

'The Ambassador'

st. paul's
anglican
church

As Ambassadors
for Christ, we are
called to bring
our Lord's grace, love,
and peace to everyone.

~ Thursday January 11, 2024 ~



Happy New Year, Baby!

Congratulations to Kalias John Masakeyash, who was baptized on the first day of the new year by Archdeacon Deborah Kraft of our TBay – North Shore Deanery,

assisted by St. Paul's Lay Reader Sandra Fox. Here he is good as gold at the font [right], and fascinated by his big brother while Dad Geddy Lee, Mom Larissa, and Sandra are all smiles.

"Ambassadors for Christ" ~ 2 Corinthians 5: 20 ~

A "GRACE NOTE" from thunderbay-northshore.anglicans.com

"How will you shine Jesus' light today?"

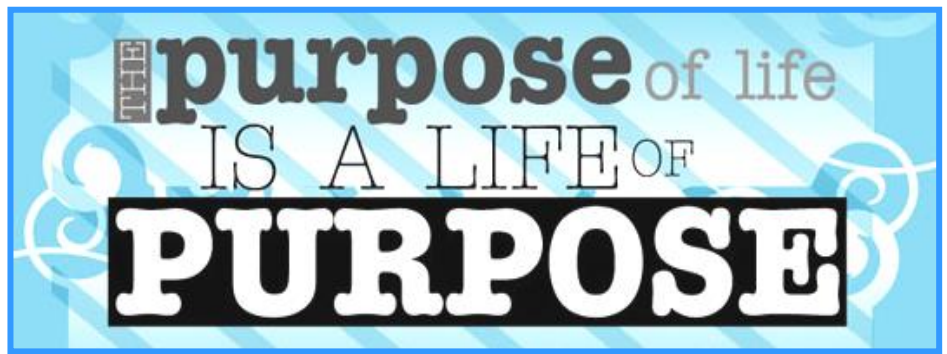
visit our website @ stpaulsanglicanchurch.ca for more great photos of parish life



Happy New Year! Happy Epiphany!

We are in the Christian season of **Epiphany** until **Lent** begins in mid-February. This is the season when we focus intentionally on **being open to the light and the wisdom of God**. May God bless your journey of spiritual enlightenment throughout 2024!

Christine ☺ "Ambassador" Editor



1. Welcome Reverend Nancy ~

Click on our website stpaulsanglicanchurch.ca to watch a special Video Message to St. Paul's from our new Priest Associate, The Reverend Nancy Ringham. [It's on the home page, right under our service times.]

We're excited to have Rev. Nancy here with us in her new role, joining Visiting Priest Rev. Rob Smith, Honorary Assistant Fr. Gordon Holroyd, and Deacon Associate Rev. Anne Carr as part of our Ministry Team. Welcome, Rev. Nancy, and God's blessings on your time at St. Paul's!

Here's a greeting Rev. Nancy posted in our Bulletin last Sunday, Jan 7 ~



Greetings And Peace To Each Of You!

It's a new year and you know of a few changes at St. Paul's already as we head into 2024.

My name is Reverend Nancy Ringham and as of January 1, I've been appointed by Archbishop Anne Germond to be the Associate Priest at St. Paul's for the next six months. I am taking two Sunday 10:00 am services each month and Reverend Rob Smith is covering two 10:00 am services. In the event there are five services in a month or special seasonal celebrations, Rev. Rob and I are collaborating on planning and coverage.

I will also provide pastoral care, including emergencies and visits to hospitals and long-term care homes. If you have a need, please contact me on my cell at 807-627-5667 or email ringhams@tbaytel.net. I plan to be in the Office on Thursdays and welcome your drop-ins or calls to make an appointment.

As "Ambassadors for Christ," you know God continues to be present in the midst of change. We pray that God's will be done through our words and actions in our shared ministry!

With my prayers, Rev Nancy +

2. Parish Passages ~ **The Reverend Elsie Fox**

The Family of The Reverend Elsie Fox invites parishioners to **Jenkins Funeral Home** on Brodie Street, Friday January 12 for Visitation [10:00 am] followed at 11:00 am by a short "Celebration of Life" Service conducted by Elsie's daughter Sandra Fox, assisted by Archdeacon Deborah Kraft.

Afterward, Elsie's body will be flown to her home community of **Big Trout** for burial. Bishop Lydia Mamakwa of **Mishamikoweesh** will preside.

"Rest eternal grant unto Elsie, O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon her."

"Passing The Torch" ~ Brand new Lay Reader Sandra Fox receives her Lay Reader's Cross from her mother Deacon Elsie Fox, at her Lay Reader Covenanting March 1, 2020.



3. Vestry Reports Due SUNDAY JANUARY 21! ~

Reminder to our Wardens, Ministry/Group/Team Leaders, and Synod Delegates:

Time to write your Annual Report for Vestry! Here's your opportunity to sum up your 2023's activities and look ahead to your vision for 2024. **Your ministry is an important part of the life and vitality of St. Paul's** and each group's Report is an important part of our historical record. We all look forward to reading these 'good news' stories! You may include a photo if you wish.

Please submit your Reports ASAP. Our Jan 22 deadline allows just 2 weeks to prepare, digitize, and print the Vestry Book for distribution Sunday February 4. **Reports can't be included after Tuesday January 23.**

You'll receive an email with **NEW GUIDELINES from the Wardens** and a sample Report outlining the simplified format we've adopted for this 'liminal' year.

Email your Reports to the Church Office at stpauls.secretary@shaw.ca. **If you have any questions, let me know; I'm happy to help in any way!** I am in the office weekday afternoons [622-4045] or you may leave a message or email me any time. Thank you for your commitment to St. Paul's, and for helping us complete our 2023 Yearbook.

Thnx! ~ *Christine* 😊

4. Rev. Nancy's Sermon from Sunday December 31, 2023 ~ 'Epiphany Sunday'

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you O Lord, Our Saviour and our Redeemer. Amen

The first reading from the Old Testament contains poetic words. The prophet Isaiah has declared to the community of the day, ***"Let your light shine for all to see. For the glory of the Lord rises to shine on you."*** This is a community that is in exile, listening to the promise of God through one chosen to be God's messenger. An Epiphany text is used in all three years for this **"Feast of Showing Forth."** This is a text that has meaning for us today, not only as God's people but as ones who inhabit this earth. It has meaning that is rooted in mystery until the full disclosure takes place. How will we know the exact moment, and in truth, is the exact moment what we need to know?



Through Paul's words in the letter to the Ephesians, we hear 'mystery' spoken three times. Our world today seems to need to unpack mystery and solve and blame and make judgement on so many situations where mystery is real and the truth is unknown.

Today's readings are so much about seeking and following and believing in the promises of God, without knowing every step of the journey beforehand. They are about revelation that comes, in new ways and in fulfillment of the time that has been spoken of but not laid out precisely. If these words make you crazy, and I know many of you may truly want to have the answers and the end result of what you ask for . . . but Epiphany is not like that, cut and dried. "Epiphany" means an appearance or manifestation; in plain English "a showing forth." For Christians, Epiphany is a festival that commemorates the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, who were the three Magi. The date is January 6 officially, a season of twelve days according to our annual calendar, and this Sunday, December 31, is the closest Sunday before that date.



It seems very appropriate this year that we who are here, the community of St. Paul's in Thunder Bay, and me as one called to ministry with you, consider Epiphany today. There are words that have come to mind for me ~ following, seeking, discovering, growing ~ when I have pondered the particular place we are in. There are many more words if we consider all of our thoughts collectively.

The way the story is told through scripture grounds our thoughts as a community of Christ as we continue to figure out what God is up to going forward. And even while grounded, we have thoughts and experiences that reveal to us new ways of seeing, looking at what God is up to.

I want to share an experience I had earlier this week that did get my attention as I was preparing to preach on this Sunday. I invite you to listen to what I am saying with an open mind, listening for something new . . .

I had a phone call from a friend who lives in Kenora. She has been a Marriage Commissioner for many years and holds her license to perform marriages through *Humanist Canada*. She is one of the 'Waterloo Chicks,' and some of you will remember my first sermon here in October when I was fresh from a few days away at a 'Chicks Reunion.' That is kind of beside the point, but it might enlighten the story because you know these are friends with whom I share nearly fifty years of relationship.

Jane had a call from a person in another city she did not know, but who had gotten her number off the *Humanist Canada* website. She did not feel she could help this woman who was seeking a community where she would be welcome, and hold many common values and beliefs with. She was seeking a community where she belonged, as her loneliness affected everything about her. Jane had a sense she had faith in God and could benefit from a conversation with one of a like mind. After determining that this person was not desperate and at risk of harming herself, Jane said she wanted to refer her to another person to have a conversation that Jane did not have time to offer in that moment, nor did she feel she could be more helpful. Are you with me so far? And so, she called me . . .

A short while after Jane texted me her first name and phone number, I called this woman. We talked; I mostly listened and I made some suggestions for further exploration opportunities for her, without knowing very much at all about the city she lived in. After I sensed we had made a connection, I took the risk of sharing with her the season we Christians are coming into: Epiphany. I told the story of the three Magi and how they followed the star that led them to the Christ Child, the story we have just heard. I clarified that these Magi were Gentiles and outside of the Jewish tradition of God's "chosen people." This resonated with her, even as one who had faith but for whom Christianity did not resonate. It was such an Epiphany moment! And God's perfect timing makes me very grateful.

You see, I am a believer. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour. Of this there is no doubt in my whole being. That does not mean I have everything figured out. I am on a spiritual journey trying to be a disciple of Jesus. Just like many of you, if not all, profess to be.

And yet, I hear from the scriptures proclaimed today, that God loves all of Creation, and even those who have differing beliefs and experiences, and wisdom!

Paul's letter reveals to us the truth about Paul's conversion to become the Apostle to the Gentiles. From the text of Ephesians ***"for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation."*** In the book of Acts that full story of Paul's conversion is available for us to ponder at greater length. God's intention to include all of Creation and make all things new, is spoken of in many passages. In the fullness of time God will reveal to us the entire big picture. In the meantime, we continue to journey in faith striving to follow Jesus, the Light of the world. We strive to reach out to those who hunger and thirst and for whom loneliness is ever present, bringing the message of the Love of God to them in all circumstances.

This is a story that came to me through a daily devotion site, *Our Daily Bread Ministry*, that illustrates God's big picture.

'On New Year's Eve 2000, officials in Detroit carefully opened a hundred-year-old time capsule. Nestled inside the copper box were hopeful predictions from some city leaders who expressed visions of prosperity. The mayor's message, however, offered a different approach. He wrote, "May we be permitted to express one hope superior to all others . . .

[that] you may realize as a nation, people, and city, you have grown in righteousness, for it is this that exalts a nation."

More than success, happiness, or peace, the mayor wished that future citizens would grow in what it means to be truly just and upright. Perhaps he took his cue from Jesus, who blessed those who long for His righteousness (Matthew 5:6). But it's easy to get discouraged when we consider God's perfect standard.

Praise God that we don't have to rely on our own effort to grow. The author of Hebrews said it this way: "May the God of peace ... equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 13:20–21). We who are in Christ are made holy by His blood the moment we believe in Him (v. 12), but He actively grows the fruit of righteousness in our hearts throughout a lifetime. We'll often stumble on the journey, yet still we look forward to "the city that is to come" where God's righteousness will reign (v. 14).'

We are all on a journey and I have a gift to offer to each one of you today, as you feel called to participate.

"Star Words" is a prayer practice that is connected to Epiphany and the New Year. It has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. This is not my brainchild . . .

During Epiphany worship, people are invited to randomly choose a star without knowing the word printed on the reverse side. The star word selection is a metaphor to the Magi's journey of discovery. Just as the Magi followed a star long ago, we too can be guided by our star word for the coming year. The word printed on the reverse side of the star can guide people throughout the coming year, inspiring them and challenging them. For some, the word's meaning pops up right away. For others, the meaning may evolve throughout the year. For still others, there may be no immediate significance, but over the months, meaning emerges.



Instruction: Please randomly take a Star Word as you leave this place after worship. The bag containing the star words is found on the table at the back of the pews. May the word you choose be a blessing to you for 2024.

Please pray with me: *Revealing God, as we say farewell to this year 2023, we give thanks for all we have encountered, believing you have been with us. We live in the hope that 2024 leads us to more abundance, more hope, more joy, more peace, more love— and a closer relationship to you Lord, to others, and even within ourselves. May your revelation to the magi who faithfully followed a star, continue to work in us as we encounter Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.*

Reverend Nancy +

**Stay tuned for "PART 2"
of this week's edition,
published tomorrow! 😊**