

CHRISTMAS 2018

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only
begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

St. John 1:14

Dear Friends in Christ;

One of the most striking aspects of the Christmas story is the way in which it's so thoroughly physical. The Son of God is born amidst hay and dust and farm animals, in the middle of a disruptive Roman census, in the confusion of an overcrowded village with nowhere for a birth to take place. The story almost rubs our noses in its everyday quality. If it had been up to us, we might have made up a story in which the Saviour of the world would never have had to go through the dangerous process of being born into a world without modern medicine, perhaps would never have started life as a helpless infant at all, and would certainly have come to earth in a context, and a place, worthy of his great significance. We may be attracted to the imaginary power of cartoon superheroes, but cartoon superheroes will hardly offer much comfort when we have to face the very real fears of a very real life. Instead, in the very real story that St. Luke records, the One who came to save us came in the most earthly manner possible.

There's a risk, I think, in our annual re-telling of the Christmas story. The risk is that we can easily imagine that the purpose of the story is just to describe a lovely event that happened two thousand years ago. Certainly, all the wonderful carols that we love to sing focus on that part of the story, and there's lots of good reasons for doing so; but to do so exclusively is to miss the point. The disturbingly physical nature of the Christmas story challenges us to see the many different ways in which Christ lives even now in our world. We miss the whole point of the incarnation of Christ if we think that it is only about an event that happened "a long time ago and in a land far far away."

The immediacy of the animals around the newborn baby makes it clear that Christ wishes to be a central part of every aspect of our lives, physical and spiritual. The Jesus who came to us as a member of a religious group



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persecuted by the greatest world power of His day just as much wants to be present within the uncertain global politics of our own time. And He could hardly have chosen a more destitute family – an unwed mother receives the news that she is unexpectedly pregnant, a young couple is forced by politics to journey away from home, and a young family is forced by the threat of violence to be refugees in a foreign land. The timeline of the story that we hear every year on Christmas Eve may be set in Palestine 2000 years ago but it might easily be found right now at the Mexico-U.S. border, or in a refugee camp in Jordan, or in a cold, barely furnished apartment here in Fredericton. Surely the implication is that Jesus longs to be born among people in similar circumstances in our own time and place.

All of this is very Good News indeed! Christ wants more than anything else to be present in the truly difficult circumstances of our world and our lives; and hopefully that makes a huge difference for every one of us. It tells us that we are never alone, even in our darkest moments; but it also challenges us never to forget our responsibility to reach out to the marginalised and the poor, to the victimised and the helpless, in the Name of this Incarnate Lord.

After the great miracle of His birth, this is another great miracle: that Christ really does live amongst us, and that we are learning to see Him there, “full of grace and truth”. No wonder then that we gather in the dark of our early winter night to sing carols, to raise the rafters with our praise, and to give thanks to God for the gift of His presence with us in every time; to celebrate “Emmanuel” - “God with us”.

Our central calling as God’s Family here at St. Mary’s is to share the Grace of this wonderful God who dwells with us always; who offers us the healing and hope that we can find nowhere else. I hope that you and your family and friends will plan to join us as we again gather this year on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to be renewed and changed by the story of Word made Flesh: once long ago in Bethlehem and right now in us.



On behalf of both Janice and myself, I wish all of you a holy Season of Advent and a happy Christmas.

Fr. Kevin M. Stockall
Priest and Rector

The Anglican Parish of St. Mary, York
SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Christmas 2018

Monday, December 24th
CHRISTMAS EVE

6:00 p.m. – Family Eucharist for the Nativity
9:30 p.m. – Carol Sing
10:00 p.m. – Holy Eucharist for the Nativity

Tuesday, December 25th
CHRISTMAS DAY

10:00 a.m. – Holy Eucharist for the Morning of the Nativity

Wednesday, December 26: St. Stephen the Martyr

6:30 p.m. – Evening Prayer
7:00 p.m. – Holy Eucharist

Thursday, December 27: St. John the Evangelist

9:30 a.m. – Morning Prayer
10:00 a.m. – Holy Eucharist

Friday, December 28: The Holy Innocents

9:30 a.m. – Morning Prayer
10:00 a.m. – Holy Eucharist



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