



**West Vancouver United Church
Advent Devotions 2014**

Sunday, November 30th, 2014

Please read Romans 13:11-14

During my Ministry in South Africa, whilst serving in the Methodist Church in Ladysmith, I was visiting one of my parishioners who lived in the rural area. He was fondly known as Oom Fred (Uncle Fred).

The old Farmer leaned against the fence, looking out over his parched lands. We chatted into the evening until the stars shone with starry clarity. He spoke of isolation and the loneliness of life without his beloved wife; of hard times when nature was cruel and unrelenting and of better days when the drought broke for a good harvest and the cattle thrived.

The silence of the evening prompted me to ask a very personal question, “Do you believe in God, Oom Fred?” He paused and in a very quiet voice said, “Yes I do”. We were silent for long while and then rather wistfully, he said, “I believe in God, but you know, to me God is far away and as silent as those stars”

I suppose Oom Fred was expressing just how many people feel. I think most people believe that there is a God, but for many God is far away and as silent as the stars, having little or no relevance for their lives today. And to be honest, for many years it was the same for me.

This is why the Advent and Christmas Season is so important to me. It reminds me again and again that although my faith is rooted in the Mystery and transcendence of God’s being, it is also firmly rooted in the inescapable fact of the Historic Jesus.

So for us, Advent is always a season of excitement as we prepare for Christmas and the coming of the Christ Child. It is a time for looking forward to new beginnings and possibilities.

It is a Season of Expectation and Hope!

Prayer: God our Creator, in the midst of our busy lives, help us to be still, to wait, to watch. Enable us to listen for Your voice, so we can prepare ourselves for the coming of Advent season. *Amen*

Rev. John and Joan

John is Minister Emeritus at West Vancouver United Church. He and Joan served for many years in ministry here.

Monday, December 1st, 2014

Please read 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

I never dreamed that 2014 would include a visit to Corinth, but on May 29th, there I was, along with Rev. Dr. Ross and fourteen other pilgrims walking “In the Footsteps of Paul”.

We learned that Paul had spent eighteen months in the city, establishing a Christian church. We saw a roughly carved lintel attesting to their meeting place.

Paul had chosen the city carefully. Over two hundred years after its destruction under an earlier Roman rule, Julius Caesar had refounded it and conscripted Italians, Greeks, Syrians and Egyptians as well as freed slaves from Judea to populate it. Situated in a prime trading spot in the narrow isthmus between the Adriatic and Aegean seas, it attracted eager settlers, some of them amassing great personal wealth. It was a “melting pot” and Paul seized the opportunity to spread “The Good News” by means of travellers who came to do business and returned home or journeyed on to further cities, telling others of the real treasure they had discovered.

When Paul left and others assumed leadership, it wasn't all smooth sailing. In fact, reading between the lines in the two letters he wrote to the church, they were no saints and loused up royally from time to time.

But his letters survive. The chapter concerning love, (1Cor. 13) is sometimes referred to as "The Wedding Chapter" because of its ubiquitous use at marriages where the couple may not even hold Christian beliefs.

Today's reading includes the standard Pauline salutation, but there is also encouragement to share spiritual gifts. The early church confidently expected Christ's soon return. Paul asks them to stand firm as they wait, reminding them of God's faithfulness and His desire to enfold them in the "fellowship" of Christ. As this year draws to a close, we do not know what lies ahead in 2015. You may experience challenges and heartaches, but be assured, God knows the plans He has for you:-

“..plans to prosper and not to harm, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jer. 29:11

Prayer: Trustworthy God, we are in your hands. We look forward eagerly to this festive season when we will celebrate the birth of Your Son. Help us to share what we have with others, knowing that everything comes from You. May we know for certain, “Immanuel” – God with us. *Amen*

Liz

Liz volunteers at WVUC on Wednesday mornings.

Tuesday, December 2nd, 2014

Please read 1 Mark 13: 33-37

“Watch then, because you don't know when the master of the house is coming”

When my children were small it was almost impossible to keep the place tidy. I'm sure all young mothers can relate to that. Well, during a Christmas season back then, we invited my husband's parents to come for dinner. My husband took the children with him in the car to pick them up and allow me time to do a little vacuuming, etc.

So away I went, frantically dusting and cleaning. I was vacuuming the living room and got a little too close to the Christmas tree and it started to fall over! What was I to do? I grabbed hold of it and tried to straighten it but of course as soon as I let go, it started to fall again! We lived in a duplex with good neighbours on the other side of us. So, still hanging on to the tree, I banged as hard as I could on the adjoining wall. Fortunately, my neighbour was home and came to my rescue. Between the two of us, we were able to “right” the tree and secured it to the wall with wire. Not an ornament was broken!

I managed to get everything tidied up and dinner on the way just as my husband and the children returned with our guests.

God was watching out for me with the help of caring neighbours! As the scripture reads “Watch then, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming”. So, in our lives we must be vigilant and keep watch for the Master to come into our lives.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, may we make room in our homes especially at this time of the year, for Your Son Jesus, who came to be among us. *Amen*

May

May moved to West Vancouver from Langley to be near her family. She is a regular attender at Tuesday Bible Study.

Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014

Please read John 1: 1-5

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.”

We are lucky to be blessed with big families in Vancouver – children, cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, dogs, cats, etc. So Christmas dinner can become quite a massive affair. We enjoy hosting when our turn comes around, and we have had a variety of seating arrangements - tables added to tables to extend the seating, or small tables spread out around the room, or even in more than one room. We have found that everyone brings a dish and that makes it much easier for the hosts. Over the years, I have done minimal baking of the traditional Christmas goodies, and have usually relied on my mother for help in that area. I must say that having a yellow lab food hound, “Shyla” did make things more difficult for me in the kitchen in the fourteen years that she was alive. Sadly this will be our first Christmas without her in all that time. No more shouts of “Shyla got the pate”, or Shyla got the cake, or the butter, or whatever food lay within reach. But I think my mother was really horrified the year Shyla’s nose drifted by the dessert table and caught a whiff of her rumballs and in an instant – gone! Shyla was really licking her chops after that one! They say that chocolate is bad for dogs, but Shyla really defied the odds in that category because chocolate was one of her favourite foods! We will miss her this Christmas and the unconditional love, licks, and laughs she gave us. But we will have a wonderful substitute – our first grandchild! He will be the light of our lives this Christmas, and we won’t need to guard the rumballs.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to feel grateful, happy to be alive,
Knowing that each day good things will come,
Like a beam of light shining on stormy seas,
Giving us faith that we can survive troubled times,
Riding the dark waves into the shining light of joy.
And may the light of the world shine through us always. *Amen.*

Linda and Gerry

Gerry is a member of the Search Committee. Linda sang in the WVUC choir for many years and leads the "Music in the Living Room" program at Hollyburn House.

Thursday, December 4th, 2014

Please read John 1: 6-9

“There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.”

When my children were growing up we lived fairly close to a local church that put on a spectacular display for the Advent season. I think that everyone at that church was involved in making the living story of Christmas an unforgettable display. The lights in the night sky could be seen throughout the neighbourhood and it became an annual thing to do; drive as close as you can to the nativity village and then walk towards the “light”. Every year a different volunteer would have a light beacon and he or she would stand at the entrance to wave you in, so that no matter how long you had to walk from your parking space you knew how close you were by the light. Our youngest son would be asking how much longer was the walk and of course the response was always, “Let’s look for the man waving us in with the light.”

That, in many ways, was what John the Baptist did. His job was to point people towards the Light of the World Jesus.

Prayer: : Dear Heavenly Father, as we progress through this season of Advent, continue to move us by the power of your Spirit to prepare our hearts and minds to appreciate anew the gift of your Son, who alone can bring the light of your grace into our lives. Grant us courage to witness to our faith, that others may come to experience the light of your presence, and the hope that you alone can give. This we ask in Christ's Holy name. *Amen.*

Madelyne

Madelyne is Adult Ministry Coordinator at the church.

Friday, December 5th, 2014

Please read Jeremiah 33:14-16

THE DAYS ARE COMING.....

As the season of Christmas approaches both of us , with so many loving memories of our own family gatherings agree that one of the richest has been our long time involvement with the annual CLAY EVENT, which brings together all the children of the church for the creation of a Nativity scene (crèche) to honour the birth of Jesus.

In little more than an hour the children, after an illustrated telling of the Christmas story, and some understanding of the idea of a tabletop scene, are each given a ball of earth clay for the making of their selected figure, to be modeled and enriched from a wide variety of materials, as well as paint. With assistance of parents for the very young the fifty or more children are encouraged to do their very best in the making of their own figure.

During this time the table is colourfully arranged for the setting of the stable, and freshly painted Bethlehem background. Within the hour the Nativity scene is carefully assembled. Candles lit, lights out , a brief service is held , first with a retelling of the story followed by a prayer and a time of silence to wonder at the created scene and their own part in the making.

Lights on. Cookies and juice to follow! Over the forty or more years many hundreds of our young children have participated in and remembered the CLAY EVENT as a special happening. Now with families, their own children are experiencing this much loved Christmas tradition.

May it continue for future generations.

Prayer: (as repeated at the close of each Clay Event)

God loved us so much that He gave us the best Christmas present of all, His only Son. And we can give Jesus the best birthday present of all, remembering that Christmas is His birthday. *Amen.*

Michael and Loree

WVUC has always been Michael and Loree's home church. For forty years they have worked with children of all ages, not just for the "Clay Event" but over the years in fifteen or more stage productions... "All wonderful memories involving so many of the church community."

Saturday, December 6th, 2014

Please read Isaiah 60: 19-22

There's something about the pressure of Christmas - this peculiar need to make it memorable. There are these inner voices that create an otherwise unnecessary pressure for the season to be remarkable. And then, there are the voices of those around you, hoping to see you, or be with you, to celebrate what has become a treasured time together.

For us, there were things about our first Christmas as a couple that we simply weren't prepared for. We had been through the roller coaster of 'the wedding', with its stresses and its joys, and now, here was our first event as a new family. It's special! We WANTED it to be special! So we did what we could to make it so. But, things were different, and we had to navigate, as a couple, how our time would be spent, how much we would spend on gifts, etc.

The voices, those internal and external pressures, got very loud for us last Christmas. There was lots to navigate with mothers and fathers and siblings and friends who were here, or there, or wherever. And it was very easy (at least for the female side of this marriage) to get lost in the navigation of what this season is REALLY all about. It's about celebrating the fact that Jesus came to show us how everything we thought we knew is actually totally different. That is what this passage is partially about. It's about God coming and changing the world to be a place where we are ALL loved, forgiven and known by Him, and in turn, we look to Him, recognizing that all of this, ALL. OF. THESE. are gifts from our Father.

Prayer: God. Help us remember when we feel pulled in many different directions this season to return to you. You are our everything, and may you be glorified. *Amen.*

Simon and Meghan

Simon is Youth Minister at the church. His wife, Meghan, teaches at a local High School.

Sunday, December 7th, 2014

Please read Hebrews 1:1-3

"Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and varied ways ... he has spoken to us by a Son ... (and he sustains all things by his powerful word)."

When our children were young we would try to spend part of our Christmas holiday time at our cabin. As we packed up and got ready to go, there would always be complaints about leaving behind friends, new toys and newly opened presents, as well as leaving the familiarity of home. However, once we were well on our way, the interest and fun of the ferry ride across Georgia Strait would take over and despite delays, a long car ride and two more ferries up-island, we enjoyed the journey. At last, tired and in the dark, we would arrive. Kindling would need to be found, and a fire lit, taking time to warm up the cold and damp space. During our few days at the cabin, we were cozy and our pleasures were simple ... preparing food together (pie, of course), walks in the dark to catch a glimpse of faraway stars (through dark, scudding clouds), reading and playing games (like Monopoly, neither quiet nor simple!). Many of us at Christmas seek a simpler way of celebrating, a kind of search for meaning during a time that has become frenetic, lonely and sad for some, when we can't hear God's word.

In the reading from Hebrews we are reminded that God continues to speak to us. In our searching, God speaks to us. He has spoken to us by a Son, who embodies love, everything that God is. In times past, he spoke to our ancestors, who packed up and abandoned their familiar surroundings, leaving friends and relatives behind in

their desire for a better life for themselves and their children. Little did they guess the hardships they would face! God also spoke to Mary and Joseph, as they undertook an arduous journey to a distant village, not knowing anything of the joys and trials ahead. They followed His word and their little boy was born in simple surroundings.

Prayer: God, help us to search and to listen. May we be led by Your word as shown by Jesus. Remind us that although some of us have a better life, many people are uprooted from their homes, without warmth, without food, without shelter, living in an unfamiliar land. Remind us to love others as You love us, particularly at this special time, when we worship at the cradle of a little baby. *Amen.*

David and Heather

David is pursuing his artistic skills in painting and creating banners for the church. Heather is a hands-on Grandma.

Monday, December 8th, 2014

Please read Psalm 43: 3-6

There were two lines in Psalm 43 that resonated with both Faith and I:

‘You (God) are the source of my happiness’ and
‘I will put my hope in God’...let us explain why.

Rebekah, our youngest daughter, was born a beautiful and healthy baby girl, with pudgy cheeks and a beautiful smile...but eight months later, all this would change, and our trust in God would be severely challenged.

After an uneventful trip to the grocery store, Rebekah suddenly became ill with what appeared to be the flu, but soon was unconscious with what turned out to be viral meningitis, one of the most deadly varieties that attacked the brain. She was rushed to the hospital, and in the days that followed would frequently seizure from the powerful IV meds to her brain...but on the eighth day, ‘this tiny baby’ had a massive seizure, and everything stopped including her heart.

Rebekah was ‘clinically’ dead for 22 minutes, and only after the valiant efforts of the Lions Gate Doctors were they able to revive her...but the prognosis based on known history was most likely ‘vegetable’ based on the brain damage she had sustained, with the ‘best case’ possibility was Grade 6 mental capacity.

Fast forward 25+ years...and with God’s help, loving and supportive parents, sisters, friends, church family, health professionals and educators, Rebekah finished Public and High School, receiving one of Sentinel HS’s major awards for ‘Meritorious Service and Courage’, a BBA from Capilano University and now works full time at HSBC. Rebekah is a living example of God’s many miracles, and truly has become the source of Faith’s and my happiness...for we never stopped putting our hope (and trust) in God.

In closing, let us share the prayer we said EVERY night with our daughters before they went to bed:

Prayer: Loving Father, put away, all the wrong I’ve done today,
Make me sorry, true and good, make me love thee as I should,
Make me feel by day and night, I am ever in thy sight,
Heavenly Father, hear my prayer, take thy child into thy care,
May thine Angels pure and bright, watch around me through the night. *Amen.*

Roger and Faith

Roger and Faith have lived in WV on three separate occasions. They have three daughters and two granddaughters.

Tuesday, December 9th, 2014

Please read Psalm 27: 1-4

Letting go and Letting God

Christmas 2001 will always be a memorable one for our family.

It was December 16 at nearly midnight the last day of our visit to the family in Halifax which had climaxed with a party around the Christmas tree. Suddenly the packing in our room at the hotel was pieced with screams of agony. Events shifted: frantic phone calls, 911, sirens.

First diagnosis: Your husband is dying and we do not know why, said the emergency doctor. Then came a second ambulance to another facility where X-rays revealed the trouble, followed by a third speed through the night to the regional hospital. At five a.m. a circle of surgeons advised a rare and risky procedure, but their faces did not offer much hope. Later that morning the vigil began.

Prayers, letters, phone calls poured in from our home church, the local congregation, the hospital chaplain. We tried to pretend to our granddaughters that Santa was still coming.

Then a week later after another sleepless night, I prayed:

“Dear God , if you want him, take him home.” I closed my eyes.

About eight the phone rang. It was the ICU doctor. ”Your husband is out of danger, but although recovery will be long, it now seems possible.”

There were some very tense times, but on January 3, discharge came and three weeks later, the clearance to fly home.

The last line of Psalm 27 resonates with me even now:

Wait for the Lord;
Be strong and let your heart take courage
Wait for the Lord.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for your love and support in times of crisis. At all times in our lives give us the strength and courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, your beloved son. *Amen.*

Ruby

A member of United Church since 1951, Ruby is Adult Ministry Chair. She is an accomplished knitter with a passion for Coloured Pencil Drawing.

Wednesday, December 10th, 2014

Please read: Psalm 119: 105-106

5:30 am: the alarm clock calls out its morning chime. You roll over to flip a switch. The room jumps from stillness into morning routine. The day begins to emerge from its restful state. Darkness slowly gives way to the dawn.

Before the days of electricity, of street lights and tamper-resistant plugs, fire was the primary source of light. Candles, campfires and lamps were methods of harnessing light to make clear what was not. The Hebrew people were acutely aware of this. Their forefathers were the ones who, under the leadership of Moses, were led through the nighttime wilderness by a pillar of fire. Where the light went, they followed. In the dark wilderness the Hebrew people learned about trusting God, and that meant listening for what God's loving voice is saying: directing, encouraging, and challenging.

As you wake from your slumber, turning on lights at your will and command, perhaps you have a place in your routine to read Scripture and see what God might illuminate. God's Word is perhaps one of the most clear ways that we can glimpse the activity and work of our Triune God. God speaks through Scripture to us today, and through it we see God's heartbeat for our broken and fragmented world.

Prayer: LORD, shine your light into the darkness of our lives. As we look into you Word, may we be surprised, challenged and drawn closer to your heart. *Amen.*

Dylon and Katie

Dylon is the "Godly Play" leader with the Sunday Club. Katie works with Union Gospel Mission, downtown, Vancouver.

Thursday, December 11th, 2014

Please read: John 12: 35-36

Light and Darkness

The word Christmas brings to mind outside coloured lights, Christmas tree lights and most importantly, Our Lord, Light of the World. Christmas 1968 was, for our family all of these and more. My son (10) daughters (13 and 16) and I were also celebrating having my husband, Tom, their dad, home from the hospital after having his left leg amputated below the knee from bone cancer. By the New Year he was coping well with a prosthetic leg and was back to work. We all breathed a prayer of thankfulness.

In early May, Tom developed a deep cough and sore chest. To our anguish, tests showed terminal lung cancer. I broke down, wondering how I could bring up our children on our own, deal with the house mortgage and other legal matters. Tom held me in his arms and with tears in eyes said, "I'm counting on you to cope."

With the help of family friends and my faith, I did manage to cope. I retrained as a secretary, (a job I had held from 1944-46 while I served with the Canadian Women's Army Corps). The children graduated from school, were successful in their careers, married and blessed me with three beautiful grandchildren. I look back over my eighty-eight years, counting my blessings and all my happy memories.

Prayer: Thank you Lord, for being the light in our lives and walking beside us through the dark times. *Amen.*

Jean

Jean loves writing and has published a memoir of her life story and a volume of her poems.

Friday, December 12th, 2014

Please read Ephesians 5: 6-14

“Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

An elderly couple are sitting in a tiny, circular chapel perched atop a hill in central Austria, that seats no more than 20 people. They are quietly praying, and likely paying homage as well to Franz Gruber, the local organist of that town of Oberndorf, who, 180 years earlier, had created the music for the world’s most beloved Christmas carol, “Silent Night! Holy Night!” This memorial chapel had been built in his honour in the early twentieth century, because the original church in which Gruber worked, appropriately called the St. Nicholas Church, had been flooded out and demolished. Suddenly the couple turned around in irritation: a huge tour bus disgorged 32 noisy Vancouver boys, who, unused to the hot, humid July weather and dressed lightly in shorts, t-shirts and ball caps, piled off the bus and crammed into the tiny chapel. Noisy and boisterous as they were, they were not a soccer team: they, too, wanted to pay homage to Franz Gruber, whose carol they performed every Christmas to close out their own concerts and services.

Scowling at the boys, the couple made as if to get up and leave, when the boys gathered themselves at the front of the chapel and started to sing that famous carol, obviously with great affection and meaning, and even in not-too-badly pronounced German, before switching into English. The incomparable sound of boy sopranos filled the rafters, and before long, tears were streaming down the cheeks of the elderly couple (and if truth be told, down their conductor’s cheeks as well). Just as suddenly, the singing stopped, the boys jammed their way through the narrow doorway and returned to the bus, a blue cloud of diesel smoke the only sign that briefly, very briefly, a miracle had happened.

Prayer: Dear God, your Word teaches us to “Live as children of light”. Perhaps the greatest blessing at Advent is the sense of expectation, excitement and joy that radiates from children around us. Children teach us so much about Christ’s unconditional love. Jesus’ ray of light, glowing so brightly in children, permeates the darkest of all seasons, illuminating not only the night time, but the darker places in ourselves that often times scowl before we, too, understand and are transformed by love. “Live as children of light.” *Amen.*

Gerry and Cora

Gerry is Music Director at WVUC and works with a number of choirs at home and abroad.

Saturday, December 13th, 2014

Please read 1 Peter 2: 5-9

*“See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.”*

Have you ever seen human towers, castells? The small town of Valls, just west of Barcellona, is said to have created this tradition sometime during the 18th century. These people-towers are constructed in three parts. The base is a large ring of people called the “pinya”. On this ring of people the weight of the load above it will be distributed, and the pinya will stabilize the tower and its height. It also serves to soften the fall of the castellers should the tower fall apart. On top of the pinya the actual tower that everyone sees is called the “tronc.” It is built in rings of up to 9 standing people each. The number of rings they build can be a few or many. Climbing to the top of the tower is reserved only for children. They form the “pon de dalt”, the tower dome. The “anxenta” climbs up to the top and remains there only for a few seconds to raise his or her arms to salute the crowds. But the goal is not reached until the castell is de-constructed without falling apart, a procedure as tricky as the build-up.

Reading this part of apostle Peter's letter reminds me of these towers. Jesus said that it was on Peter's shoulders that Christ's church would be built. But here, Peter is describing how that church needs to be constructed on Jesus. To the Jewish people, the temple stones were actual rocks, those which Solomon had constructed to

build the Holiest of Holy places for the faithful, the Temple. Peter used this same imagery of building stones to teach us how we are to form Christ's church. Jesus will be the foundation, like the pinya of the castells. He will bear our weight, stabilize us, and cushion our falls. In verse 6, Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16 where the prophet meant actual rocks, but he is saying we are to be living stones, to be built up with much nobler fabric than the Jewish temple built of rocks. This new temple will be a living temple, consisting not of dead materials, but of living parts like a castell. Christ, the foundation, is a living stone. God is the The One to which all worship will be given, through the foundation of the Messiah, our Prince of Peace. We are a temple of people, not stones, built on Jesus, and which worships the Most High, the Almighty.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Guide us to know You better through this Holy Season. Bring Jesus to life in our hearts and minds that we can listen to the Holy Spirit leading us to build your church, not of dead rocks, but of living stones that reach up to new heights in service to your Kingdom. *Amen.*

Bill and Gwen

Bill is Vice-Chair of the Board and Chair of the Search Committee. Gwen is Communications Coordinator and Vice Chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

Sunday December 14th, 2014

Please read Isaiah 60: 1-3

“Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.
² See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
³ Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

New International Version

Darkness surrounds us in our everyday lives. It's in the news, it's in schools, in our workplaces, and even in our homes. Part of our calling as Christians is to find the best in everything, avoiding negativity and replacing it with the positive. In other words, to "arise" - -rise above the darkness and to "shine" - to be a light in the world.

At first glance it seems easy enough, but a question remains: What can we do to avoid the darkness when it is so prevalent in our everyday lives?

I admit, I've been over-thinking this for the last several months, trying to think of something "big" and "monumental" to share with you. Only recently did I realize that our calling as Christians isn't necessarily about the "huge" things, but instead small acts which better the lives of others. Sometimes we may be called to do big things, but no act is too small when sharing your light for Christ.

For several months preceding Thanksgiving, a family in our congregation had been having difficult times, with a child facing serious medical issues coupled with frustrating delays in getting the urgent medical help they needed. After multiple trips to different experts, including a trip to the USA seeking help, they returned to Vancouver, physically and emotionally tired. Understandably, they were too worn down to celebrate the holiday. For them, it could have been a time to be overwhelmed with darkness from fear, stress, anxiety and uncertainty.

Thanksgiving must be a difficult time for many people, just like Christmas - -you think of how happy everyone else must be and it can be a time which magnifies one's own personal darkness, by contrast.

No one should feel alone, enveloped by darkness at any time, but especially at this time of year. As a Church family, it is our job to help everyone feel loved and looked after as part of Christ's family. That evening, on Thanksgiving Sunday, we prepared some extra food--potatoes, turkey, and stuffing with all the trimmings and a few fun "extras" to make a special care package. It wasn't hard to do, and as a family it made our thanksgiving even more special. It was something small we could do together to help a family who themselves do so much for others.

That evening we received a beautiful, heartfelt call from the family, who talked about the recent events. One of the things they said is that they "never felt so blessed" as at this Thanksgiving, and that they had really reflected on all of their abundant blessings as they shared Grace at their dinner table. Their abundant gratitude wasn't just about the dinner we brought but for their many blessings in life, especially over the last weeks. During the toughest, potentially darkest time, they felt like they had been in God's hands the whole way. Even in a time of darkness they remained focused on Christ's great light. This family's words and faith brought this passage from Isaiah to life. ***This*** is what we are called to do in every step of our journey with Christ- to follow and share His light, trusting that He is leading the way.

In today's reading, we are reminded of the darkness all around us. With life comes unknowingness, uncertainty, fear and even evil - all of which can be very scary, overwhelming, and at times we can't see the way through it. With life comes hardships, sadness, and frightening uncertainty that can bring us to our knees, but Christ's Light is always there, showing us the way. Sometimes, it is in the moment when it is darkest that God's light can become most apparent. In choosing to look for the light, to trust in it, and to become a part of it, you find your way, allowing you to rise above all uncertainty and worry. You ***are*** in God's hands. Always. He is the light which shines for all of us. The love of the Lord will bring you to new heights. "Arise !"

The messages we received from this family were far more rewarding to us than anything we could have done for them. In a time where it is so easy to fall into darkness, this special family shared their positivity and love with us, choosing to become beacons of gratitude, appreciation and light. Their example goes to show how God's love shines through and that no matter what is going on in your life, no matter how big a problem may seem to be, we are being looked out for and shown the way.

See Christ's Light. Trust in Christ's Light. Rejoice in Christ's Light. Be and extension of Christ's Light for others, that they too will become beacons for God's abundant love, peace and hope.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus, the light of the world. Thank you for being my beacon of love, hope and peace. I pray that you will continue to show me how to love others with eyes that are illuminated by You so I might see the best in everyone and in everything. Help me to know what I can do today that will bless your Kingdom. Lord, make me a light in your world today and always, especially for those who find themselves in darkness. Use me Lord, as you will, to help share your Light with the world. In the name of your blessed Son Jesus Christ I pray. *Amen.*

Will

Will is 15 and an enthusiastic participant in WVUC Youth Group.

Monday, December 15th, 2013

Please read 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6

I love Christmas. I love everything about Christmas. The delicious food, the wonderful people, the precious little sheep that waddle around in the pageant, the Christmas movies, and the hot chocolate that warms your whole body. I love it all. However, there are two things that rise to the top. The decorations, and the music.

Every year, my Christmas kick-off is usually at the very end of November/early December. My family and I head down to Dundarave to decorate a beautiful Christmas tree to represent the WVUC in our community. The ornaments are all created by kids in Sunday Club. Paired with the silver garlands and the bright blue and white lights, the tree looks magical in the night. To top it all off, we add a beautiful, elegant angel to the very tip top of the tree.

A few days after, we head back to Dundarave. Except this time, there are loads of people there, AND the rest of the trees are beautifully decorated. The festival of lights has officially started...yippee!!! The rest of our choir, the Pacific Spirit Children's choir, are there in their festive colours all ready to perform. So, you've got your Christmas trees, your festive colours, your cheerful audience, and your music. Could it get any better? Well I mean, if it snowed..... Pftttttttt who are we kidding. It's Vancouver! But what happens next, is what really screams Christmas to me. All the people gather around and sing Christmas carols together, while being surrounded by lit up Christmas trees.

In the bible, it says "Light up the darkness!", and to me, this is a great example of something lighting up our community, and helping to really spread the love of Jesus!

Prayer: Dear Father of Light, thank you for shining the light of Jesus Christ into our lives. May we do our part in reflecting His love to others. *Amen.*

Claire

Claire has attended WVUC all her life. She loves music, art and Irish dance; most of all she loves Christmas, and wanted to share what it means to her. So... Merry Christmas!

Tuesday, December 16th, 2014

Please read 1 John 1: 4-7

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.”

Those of us living on the west coast of British Columbia remember well the Christmas Eve of 2008. A major snow storm had hit which seemed to bring the world to a stand still. Indeed the roads were so impassable that several churches cancelled their Christmas Eve services. At that time I was serving at Ryerson United Church in Kerrisdale and we were determined that we would not be intimidated by a little inconvenient weather.

The problem I faced was that the morning of the 24th found me on Gambier Island with no power and with roads which would not be cleared for days. Knowing that I had a long and uncertain trip by ferry and bus ahead of me I set out for the earliest ferry before dawn. None of my neighbours had ventured forth that morning and I was alone in my mile long trek through knee deep snow.

Two things stuck me on my journey. The first was the quiet of the woods on a day which is normally spent in crowded noisy malls. The second thing was even more dramatic. Even though it was still night the pristine snow sparkled with reflected light and when the clouds broke for a moment the light of stars broke through. In the noisiest time of the year, the silence through which the Spirit speaks most effectively was ever present. In the darkness, the light danced off new fallen snow and, in that moment, God was, indeed in the light.

Prayer: O God, in this time of winter darkness, may we be made even more aware of the light of your presence. *Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Brian Thorpe

Brian is a retired UC minister who has been helping ministry at WVUC during the vacancy.

Wednesday, December 17th, 2014

Please read: John 3: 16-21

This fall has been a tumultuous one for our family. Our oldest daughter, Mackenzie (Mac), was diagnosed with scoliosis in July. The diagnosis and severity of her case caught us completely off-guard and it has been very difficult to receive access to the appropriate experts due to the long wait lists in Canada. As Mac's condition rapidly deteriorated and her pain levels increased, we felt powerless to help her.

Just as we were resigning ourselves to the fact that we would have to wait months and months for help, I received an email from my beautiful, faithful friend, Pam Seely. Due to the chaos of our situation, I hadn't been in touch with Pam for some time. But one night, at a WVUC Youth and Family Committee meeting, Pam's name came up and everyone in the room lamented that we were all missing her. As she was so on my mind, I sent her an email to touch base and included mention of Mac's scoliosis. Pam immediately emailed back and told me that her husband, Ken, is a Shriner and that the Shriners could help us!

I have previously shared with the Congregation my journey towards feeling comfortable placing my faith in God, and I must admit, that the more I witness the 'coincidences' and 'amazing graces' that appear in our lives, the stronger my faith becomes. What a Divine intervention we were witnessing.

This Christmas, despite Mac's diagnosis and pending spinal surgery in the new year, we have so many things to be grateful for. We are so grateful to Pam and Ken for connecting us with the Shriners. We are so grateful to the Shriners for the absolutely incredible care they are offering our family. We are so grateful to our friends and family who have been so generous in their outpouring of support. And we are so grateful to God, who I am convinced must have a hand in this uncanny unfolding of fortuitous events.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have placed us in a global family of brothers and sisters in Christ. Help us sense others' needs and respond to them as Christ would do. *Amen.*

Conal and Heather

Thursday, December 18th, 2014

Please read Isaiah 40: 1-11

Like sheep we follow the shepherd's direction, we go to him for comfort. God is the shepherd and we are his flock. And we must follow his direction.

In this crazy, crazy world we live in, with all the issues we go through, we look for comfort and for direction, but these things are so hard to find that some people spend their whole lives trying to find them. But comfort is all around us. For you, it might be sitting in Starbucks drinking coffee, or making dinner with everyone at youth group. However, in this crazy, crazy world, even though it's everywhere, comfort seems to have gotten lost in the midst of our busy work schedules and the problems in our busy problematic lives. Everyone is a little broken on the inside, but we have two options: to let it eat us up, or to let God in and accept his comfort. It's so

important, if you can, that you let God in, because the comfort of God is the best thing in the entire universe, I swear!

I'm in high school and, ever since the school year started, I've gotten too busy for God. As school or work gets busier, we lose direction, feel less comfort and the invisible direction and comfort that is around us fades away, and all that's left is the job or social status that we cared so much about. I'm not saying to leave everything that's important to you, but I just want to remind everyone to keep going to God for direction and comfort.

Prayer: Dear God, like the sheep who follow the shepherd, help us remember to go to you for comfort when we need it. *Amen*

Amanda

Amanda is a member of the Youth Group at WVUC, she will be joining the team heading to Mexico during Spring Break.

Friday, December 19th, 2014

Please read: John 9: 1-7

The first time I read this piece of scripture I was so amazed at Jesus' love and compassion for others. He not only healed a blind man but one with little money and no friends. Jesus is so beautiful to us and loves each one of us so much more than we really do believe. Jesus shows his love for the needy in this story as well as his love to create possibility within something a little tarnished. Although the man could not see Christ, Christ could see him and wanted his work to be shown and visible to all those around Him. The Jews were in such disbelief of what Jesus had done for the blind man that didn't believe that he was the same man. Some of the people thought he must have sinned to become blind and others thought that it was his parents who had sinned. Jesus told them it was neither the man nor his parents. He tells them that this was so that the work of God could be shown in the man's life.

During the Christmas holidays Jesus wants his work to be seen by us. I believe that he wants us to know how much he loves us and cares for us. At Christmas time each year my family puts aside some time to think about those who are less fortunate than us and are suffering somewhere around the world.

It reminds me of this reading now and how God wants us to think of the work to be done during the holidays. This year I challenge all of you to take a moment throughout the Christmas season and think of a time where God's work is being shown. The way Jesus came into the blind man's life took him by surprise as he thought he would be blind for the rest of his life. He encountered Jesus and his life was fully changed. He was seen as a different man after that and became fully sighted. Although some thought he had sinned, Jesus knew he hadn't. He believes in us, no matter what we have been through.

Prayer: Father, this time of year you gather us with friends and family around tables of delicious food in your presence. I ask that you show us your work this holiday as we work and show you our love and celebration to the coming of your son into the world. In your holy and beautiful name we pray. *Amen*

Alexia

Alexia is pleased to be part of our lively Youth Group.

Saturday, December 20th, 2014

Please read Ecclesiastes 12: 1-7

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth...”

“It’s okay Mum, I’m old enough now to baby sit, so why don’t you and Dad go out for a date?” asked my daughter, a little too eager to get us out of the house. It was autumn and this was a new experience for our family. The children were now at the age where they could be left on their own – at least for short periods of time. Throughout the fall season leading up to Christmas, Bill and I did take the kids up on their offer, sneaking out for dinner or a coffee and a chat from time to time. Little did we know that the kids were up to something at home. That “something” only became clear on Christmas morning. Bill and I woke up and found beautifully decorated stockings hanging from the fireplace, full of thoughtful gifts the kids picked up throughout the fall (including the Elegant Flea Market at the church!). Every time we went out on a “date night” the kids worked hard on their homemade gifts for Christmas morning. It was stunning. It was lovely. It was memorable. “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth” writes the author of Ecclesiastes before dissolving into a rather discouraging reflection on aging. I wonder, however, whether remaining open to the surprise of youthful kindness and innovation is a way to remain connected to the activity of God in the world. What surprise might God have in store for you this Christmas?

Prayer: Imaginative God, we bless you for all the ways we come to know your love. For the gift of creativity and for the capacity for kindness, we give you thanks. Help us to remain mindful of the needs of others and willing to surprise those around us with words and actions full of grace. *Amen.*

Susan

Susan is Office Manager at WVUC. Multi-talented, (sewer, swimmer, bike-rider, photographer) she takes particular pleasure in problem-solving and shows Christ’s compassion towards all those in the community.

Sunday, December 21st, 2014

Please read Isaiah 11: 1-10

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

“They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Christmas has always been one of my favorite seasons. Especially as a young child. I always got so excited about getting to eat lots of yummy food and treats, having snowball fights in my back yard with friends, going to visit family that I usually get to see just once a year and thinking about all the wonderful things that Santa was going to bring me on Christmas day. However, one Christmas was unforgettable and I would like to share it with you. As I look back on it now as an adult, I see that it was the one Christmas that really taught me about the power of God’s love through the kindness of others.

When I was little I was diagnosed with brain cancer. I was in grade 2 at the time and was very sick and had to miss lots of school because of my ongoing treatments. My friends were getting bigger, stronger and faster and I was getting weaker and couldn’t play like my other friends. Even on the days that I could make it to school, the other boys were off doing things like running on the field, playing soccer and various games. I started feeling like I was losing my connection to old friends. I felt very lonely and isolated, and at a time of year when Children are usually happy and excited about the arrival of Christmas, I felt sad and was losing hope.

In elementary school I had a learning assistant. Her name was Mrs. Scott and she was the best. On the days that I made it to school, she always made it so enjoyable and fun even though learning was a struggle for me. We often spent time on our own because the rest of the class was moving faster than I could keep up. I never felt stressed when I was with her, because she always made our time together extra special with her stories, words of wisdom, and gentle teaching style.

It was a few days before Christmas, school was out and I hadn't seen Mrs. Scott for a couple of weeks because I had been too sick to attend. I heard a knock on the door. I opened the door and to my surprise there she was standing on my doorstep with a massive Gingerbread house with bags of coloured candy and flavoured icing. She also had a bag of candy and icing for my little brother. This wasn't just a store bought gingerbread house, or a regular "house", this was a magical house on a decorated board with snowy trees and little people, gingerbread sleigh and all kinds of wonderful surprises. When I look back now and think about that Gingerbread house and the many more I have received each and every year during this busy season, I see just how selfless she was, especially since she had a family of her own to prepare Christmas for. She took that time to think about me and to make me that beautiful gingerbread house. It was such a wonderful surprise and a wonderful gift.

The next day, there was another knock at the door. A parcel! A large parcel wrapped in brown paper with my name on it. My mom looked it over and didn't know who the sender was, so she let me open it. It was a huge teddy bear from a group of strangers who had learned about my cancer story from Children's Hospital. That bear had a little tape recorder in his tummy, so that I could listen to stories or music. I would always have this big "friend" to carry around with me to talk to, or to sing with. It was the perfect gift for someone like me who needed a special friend, and it came from people that I had never met, or would ever meet. And again.....at Christmas time, this busy time of year, they were thinking of me, a total stranger.

The next day was Christmas morning. My brother and I had got up early to open our stockings. We were so excited and playing with our toys, when there was a knock on our door. My mom went to answer it. It was a school friend of mine, Christopher and his mom and dad. His parents said that Christopher had asked if he could bring his special gift over to my house so he could share it with me. He had something in his hand and as he pulled it out of the bag, he told me that Santa had got him a train set. My eyes lit up like fireworks because when I was in grade 2, trains were my favourite thing on the face of the earth. His dad had packed up the whole electric train set with tracks and had brought the set over to my house so that Christopher and I could play together.....on Christmas morning. We spent the rest of Christmas morning playing with his train set as both our parents watched us.

Seeing how another young boy my age would rather share his most prized Christmas gift with me on Christmas morning than hang out with his own family in his pajamas at home, made me realize that "What I want for Christmas" somehow became "What I want to give for Christmas". This was a wonderful memory of kindness. In today's reading from Isaiah, we are reminded of the promise of what the world will be like when Jesus returns and establishes his heavenly kingdom. There will be no harm or evil to anyone or anything. We will all get along no matter who we are or where we are from or what our position in life. There will be peace and love everywhere.

The thing I love most about Christmas time, is that the closer we get to Christmas, and thinking about the meaning of Christ's birth and remembering all the wonderful things that Jesus is about and the promises that he has made to us as Christians, the more kindness, compassion and love there is amongst people. This love that grows in everyone, as we prepare for the "coming" of Jesus, whether they are strangers, friends, or family, has the power to heal sadness, worry and loneliness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I dream of a world of peace where enemies are reconciled and children play in safety: where the poor and powerless find justice and the sick and lonely find comfort. I dream of a world full of your love. *Amen*

Wesley

Wesley helped the WVUC Youth team build a house in Mexico.

Monday, December 22nd, 2014

Please read Romans 15: 4-13

A long time ago when we were young, my husband Larry and I experienced a very traumatic time of loss with the death of our child. As we tried to deal with it we decided that we would save our money for a year and go overseas to work. We chose New Zealand and Australia because we felt it would be easier to adjust in English speaking countries.

We lived and worked in New Zealand and had many wonderful adventures and experiences meeting and becoming friends with Maori people, Pakehas (Caucasian New Zealanders), and other young people like us who were from other parts of the world and were traveling and working as we were.

After a year and a half we decided it was time to move on and we crossed the Tasman Sea on an ocean liner and arrived in Sydney. After a tour around the East coast of Australia, we boarded the train to cross the Nullarbor and arrived in Perth. We rented a house with 5 bedrooms that had been house of the year in Perth in 1937 and had suffered much in the 40 years since, but it suited us well. Several of the English friends that we had made joined us and we shared the house including the cleaning and the cooking.

As Christmas drew closer we made arrangements to exchange gifts and, one of our friends, Mick wanted to make a traditional English Christmas dinner. So we all agreed that he should do that and we provided the money for the ingredients.

The day began with breakfast and a present exchange. Chris had bought each of us a musical instrument. There was much laughter and even a bit of music. By midday it was 40 degrees Celsius and Mick decided that we would eat our English Christmas dinner at 10:00 that night.

We all sat down to eat in a very warm dining room filled with the smells of roast turkey and plum pudding with brandy sauce and the pleasure of good company. I was aware of the one whose birth we were celebrating, the Babe of Bethlehem, and for the first time in the two and a half years since the death of our child, I felt a real sense of peace and hope in the company of friends and the presence of God.

Prayer My prayer for you this Advent season is Paul's prayer for the Romans, "I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness and peace because of your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope." Romans 15:13 *Amen.*

Rev. Lynne

Lynne is acting Minister of Pastoral Care at WVUC during the time of vacancy.

Tuesday, December 23rd, 2014

Please read Matthew 1: 18-25

Christmas at our house is always special. Our two sons, one from Merritt and one from Quebec and their families are almost always with us at Whistler. Everyone can ski, toboggan, make snow houses on the cabin deck and decorate snowmen in the back yard.

Usually, the day before Christmas, our neighbour Brian who sports a very long white beard, plays Santa and knocks on our door with goodies for the children. Eyes light up! This past year we know that Brian has had cancer and lost all his hair and beard due to chemo treatments. He is now so pleased that his hair and beard is growing back again and will be ready for Christmas again this year. What courage and sharing!

Christmas Day is of course central to all activities. The Christmas tree glitters with lights and gifts wait to be opened by eager little children – moms and dads too. The rule is that only one gift can be opened before breakfast. The turkey is readied to go into the oven and we all hope it is cooked in time. The high point of the dinner is the flaming of the Christmas pudding – an ancient Ross tradition. John is in charge and we cheer when the hot rum catches fire and the blue flame is poured over the warmed pudding – to be eaten with hard sauce.

In the past, we have also celebrated Christmas dinner with dear friends. When we live a long way from our family homes in Ontario and Quebec, we are blessed with others who join us. We rotate homes. Young and old gather around the piano to sing Christmas carols.

Our family party lasts a festive five days because: - we celebrate John's birthday on December 24, special baby Jesus's birthday on the 25th, a wedding anniversary on the 27th and a granddaughter's birthday on the 28th.

In today's reading, Matthew tells about the birth of Jesus. I can't imagine how the engaged teenaged couple, Mary and Joseph, felt when Mary discovered that she was pregnant – and Joseph's incredible faith when the angel told him in a dream that he should marry Mary and that the expected baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The baby will be a son and will be called Jesus – as prophesized in the Old Testament.

Just this past summer, we were blessed with the birth of a beautiful granddaughter. Her mother had a very difficult pregnancy and birth. I think of how their family became closer as they all worked together through those months. Miracles continue to happen all the time.

Prayer: We give prayerful thanks to God for renewing in our hearts each year, the miracle birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also give deep thanks for our church and church family.

Thanks be to God. *Amen.*

Marilyn & John

When John and Marilyn moved back from Nanaimo they were pleased to attend WVUC and the ministry of Rev John Gouws.

Wednesday, December 24th, 2014

Please read: Luke 2: 8-20

I became an uncle two weeks ago... let me back up.

My older brother started seeing his best man's ex-wife a few years ago. She has three girls aged 5, 6, and 11. They've known each other for years, and my brother has watched those little girls grow up. He has always loved kids, and I knew that one day he would want one of his own to carry on the "Pearson Bloodline!" But, when he acquired three great little girls, and a wonderful partner in Kristin, he seemed pretty happy with life.

Then news came that Kristin, my brother's partner was pregnant. My mom cried, of course, and I started looking up really cool halloween costumes 'cause he was due in the middle of September. In all the excitement, my mom found out that her Landlord was selling their house to someone who was going to tear it down, and she needed to move out in September.

My Brother, Kristen, and the three girls were also looking for a house, so together with my mom, they started their journey to find a house big enough for all of them. They found a suitable place with plenty of time, but when Kristen started to go into early labour, things seemed a little dicey. Everything was alright this time, but she kept having more and more contractions.

Mid-August, my mom got more bad news; she was let go from her job of 16 years and had to go on EI. No job, a big move ahead, into a house with her son, pregnant daughter-in-law, and 3 little girls, and at the end of the

day all she could say was "At least now I have time to pack." She packed up her house, and helped my brother and Kristen pack up theirs, as Kristen was ordered to bed-rest.

Once they were moved in, my mom took Kristen to doctor's appointments so my brother could still go to work. When Kristen finally went into labour, and Tucker was born, the family pulled tighter around to help, with even Great Grandma driving out to Delta from White Rock to help garden.

I suppose the feeling someone gets when told they are pregnant a mix of excitement and fear. It helps to know that there is someone there who you can count on. As scary as times can be, the birth of a child is a time of excitement and possibility. God works in mysterious ways. and sometimes the life's scary and uncertain times, losing a job, turn out to be the big blessings in your life.

Prayer: On this Holy eve, let us remember the true meaning of Christmas, with the birth of a boy, a boy full of potential, who was born for us, so we might live. He is the King of Glory, and with the birth of every child may we celebrate His Name! *Amen.*

Tristan

Tristan keeps himself busy as a soloist, banner-creator and actor.

Thursday, December 25th, 2014

Please read Matthew 4: 14-16

I am always amazed at how soon Christmas decorations appear in the stores for purchase. Costco was selling Christmas lights way back in September, soon to be followed by Walmart, London Drugs, Home Depot and the Bay! It's as though the secular world has caught onto something that is too often missed by those of faith; "something good is about to happen and we'd better get ready for it." Of course we know that it's the crass desire to make a buck that is the driving force here. But just maybe the commercialization has something to teach us.

Prior to the passage above (Matthew 4:14-16) we are told that Jesus has just been baptized, driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and heard that his cousin John had been arrested. Matthew muses that Jesus' retreat was the start of something very big and remembers Isaiah's passage about the importance of the Galilee: *'the people who sat in darkness, have seen a great light, ... light has dawned.'*

At Christmas, I cannot help but remember the faces of my family and friends I've met along life's path. Each has endured at least a few moments of darkness, a walk through the "*region and shadow of death.*" It is so easy to get caught up in those times of sadness and depression. So a yearly reminder that God continually breaks into our world and our lives to brighten everything up is tremendous good news.

Whatever trouble we have or will face, the story of Jesus' birth shouts that we do not have to endure it alone. He is the light that changes everything. The store-bought brilliance of coloured lights shining in our face is a seasonal reminder of God's unending presence and love. Without even knowing it the commercial Christmas enterprise unwittingly shouts to the world that Jesus has come, does come and will come. Those who would never darken the places of faith expression join our happy chorus, "Christmas is a good time" and whether they know it or not, celebrate it or not, God is present in their lives. As a minister, it's just as easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life as it is for everyone else, and forget that God breaks into our lives all the time. The lights of Christmas serve to brighten the pathways of a darkened December night but more importantly they shout to the world; to me and you that God is "*the Lamp unto our feet and the Light of our path.*" And because of the lights I am going to be a little more ready for God!

Prayer: God, be the Lamp unto my feet, the Light of my path. Help me to know that You are with me, even when I forget You. Startle me, from time to time with your Presence and Your love. May the Babe of Christmas always shine through my life. *Amen*

Rev. Dal and Helen

Dal is a retired Minister. He plays the bagpipes. Helen is a needlewoman of great skill and a renowned kiltmaker.

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