

**GRACE ANGLICAN CHURCH**  
*Joyfully Proclaiming in Word and Action*  
*the Hope that is Within Us*

December 2020 Newsletter



*Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:15-16

I hope that this month's newsletter finds you well and that you are staying safe. As I look back over the past year, I am thankful for everyone who has reached out as we find a new way of "doing church". It is important that we find new ways to continue our outreach programs because the need for them is stronger than ever. Please continue to reach out to one another and look for new ways to serve the world.

Special thanks to Will Fletcher and Laura Roberts for setting up our website. Please visit us at [graceanglicanbrantford.ca](http://graceanglicanbrantford.ca)

I hope that you enjoy this newsletter. If you have any suggestions for the newsletter or the website, please let us know.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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## **From Father Paul**

Dear Grace Family,

Happy New Year! At least, that's what I said to people last Sunday as we celebrated the Reign of Christ, the very last Sunday of the church's liturgical year. As of November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the first Sunday of Advent, a brand new year arrives. I know that this date does not coincide with our regular calendar, but I am so looking forward to the end of 2020 and all its Covid dependency.

While cases in the second wave continue to rise, it can seem like there is no end in sight. However, Advent calls us to raise our heads, to stay awake, to take account of how we order our lives; that is, it is a time to take stock, to give thanks for Jesus's first coming into this world and into our day-to-day lives - testing, chastening, beckoning, sustaining, challenging, looking for his second coming when he promises to gather all things to himself.

I don't know about you but when I reflect on this past year, it's sometimes hard to summon the courage, fortitude and desire to look for hope in something that seems so intangible, while this other distraction continues to rear its ugly head. One of the distinctions between the way our society often suggests we orient ourselves and the way we are called to orient ourselves as Christians, has to do with where we're looking. More often than not, society asks us to 'look ahead,' to 'leave the past behind and seek our fortunes in the future.'

But the Christian life cannot simply be about looking ahead. To be sure, we do look for signs of God's coming, to what we see as the future. But in fact, to look solely at the future, to invest ourselves so heavily in it, is to fail to see God's day to day presence in our own lives and in the lives of others around us. When we miss these signs, the events of our present can often seem to take on more priority than they ought. Sometimes they serve to distract us from realizing how our present behaviour ought to shape our relationships, our thoughts, our concerns, our sense of satisfaction and our willingness to love, share and give of ourselves and of our resources.

As Christ's disciples we are to look not simply forward to Christ's second coming, but also to the past to see where he has already been. Christian tradition is filled with this sense of retrospective learning. Recalling where God has worked in our lives;

we see the shape of our lives as they so often follow the figures and characters of Scripture that we hear about throughout the year. Like these figures we are asked to place our struggles, failures, losses, hopes and joys before God so that we might have our hearts and minds reoriented to God's ways.

Our readings over this new year, our Advent, call us to self-examination. To offer our whole lives to God. It is a petition, a prayer to God to allow us to see ourselves as we really are before him and to see others as God's beloved. That is the fulfilment of the first commandment; and the second is like unto it: our petition to be shown how to live our lives in charity; that is, love of our neighbours; to take of the Bread of heaven and of the Cup of life; that we might be made partakers in God's own life poured out for this world in which we live. For on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

This season let us take stock. COVID has exposed our true frailty as human beings. It has pressed us to ask questions about what really matters, why we're here, where we are going as individuals and as a society. COVID has served as a true wake up call for us as Christians too often asleep; drifting along, uncritically, living in accordance with the behavioural, social and economic norms of our culture.

This new year we begin having to live through a trial much like the Israelites endured. God called them to look up, to seek him, to really see him and to repent and open up to his transformation of their lives. So let us examine our lives and where we have encountered God in them. I would encourage you to take the time this Advent season for intentional prayer. Ask God to show you where he is at work, where you need to grow, where you need support, where you can offer support to others and what God is calling you to for this next year. For we have been equipped and made capable of sharing his love with others.

What we celebrate in Advent and most particularly at Christmas, is the sure hope, the peace, the joy and the love of life with God, founded in his sending his only Son into the world that we might be forgiven and capable of receiving the love of God that reconciles us to him and that makes all things new.

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May God be with you this Advent and always  
Blessings,  
The Reverend Paul Silcox

## **MY CHRISTMAS HELLO - REMEMBER ME**

Greetings from June Spence and for those recognizing my name. I am glad of that for those who do, not there is still a greeting enclosed from me to you. There have been many weeks without our lively Grace Café gatherings that we have so enjoyed. And our togetherness at Service. Yet I still feel very connected with you all.

The beautiful and meaningful Christmas Season is fast approaching, even living in our present strange world. No winter wonderland for me in Calgary this year.

Thank your Chris for producing newsletters. Thanks also to the many others, who for months, have risen to every need that keeps our parish alive and well by coming into our homes and lives. I can but hope these lines have brought some smiles and thoughts not expected when you opened page one. It has been a pleasure putting these words together seeing you all in mind's eye while doing so. Let every one of us be able to find joy in the coming days as we know our saviour is fast approaching this meaningful Christmas season.

So, from me to each of you, may I use the forever greeting of old -----

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!  
June Spence

From the Desk of the Grace's Archivist

2020 is going to be a year most of us will never forget. With 2020 marking Grace's 190th year, I am working on a new guided tour booklet that explores the interior and exterior history of the church. This new tour booklet will talk in more detail about items that I have uncovered which has not been included in with any other tour.

Here are some things that I am current researching to put into the new tour booklet: (1) the dedication history of Grace's High Altar Covers (I know the Blue Set was Given in Memory of Bill Fletcher); (2) where was Grace's original sacristy; (3) the location of a time capsule, buried in the 1980's, that is located on the grounds; and, (4) the location of Grace's cornerstone.

I am also looking for any historical photos of Grace and old bulletins containing information on baptisms, confirmations and first communions, etc. If anyone has anything please email me at [kalvinclark8@gmail.com](mailto:kalvinclark8@gmail.com) or see me after church. If you want to keep the photos etc. I can take them and Scan them and give them back to you.

Kalvin Clark

**A [Prayer](#) to Put Jesus First This [Christmas](#) Season By Debbie McDaniel  
(internet)**

*“And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” [Luke 2:7](#)*

No room for them. No vacancy. No place. Words that still seem to hang close, even today.

In a world that seeks to crowd Jesus out, where busyness abounds, and hearts are stirred to focus on other things, it can be hard sometimes to choose to keep Him first. It's all too easy to get caught up in the whole hurried dash of the holidays, and to give our attention to what seems more urgent. Our focus gets blurred; and the most important gets pushed aside.

It takes an active and daily choice to put Christ first, especially in a culture that says you're too busy to focus there. Or that life is too full. And there's no more room.

May God help us to choose wisely, what voices we listen to, and where we give our attention today.

He is the One who brings true meaning to Christmas.

He is the One who brings real peace in this all-too-often hectic season.

He is the only One worthy of our time and attention as we slow down the maddening rush around our lives.

We can know all of this in our heads, but may He help us to really believe it in our hearts...and choose to live it out this season.

Renewed.

Refreshed.

Making room for Him, first.

**Dear God,**

**Help us to keep our focus first on Christ this season. Please forgive us for giving too much time and attention on other things. Help us to reflect again, on what Christmas is really all about. Thank you that you came to give new life, peace, hope, and joy. Thank you that your power is made perfect in our weakness. Help us to remember that the gift of Christ, Immanuel, is our greatest treasure, not just at Christmas, but for the whole year through. Fill us with your joy and the peace of your Spirit. Direct our hearts and minds towards you. Thank you for your reminder that both in seasons of celebration and in seasons of brokenness, you're still with us. For you never leave us. Thank you for your daily powerful Presence in our lives, that we can be assured your heart is towards us, your eyes are over us, and your ears are open to our prayers. Thank you that you surround us with favor as with a shield, and we are safe in your care. We choose to press in close to you today...and keep you first in our hearts and lives.**



## A Reflection

*By Renée Anderson*

Cookies, decorating, shopping, gift giving and receiving, and singing praises and lullabies of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ through carols and hymns. These are some of the things that should not change.

I decided I would do my best to keep the tradition of putting up the tree and turning on those glorious lights and admire all the ornaments that have been accumulating over the years, and the addition of the new ones to fill in my imperfect tree. While decorating, I was going to play my Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers CD I received as a gift last year, but enjoyed the silence instead, and in the silence, there was time to reflect. When the tree was decorated, I then played the CD. At this time, I could focus on the words to the songs, touching my heart, giving me hope. Yes, even with Kenny and Dolly!

As the days passed and my daily Bible readings took on a life of their own, I felt compelled to read the Mary Story, often called the Magnificat. I knew I wanted to write this article, but didn't know what direction it would take. I gave it time to nurture, although I don't know if I have given it enough time! Magnificat. Magnificat. What glorious words the Magnificat holds which make my heart flutter. I love the story of Jesus in those early days. A true testament that miracles can happen at most any age. Just think, this girl of sixteen years gets a visit from an angel that tells her she will be the mother of a saviour. Wow. And to think she just didn't hesitate--maybe thinking "Ok... you've picked me...so I'll do it!"

*"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,"*

Spiritual words for us all. What meaning does it have for you?

God is with us all. He says so over and over in the Bible. He will never leave us.

During this Christmas season, we may do things differently, as they say, but our faith can help us to hold on to the hope, peace, joy, and love...in God and each other.

*"...for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."*

How excellent are these words! We should always give thanks to God, for he has given us all things. He created us and we should feel blessed and thankful for who we are. Each one of us is a gift from God and we can offer the gifts He gave us, to others.

So maybe I will continue to reflect on the Magnificat (Luke 1:47-55) and write to you next week. If my heart continues to flutter, maybe the magic of the words will give me something more to write about.

Have a lovely week.

### **Advent 3 Message From Father Paul**

The days and hours of Advent continue to invite us to the work of waiting and watching: by lamplight, by starlight, and in the darkness before dawn. God often keeps us in the dark. We are not ready for the exposure light would bring. Jesus said: "I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now."

And so we are called to practice patience. Patience is one's ability to wait something out or endure something tedious, without getting riled up. Having patience means you can remain calm, even when you've been waiting forever or dealing with something painstakingly slow or trying to teach someone how to do something and they just don't get it. It's a reminder that we are not in control, that our lives do not always happen according to our schedule. The experiences of the prophets, Mary, Joseph, shepherds and Magi remind us that we exist in God's time. Living in our current situation requires our prayer, our attention and most certainly our patience as we recognize God's presence, as we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our lives.

Much like John the Baptist, it seems as if we are currently living in a pandemic wilderness waiting and preparing ourselves to be faithfully transformed by Jesus. And although this transformation may be filled with uncertainty, anxiety and fear, John is calling us to trust, to turn back to the source of life and forgiveness, to renew our commitment to strive for justice and peace.

As we journey into this new season out of the wilderness, let us receive Christ's love and grace in our hearts and strengthen the bonds we share with each other through our baptism.

When we say yes to God, our yes echoes that of Mary, and like her, we become God-bearers.

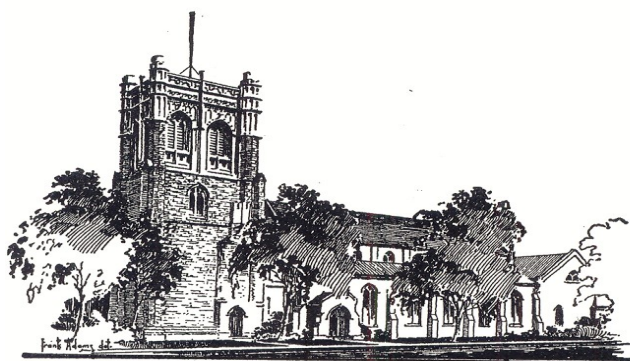
Presume the reason you are alive, for as much as one more day, is to participate in the life, light, and love of God.

Receive the light, then look upon others and be radiant, bearing God's light, life, and love for them. They may otherwise never know in their lifetime how much God loves them. Let each of us look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Blessings,  
The Reverend Paul Silcox

*Welcome to historic Grace Church. Greetings in the name of Christ!  
We are a fully accessible, child friendly community.*

**GRACE CHURCH ENDEAVOURS TO BE A  
SCENT FREE ENVIRONMENT.**



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