested we go to the home of our elders and sing Christmas carols. Without thinking, Sheila and I spent several weeks baking cookies and squares to ensure we had enough to take around when we visited the elders. On the visits, the elders, with a generous display of thanks, received the baked items, but I noticed most seemed to go to the grandkids who devoured the baking. After words, we would gather at the mission house for more food and drinks.

The next year as we planned this event, some of the adults asked if they could get the food to take to the elders. Sheila and I gladly handed the chore over to them. As we visited the elders' home, they brought in large hunks of "cached meat". This was caribou that was caught in the late summer and covered up with rocks and then left to age until Christmas. As they brought out the cached meat, the elder's eyes glistened with joy in a way that never happened with cookies and squares. This was a delicacy that many of the elders did not often get because they could no longer go hunting. I learned a valuable lesson that Christmas. What brings joy in one culture is often different from your own culture. I learned to listen more and heed the advice of the church elders in these matters. I must admit 5-month-old meat left under rocks to age did not make my mouth water!

Services at Christmas

We had many of the same services as those in the south had, although it often had some different twists in it. The Carols and Lessons was a particular happy time when our vestry (all Inuit) insisted that because there were a few English people, the readings should be read in both languages and we should have the words for the songs in both languages. "O Come all ye Faithful" sung in both languages at once may not have seemed pleasant to the ear, but to the heart of faith, to see English and Inuit standing together joyfully singing together brought tears to the eye.

At Christmas time we ate at the drop of a hat. We attended no less than 6 – 8 feasts and played Santa for at least 4 of them. The government departments had feasts, the Churches had feasts, the nursing station and the RCMP had feasts, the Inuit groups had feasts and they were all open to the community mostly. Lots of laughter and singing together. No one was refused entry and no one went hungry. At the end of the feast the elders and the needy took what was left home.

At Christmas Eve, the joy gets turned up another degree or two. Like elsewhere, people make a last mad dash to Hudson Bay or the Coop. We tried to avoid the place on this day. Then at 10:30, the bell of the Church starts to ring - The call to worship. By this time people have already started to come. Now this church would sit normally 150 or so. By the first hymn at 11pm there were over 300. In spite of the crowding, I was always amazed that when an elder showed up on the pathway into the church appeared - a seat was found. The respect for the elders leaves me in awe and admiration to this day.

You can imagine, communion was some event. Not easy, and not always quiet - but awesome, worshipful and surprisingly orderly. As people received communion from myself and 3 Lay readers, they moved to the back, allowing room for another to come and receive. I am not sure how it was done but people seem to end up in the place where they started. There was anticipation in the air as the service ended because people knew the Christmas had on just begun.

As they left the church everyone headed down to the community hall for games and a square dance. These games and square dance happened every night right up until New Year's Eve. We went to most - if not all - evenings taking part in the fun and laughter. But never once in all eight years we lived there, did we see the end of one of those dances. We were snuggled in bed long before the last dance. 10 pm New Year's Eve the dancing stopped so that all could go to church and together we would see the new year in together in prayer and thanksgiving. The services ended about 12:15 and people poured out of the church and headed down to the Community Hall for one last dance. We could hear the rifles going off and the whips being snapped in celebration and joy for what God had instore for the future. We however, after that service, went home and gave thanks to God in gratitude for being part of such joy, generosity and love that made an imprint on our lives that remains to this very day.

May we all take the time this Christmas to find the joy of celebrating the Christ Child's birth. May we find joy in being with each other if only in spirit and may we take the time to reach out to each other with a word of kindness or an act of love.

Merry Christmas, Quviasugittsi Quviasuvingmi!

Bishop Larry Robinson
Priest in Charge, Trinity of Parishes



A Letter

A letter is the warmest way to bid a friend the time of day,
A keep-in-touch that brings the smiles across the very longest miles.
And what a wealth of strength and hope is tucked inside an envelope,
Reminding loved ones that you are, at least in heart, not very far.
In no country, state or camp, the wealth beneath a postage stamp,
For memories that never age are written down upon each page.
And though it's nice to telephone, one of the sweetest pleasures known,
Are moments shared in thoughts we send, that can be read, and read again.

..... Grace E. Easley

Advent and Christmas in the Trinity of Parishes

Northern Lights (Christ Church, Wandering River, St Paul's Boyle, St Thomas' Perryvale, St. Andrew's/Zion Colinton), All Saint's Athabasca and St, Andrews Lac La Biche

All Sunday Services will be on Zoom

Meeting ID: 812 6212 9538 Passcode: 342442.

It is hoped that they will be shown on Facebook for those who can not get on Zoom. Check St. Andrew's/Zion Facebook Page

Each Sunday in Advent during the Service there will be a Family Time. This short Family Time will also be on our Northern Lights Website and on the Diocesan App. Anyone can download them and view them in their homes.

During Advent and Christmas,

Daily-Monday to Friday Morning Prayer at 9am and Evening Prayer at 7pm will be said on Facebook. They will be led by parishes throughout the Diocese. You can join in on the Diocese of Athabasca Facebook Page or on the St Andrews/Zion Facebook page.

December 11 – St Paul's gathering Cancelled

December 12 – St Andrew's/Zion bake Sale Cancelled

December 13 10:30am will be our Lessons and Carols.

It will be on Zoom - Meeting ID: 812 6212 9538 Passcode: 342442, and St. Andrew's/Zion Facebook Page

December 24 Christmas Eve Service will be on Zoom and also on Facebook. Stay tuned for updates.

Anyone wishing Home Visits or Home Communion contact Bishop Larry at 780-213-4099 or Rev Rose at 780-558-9074

Watch the Northern Lights Website or St. Andrews/Zion Facebook Page for events and updates