

Rector's Christmas Letter 2025

Dear friends:

Everyone celebrates Christmas differently. You may well have customs and traditions that are important to you. Many of these are based on your childhood experiences, perhaps even some highlights of Christmases gone by while raising a family. Or perhaps you are just getting started and have a lifetime of Christmases to make new memories.

I believe that we make a series of choices during this season and it is in these choices that we make Christmas all that it can be in our lives for this year. Sometimes we choose to visit family and friends. Indeed, we choose to surround ourselves with people who bless our lives and reflect the love of Christ during our time together. We may even choose to attend worship during Advent and on Christmas eve or Christmas day. Worship offers the music, scripture and prayers that refocus us on what matters in our lives especially the faith that strengthens us to say or do those things that bless those around us.

Family traditions are important and we tend to repeat those experiences that left us with the best memories. You may find this season to be joyful and fulfilling but I am aware and sympathize with those who find the season difficult and even challenging. If you have lost someone that was important to you during the last year, an empty chair at the Christmas table can be difficult. Some memories will bring us joy and others will bring us tears. I think it is important to set time aside to prayerfully reflect on those experiences as you prepare your heart and mind for this year's celebrations. At the heart of our Christmas experience is the Christmas story.

As an Anglican I often wonder if Mary does not deserve more attention in our liturgy and prayer life at Christmas time...the bible helps us to be curious about Mary. One might presume that the teenage virgin was deeply in love with her fiancé and was excited about her future marriage when one night she had an encounter with an angel. During this conversation she accepted the holy request to become the mother of the Christ child. Mary's devotion to God and Christ has long been admired and respected. The Christmas scriptures are only the introduction to a reflection of her lifelong love, compassion, and dedication to Christ. Today, many women and men alike think that Mary was truly blessed and favoured. She is an example of faithfulness, hope, and divinely inspired loyalty to her faith and to Christ.

When I contemplate the life and witness of Joseph, I think of all the young men in our society who are considering their potential meaning and purpose in life.

Meanwhile they may feel as if there will be unpredictable challenges that make them re-evaluate everything they thought was true. Joseph had a plan. He was going to marry a beautiful, smart, and faithful woman and then suddenly everything changed. She told him she was pregnant and his head began to spin for this was a total surprise. Despite his confusion, anger, and frustration, an encounter with an angel changed his mind and he chose to remain with Mary and follow God's plan. He would become Jesus' earthly father.

When I think of the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth, I am reminded of all the men and women who worked shift work or those who labour long hours in physically challenging jobs. These are the shepherds of our time. Let us remember that Christ's birth was revealed to these people. God sent his angels to them to announce the birth of Christ, and although they were frightened at first, they became curious. They had questions. They wanted to learn more so they went to where they knew they could experience Christ. It was more than a visit...it was an encounter.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the angels. Did you know that over 67% of Canadians believe in angels? Perhaps you are one of those who do. Our tradition is that angels are often messengers as they were that first Christmas eve. Some people believe that angels are also guardians along the journey of life. Clearly there is a strong presence of angels in the Christmas story.

This Christmas, I encourage you to get curious. Perhaps to be more intentional about learning more about the Christmas story and its relevance to our lives. Sometimes God speaks into our lives and gives us our divine commission. The question is, will we hear it and will we respond by faith?

May God bless you this Christmas. It is my hope and prayer that you will experience the joy in the Christmas message and that the music, liturgy, and fellowship with your church family will be a source of hope as you celebrate the birth of Christ.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Hendry

Christmas Eve 7 pm and Christmas Day 10:30 am