

NORTHERN LIGHT

The Official Newsletter of

The Cariboo Presbyterian Church

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"I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live."

(Ecclesiastes 3:10-12, NIV)

Welcome to our stillness. May His presence and His peace fill your season.

(The view approaching the home of Sandi and Larry Evjenth, the hosts of the Baker Creek House Church.)

MESSAGES OF MISSION

Stories of Comfort in Times of Distress:

Jon Wyminga

'Tis the season! One of the signs is the growing number of Hallmark Christmas Romances mysteriously appearing on our TV receiver's

recording device. One of my two daughters loves to hate and hates to love those movies. Both of them live in Vancouver and have had the lucrative opportunity of working on some of their movie sets. (No, unfortunately they weren't on camera.)

About a year ago I heard a radio interview with a former war correspondent who had reported from several conflict zones around the world. Turns out she loves Hallmark Christmas Romances. So much so that she would binge watch them whenever she came home for vacation, even if it wasn't Christmastime. The comforting predictability of the stories provided her a therapeutic relief from the dangerous, unpredictable nature of her work. She loved those movies so much she actually started writing her own scripts. She had developed a template of how the predictable plot would unfold and then start writing from there. It ended up becoming a second career for her. Hmm. Hardened war correspondent becomes a Christmas Romance writer! There's a plot line in itself.

The year 2020 has been anything but predictable and comforting. We may not be living in a war zone but it is a dangerous and frightening zone none the less. The COVID-19 pandemic has spread all over the world. The second wave is now making the first wave look like it was a ripple in the waters. We have had to keep physical distance, avoid hugs and other signs of affection, wear masks, diminish or eliminate social gatherings and at times even discontinue in person church activities. When we have to treat everyone like they might be infected it sometimes feels to me like a sinister adult version of kid's game "You've Got the Cooties!" Some have been grieved by the loss of loved ones. Some have been devastated by the loss of work and household income. Others are so overworked that their anxiety and stress levels are through the roof. In my community of Nazko there has been a huge rise in deaths, almost none of them directly related to COVID. Yet I can't help but wonder if there is some strange, indirect connection.

In times like this it is tempting to turn to something safe and predictable. I suspect many households will be watching more than their share of Hallmark Christmas Romances this season. But there is another story that many of us turn to at this time of year; a story I believe all of us should turn to. We might see it as a safe, familiar and predictable story. That's because we come back to it every single Christmas. Many of the words are so familiar we can recite them from memory. And whenever we see children performing it in a pageant there's almost always a safe, comforting predictability about it. If there's anything unpredictable it comes from nervous children who forget lines or surprise us with the new ones they add. ("HI MOMMY!") But even that

becomes a part of the heartwarming nature of the story.



The strange thing is that this story would have been anything but comforting and predictable for Mary and Joseph and anyone else who experienced it firsthand. They may not have been in a war zone. But living in a land occupied by a menacing foreign military came pretty close. Late in her pregnancy Mary and Joseph were ordered by those occupiers to travel by foot to Bethlehem to register for a census. When they got there they were hard pressed to find a place to stay. As much as two years later some visiting wise men set off another dangerous sequence of events. I recently learned a favourite Bruce Cockburn song that describes it this way:

*[They] come to pay their respects
To the fragile little king.
Get pretty close to wrecking everything.*

Why? Because they unintentionally tipped off King Herod in the process:

*Who when he hears there's a baby born
King of the Jews,
Sends death squads to kill
All male children under two.*

Providentially Mary, Joseph and their little baby have another narrow escape.

*But the same bright angel
Warns the parents in a dream and they
Head out for the border
And get away clean.*

We may find this story comforting and predictable. At least we may re-create it so that it is. But at its root it is anything but. Still, the story of Jesus' birth brings comfort in a way we may not have expected it; in a way that speaks directly into the troubled times we are in right now. It tells us that the

Creator of all things sees us in the midst of this dangerous and unpredictable world we live in. It tells us God has chosen to join us right in the middle of it as a child in a manger. And it tells us that the Lord seeks to reclaim us . . . and will ultimately reclaim *all creation*, when it is all made new in Christ. Merry Christmas!

“For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”
(Colossians 1:19-20)

Southern House Churches Report: Mark Carter

What a year to begin pastoring! Beginning pastoral ministry is significant enough on its own, but then add the events of 2020 and it is even more “memorable.” Even so, pastoring in the Cariboo House Church Mission has been a joy. Before the latest lock down, the Sheridan Lake church had been meeting in the local community hall and we have had people stop in to join us there. One visitor contradicted something in my sermon and engaged in a lively debate on a text I was preaching from but we concluded on friendly terms, thankfully. We have had reports of how this church has been a blessing to every person there and has provided support when needs arose. The Forest Grove church continues to be a blessing in that area and new people are joining the fellowship. Lac la Hache has seen some people attend that have moved into the area as many people move away from the Vancouver area. The Williams Lake (McLeese Lake) church has been meeting in our home and we are happy to host. Even as we move into a time of more restrictions on in-person fellowship, these house churches remain a close knit family and our prayer is that this church will be a witness to the communities of God’s goodness and love.

One of the challenges of this time is to move away from the idea of gathering large groups of people together for ministry and worship and develop new ways of sharing and worshipping together. This is not only for how this church ministers to one another, but also for how we reach out to our communities. What remains constant is to preach the gospel and to serve others. I am encouraged by hearing how the members of this church are active in their communities, quietly gathering firewood for those who need it and how others are dedicated to calling people on the phone to encourage them. My biggest problem during this time is that things are changing so

fast that I cannot stay on top of it nor can I do enough to organize and equip people. Even as I feel like I am losing my grip on the church, to my amazement, the people are moving, caring, serving, and preaching the gospel, without my direction. Don’t worry, realizing I am not as important as I thought is a good thing.

Perhaps 2020 will be most memorable for me not because of what was lost, but in what God is creating out of the old.



Lac la Hache Bible Study: Always a Blessing **Don Lipsett**

Thursday evenings a number of us from the Lac la Hache congregation, and beyond, join at the church building for Bible study. We have looked into many books of both testaments, including a great study of the book of Job (might that seem like an oxymoron?), and currently a revealing dig into the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their family, in Genesis.

We like the image of mining, because we have found consistently that the deeper and more carefully we “dig” into God’s word, the more “riches” we keep finding there. It shouldn’t be a surprise, of course, but what a blessing it is, week after week, to experience the truth and the riches of God’s word to us, as the Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to His message to His church. (That’s all of us!)

We’re approaching Advent and Christmas now, and I encourage you (and me), to take a deeper look into the information God wanted us to have about the coming of His Son, Jesus. Outside our doors, and on our TV sets, computers and cell phones, is such a mass of alternative information, which the non-believing world offers us for either ignoring this coming special day, or for why *they* think we should celebrate. Let’s all “dig deeper” in the weeks ahead, to read and to listen to *God’s* explanation. It will be a blessing! *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son . . .”* (John 3:16, NIV)

Blessings, and Merry Christmas!

Ongoing Pandemic Challenges: Jon Wyminga

As we were preparing this newsletter the BC provincial government issued another set of restrictions due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases. In an effort to get things under control we have been asked to avoid all social gatherings outside of our immediate households until at least December 7. This can create some tension as we seek to discern what God is calling us to do and be. We recognize Jesus's call to "love our neighbour" may mean making some sacrifices to protect our families, our brothers and sisters in Christ and our communities. On the other hand, Hebrews 10 calls us not to neglect meeting together. Under these trying circumstances this "meeting together" may temporarily need to take on different forms. Fortunately, telephone calls, conference calls and internet video chats still involve meeting together. We would like to encourage everyone in our house churches to develop small groups of up to four people for this purpose. In the coming weeks Mark, Shannon and I plan to develop resources and share technical information so we can continue to meet together for Bible study, prayer, worship and fellowship. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

A Word from Our Administrator: Alicia Carter

Merry Christmas to all our faithful partners of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church. The year 2020 has been an interesting and difficult year for most people so we appreciate your continued support during uncertain times. God has been faithful through everything from online giving to coins in the offering plate and we are on track to meet our budget this year. The church also received a grant from the Presbytery

of Kamloops to upgrade our audio and video equipment for producing our online worship services. Hopefully this has led to an improvement in quality over the last few months! I know Mark has enjoyed the challenge of learning video production and publishing. Thank you for supporting this ministry and we pray that God will bless you this Christmas season.



Editor's Note: We have always been very grateful for the faithful and generous support we receive from within the Cariboo and across the continent. This newsletter comes with a small token of our thanks. As usual, those of you who receive it by surface mail will find a small pocket calendar as a sign of our appreciation. Each household within the ministry will also receive the same token of our thanks. Unfortunately, we are not able to send the pocket calendar to our email recipients but if you would like one please email your postal address to cariboopc@xplornet.ca and we will be happy to send you one.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Making A Christmas To Remember: Shannon Bell

Christmas is a time of traditions and memories for most of us. We get together with family, eat huge feasts, exchange gifts and celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christmas of 2020 will necessarily look very different from any other that we have marked. There will not be the large gatherings with family and friends. Shopping for those gifts will be challenging or limited. Yes, we will be feeling the losses of our normal memories and traditions. But instead of sitting in the grief of those losses, I want to challenge myself to use this Christmas to make new kinds of memories and traditions. I want Christmas 2020 to be one to

remember, not because of what we *can't* do, but because of the *new* things we *can* do! If we believe that in "*all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28) then we can be certain that God can take this season and even our Christmas celebrations and work great things in us no matter what is happening around us.

For Jon and me, it looks like we will be alone for Christmas for the first time in our lives. Our kids are ten hours away. Our friends who we usually celebrate with won't be with us. Maybe we will have a better sense of what it was like for Mary and Joseph

to be far from home, having a baby without the support of family and friends, alone in a cave that sheltered animals. How far so many of our Christmas traditions and practices have moved from that simple setting. Perhaps God is giving us the opportunity to refocus the way we remember the birth of our Lord, to reflect on what it really means that the Creator of the universe became a human being to win us into his kingdom. I'm not sure we will even put up a tree or decorations this year.

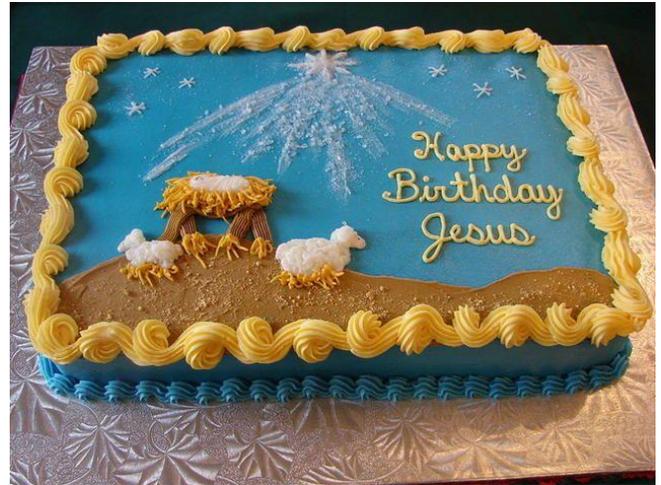


Instead, I invite you to join us in the journey to the stable and consider creating new memories and traditions. I've included a few suggestions here to jog your own creativity in thinking of things you can do this year to make Christmas 2020 one to remember, and even to repeat on some level in coming years! Who knows? Maybe you will find some of the new things you do will be even more meaningful than what you've always done!

- Begin in Advent by creating your own Advent calendar with or without chocolate! Have a Bible verse for each day, a Biblical name for Jesus each day, a challenge to give a gift to someone each day that doesn't cost money.
- On Christmas Eve, spend the evening in candlelight or with oil lamps. Reflect on the darkness. What have you experienced in your life or heart that is dark? Where do you experience darkness in the world around you? Sing songs of anticipation of the coming of Jesus. (Come Thou Long Expected Jesus; O Come, O Come Emmanuel.) Light the candles or lamp in anticipation that the darkness will be overcome with the coming of Jesus.
- On Christmas Day, rejoice in the light of the day! Sing some songs of praise for the birth of Jesus (Joy to the World; O Little Town of Bethlehem; Silent Night; Hark the Herald Angels Sing; etc.)

Take time to reflect on how the light of Christ transforms your life and the world around us. Take time to pray for God's kingdom to come in its fullness.

- Bake a cake together to have a birthday cake for Jesus. Don't forget to sing, "Happy Birthday!"



- Create a community Christmas tree. Invite members of the community to bring decorations at separate times to hang on an outdoor tree in a public place to share with the whole community.
- Make Christmas cards for people in nursing or care homes. Send baking if the home allows for it.
- Make a special Christmas ornament that reminds you of what is most important to you this year.
- Choose simple gifts or do some baking to share with others secretly. Deliver the gifts to the homes of seniors or single parents or others who might be in need by leaving it on the doorstep, ringing the doorbell and running!
- Think of someone who is more isolated through the season and write an encouraging note and drop it in the mail. If they are in need, include a gift card.
- Write letters to those you love and put them in the mail for Christmas. Try expressing things you haven't been able to say before.
- Take time to ask the Lord if there is anyone you need to forgive in this season. Use Christmas as a time to give yourself and others the gift of forgiveness.
- Play cards and board games that have been packed away in a cupboard in favour of screens.
- If you have the technology, set a time to play games with your family who are far away. *Vertellis* is a game that means 'Tell me more' in Dutch and is a set of questions to get

conversations going. Other great games to play on internet video chat are role-playing games like Battleship, Pictionary, Outburst and more.

- Read stories to one another on the phone or on video chat. Grandparents, grandkids and even the generation in between might love this.
- Listen to radio plays or take in concerts and shows on the internet. My best suggestion: Listen to the six episodes of *Little Women*, a radio play adapted by Joelle Wyminga and produced by www.farfromthetreeproductions.com. The link to various platforms is there on the website. It is a heartwarming show, and yes, this a project of both of our daughters, Joelle and Shelby!
- Set an extra place at the table for Emmanuel, God with us, to remember that while your loved ones may not be at the table, the One who loves you is!
- Enjoy a day to slow down, sit by a fire – either literally or on the TV – and listen for the voice of God’s Spirit. Listen to your breath, let your heart rate relax and enter into the peace of knowing that God has come to us.

As followers of Jesus, we are blessed to know that he is victor, even over the coronavirus. This pandemic cannot take away our peace, our salvation, or the joy of Christmas. Those come from knowing the babe in the manger. That does not change. May you be encouraged to celebrate this season with creativity, joy and the peace that passes all understanding which will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The Advent Wreath: Marlis Zabel (Forest Grove)



Such a special time of anticipation and expectation; a time to remember the profound and revolutionary event: God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Four weeks of focused attention on the real meaning of Christmas; a special time each day amidst all of the

busy-ness of the season. A time to remember the first coming of Christ and to anticipate the second coming as well.

The Advent wreath is one of the most beautiful and evocative symbols of the season. It is generally given a special and central place in the home: the living room or a dining table so it is at hand to use each day. The circular wreath symbolizes God’s never-ending love and peace. The four candles on the wreath represent hope, peace, joy and love; the centre candle signifies the birth of Christ. The evergreens are thought to symbolize eternal life. The light of the candles shining in the darkness brings to mind the Light of the World. On each Sunday an additional candle is lit until on Christmas Day the centre candle is lit as well.

Following are some Scriptures that fit with the theme of each week. You may wish to find a new verse each day to add to these verses or decide to memorize your favourite verse(s).

Week 1- Hope. **Romans 15:13**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Week 2- Peace. **John 14:27**

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Week 3- Joy. **Romans 5:2**

“Through (our Lord Jesus Christ) we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Week 4- Love. **John 3:16**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This wreath has been central to my celebration of Christmas since earliest childhood. I have used it with school children and have thrilled to their joy and anticipation as each candle was lit! I have loved their attention and concentration as a special Christmas story was read or a familiar carol sung.

My wish for you is that this custom will become a meaningful part of Christmas for you as well.

Blessing: Ginny-Lou Alexander

Jacob called his sons together in order to bless them. I have been blessed and intrigued by the blessing he spoke regarding Judah: *“Judah, your brothers will praise you; you will grasp your enemies by the neck. All your relatives will bow before you. Judah, my son, is a young lion that has finished eating its prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness – who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor.”* (Genesis 49:8-10, NLT)

Since Jacob had twelve sons, I was curious as to why he chose Judah to receive a very special prophetic blessing. I believe we find the answer by going back to the situation when Judah was born. God saw that Leah, the plain sister, was not loved by her husband, Jacob, so He opened her womb. Rachel, the raving beauty, was much loved by Jacob, but she was barren. I can just imagine the conflict in that household, with the two sisters who were so different, married to the same man! Leah became pregnant, three times, and bore Jacob three baby boys. With each new baby her hope was that now her husband would love her. Leah became pregnant, for the fourth time and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah, for she said, “Now I will praise the LORD!” When Leah's attitude changed to one of praising and thanking God for the birth of her fourth son, she inadvertently bestowed a blessing on Judah, starting the path of blessing for him. His became the tribe out of which issued the royal line of David which eventually led to Jesus.



Now if we go back to Jacob's blessing on Judah we see that he will be praised by his brothers; his brothers will bow down to him, much the same as Esau served Jacob and Joseph's brothers bowed down to Joseph. Judah is compared to a lion which was a

symbol of kingship in the near East. His greatest royal descendent, Jesus Christ, is called the “Lion of Judah.” (Rev.5:5) The tribe of Judah will be blessed as the ruling tribe until the Messiah, to whom the scepter belongs, shall come.

The thread of the blessing of the tribe of Judah can be traced throughout the Old Testament; with Caleb, one of the good spies who also was appointed to help assign the territories in the promised land; Othniel, the first of the Judges; and it continues on right up until the birth of Jesus Christ.

But, just in case we get to thinking that being blessed means that testings, trials, tribulations, and troubles don't come our way – well . . . along this same thread of the tribe of Judah there were plenty of all four of those “T” words! But God was always with His people. They strayed away, got into trouble, called out to God, and He delivered them, time and time again. And somehow God worked everything for good in those lives.

In the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16) we read the startling testimony to God's power to overcome the sin of humankind. Some of the names may surprise you: Judah visited prostitutes; Rahab was a prostitute; David committed murder and adultery; and Solomon flirted with idols. Yet through these imperfect people, God was able to preserve His promises and shape earthly events to prepare the way for the Messiah. Thank God that the thread of His salvation plan through the line of Judah did not get lost, frayed or broken! Thank God that the past of these imperfect people, didn't dictate the future! I thank God that my past does not dictate my future!!

Leah likely did not know the lasting impact on the history of God's people when she rose above her difficult circumstances and praised God for the birth of her fourth son, Judah. Jacob likely did not know the full scope of the prophetic blessing that he pronounced on his son Judah. However, they did bless God, and God blessed them.

But what is blessing? The essence of blessing is to be in relationship with Almighty God, to be dedicated to Him, to do His will, to be encouraged by Him. Apart from that relationship blessing makes no sense. Let us *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thess. 5:16-18 NKJV) and let's be finding ways to bless those around us: our families, friends, neighbours, co-workers . . . we never know what the impact will be down the road.

Some Biblical Inspiration for 2021: Mart Blazina

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10)

“Let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good

works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)

I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved; I shall not be shaken.” (Psalm 16:8)

RECIPES

Whipped Shortbread: Submitted by Sandi Evjenth
Pastor Jon's favorite Baker Creek House Church cookies are Whipped Shortbread with a Cariboo conversion :)



Ingredients: -1 cup of butter
-1 ½ cups of flour
-½ cup of icing sugar
-maraschino cherry pieces

The secret to these melt-in-the-mouth cookies is in the beating. Combine the first three ingredients and beat for ten minutes. Drop from teaspoon onto cookie sheet. Decorate each cookie with a maraschino cherry piece. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 17 minutes until bottoms are lightly browned. Makes approximately three dozen small cookies.

Cariboo Conversion . . . Gently fold ¾ cup of the small, tasty blueberries you picked this season into the batter instead of decorating with a cherry piece :)

Berry Good Oatmeal: Submitted by Shannon Bell

This is a great colourful way to spruce up your breakfast. Scottish oats are whole grain oats in small flakes that provide a different consistency than rolled or quick oats. In the grocery store they are available in the health sections under Bob’s Red Mill Scotch Oats, or they come in bulk at the Bulk Barn. Cranberries bring a tart flavour. Berries add flavour and sweetness. Zucchini adds low calorie bulk and nutrition.



Ingredients: -½ cup Scottish oats
-1 ½ cups boiling water
-1 cup cranberries (fresh or frozen)
-1 cup of mixed berries or
½ cup raspberries & ½ cup blueberries
-1 cup shredded zucchini
-2-3 T. maple syrup
or 10-15 drops of liquid Stevia

Bring water to a boil and slowly add Scottish oats while stirring with a whisk to avoid clumping. When all the oats are mixed in, add the cranberries. Cook over medium heat, stirring regularly so that they don’t stick on the bottom. When the oats look cooked (5 minutes or so) and the cranberries are cooked thoroughly, add in berries and zucchini and stir through while still on heat. Remove from heat and add in either maple syrup or Stevia. Can be served with cream or just plain.