

'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.



~ Friday December 17, 2021 ~

**Signed with the
Cross and Marked
as "Christ's own
forever."**

8 children were
baptized on
Sunday afternoon
at St. Paul's on
November 28th.

Thank you to
Bishop Victoria
Matthews for
helping at the
baptisms and for
baptizing 4 of the
children.

Thank you to
Christine French
for the baptismal
certificates and to
Sandra Fox for
co-ordinating all
the baptisms.

Here are the
children with their families and Bishop Matthews [top centre], Lay Reader-In -Training Sandra Fox
[bottom left] and Diocesan Lay Reader Jessie McKay [bottom right].



"GRACE NOTES" from thunderbay-northshoreanglicans.com

"Jesus is coming to make all things new!"

visit our website @ stpaulsanglicanchurch.ca and find us on facebook

1. Rector's Grace Notes ~

Please Join Me For ZOOM Advent EVENING PRAYER

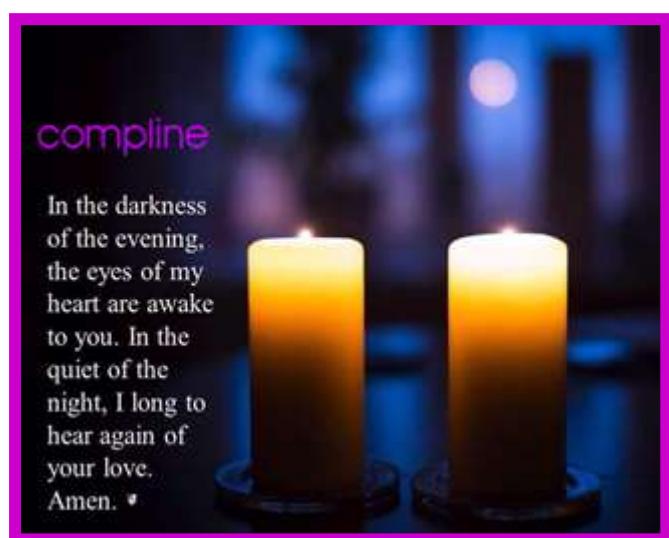
***NEW TIME* 5:00 pm THIS MONDAY December 20th**

A short service ending in peace and stillness . . .

I will be using the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP). The service takes 15 - 20 minutes and we end in the peace and stillness of the Lord and quietly depart. You do not need a BCP; I will 'screen share' the book.

Deborah Kraft is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting. **You may use your tablet/laptop/smart phone.** The ZOOM link is the same for all 4 weeks.

- ✚ Topic: Compline/Evening Prayer BCP
- ✚ Time: 8:00 pm Monday Nov 29, Dec 6, 13 / **5:00 pm Dec 20** (4 occurrences)
- ✚ Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81873186658>
- ✚ Meeting ID: 818 7318 6658



Called Home . . .

Our beloved friend and parishioner Bill Lambert passed away on Thursday, December 16 in the Hospice at St. Joe's. Bill was a kind and gracious man who sang in the Choir for many years. His beloved wife of 70 years, Alma, and his daughter Barbara and son-in-law Douglas will hold this good man forever in their hearts.

I will always miss Bill's big smile, contagious warmth, and distinctive speaking voice.

"Rest eternal grant unto Bill, O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon him."

Rest in peace dear Bill.



Let There Be Light!

Jouni did a comparison with our monthly electrical bill compared with before we installed our new LED lighting system throughout the church. On average, we are saving 25% per month on our electrical costs.

Editor's Note: LED's use less energy than fluorescents so they cost less to run. They give more light, too. More light, costs savings, and a smaller carbon footprint . . . good news indeed!

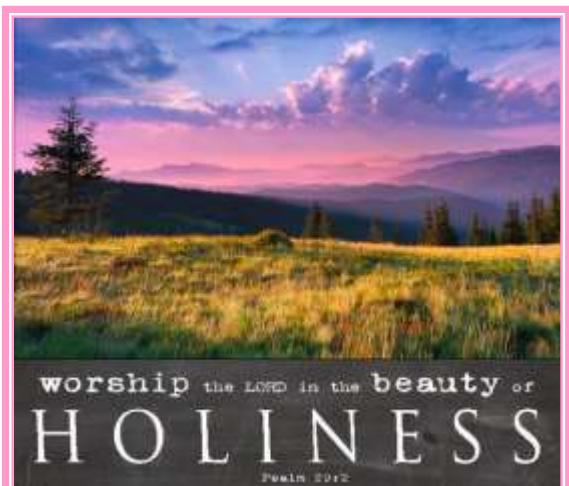
9:00 am Friday ZOOM Worship Every Week

Here is your ZOOM invitation for worshipping with me Friday mornings 9 – 9:30 am. Then you may leave or stay for a check-in 'til 10 am. No supplies needed, same link always ~

Deborah Kraft is inviting you to a scheduled ZOOM meeting: ↓ SAME LINK EVERY WEEK ↓

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82208698866>

- ▣ Topic: Morning Prayer with the Parish
- ▣ Time: Every Friday Morning at 9 am
- ▣ Meeting ID: 822 0869 8866



OR PHONE IN: Call 1 of these 3 numbers ~ ☎ 1-[204]-272-7920 OR ☎ 1-[438]-809-7799 OR
☎ 1-[587]-328-1099



Meeting ID: 822 0869 8866

We Offer 3 IN-PERSON SERVICES Each Week ~

- † Saturday at 5:00 pm
- † Sunday morning at 8:30 am & at 10:00 am

The 10:00 am service continues to be live-streamed (*YouTube/St. Paul's Media*).

Healing Prayer AVAILABLE VIA OUR 'PARISH PRAYER CHAIN'

The power of prayer to heal and to comfort is truly a blessing! We encourage you to request a Healing Prayer through our **CONFIDENTIAL Prayer Chain ministry**. The dedicated parishioners who undertake this special ministry offer up the names they receive in prayer continually throughout the day. Call/Text **Sandra Rejall at 629-3431** to leave a name; give as little or as much info as you wish.



"Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them." (James 5: 14)



Good News! We're On TV!

Watch our weekly Sunday 10:00 am service on local TV, Tuesdays at 7:00 pm on **Channel 10, "Shaw Spotlight."** This Sunday's Service will be broadcast **7 pm Tuesday December 21**. This free service from Shaw Spotlight is a blessing!

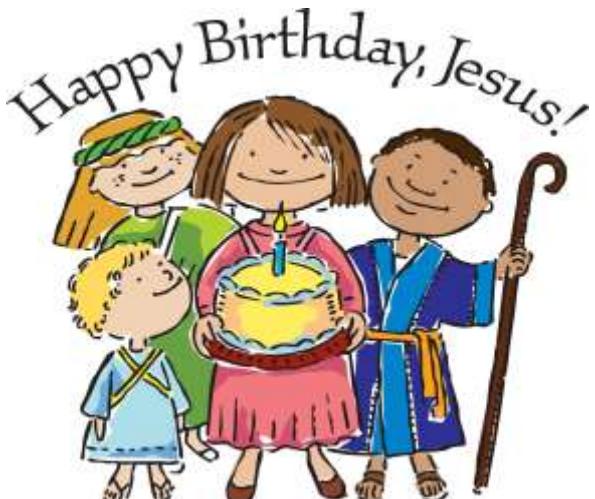
Our Sunday Service LIVESTREAMS Are Here For You, Too!

We live-stream our **Sunday 10 am Eucharist Services**. If you can't get to one of our **3 in-person Services**, you can still worship with us on **YouTube / St. Paul's Media**. Praise God for technology, and for our Live Stream Team!



watch live or ANYTIME
YouTube
St. Paul's Media

Archdeacon Deborah+



2. THIS SUNDAY December 19, at our 10:00am Service ~

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Our Sunday School and Children's Bible Study families have been working hard to bring us a special 'virtual' pageant again this year and we're so excited to see what they've done . . .

Attend in person or watch our 10:00 am livestream or catch on Shaw TV #10 this Tuesday at 7 pm!

Thanks to all the children who sent in videos of their part, and to our Children's Ministry leaders and Livestream team for putting them all together. Well done, everyone!

3. THIS SUNDAY December 19, 7:00 pm ~ Dicken's '*A Christmas Carol*' Returns to St. Paul's!

St. Paul's Anglican Church [808 Ridgeway St. across from **McKellar**] presents a **Dramatic Reading** of **Charles Dickens'** **"A Christmas Carol"**

SUNDAY DECEMBER 19
7:00 pm



Featuring
'DULCISONO'
conducted by **WOMEN'S CHOIR**
Theresa Thibert

"God Bless us every one" said Tiny Tim

Please Bring FOOD DONATIONS for **TBAY CHRISTMAS CHEER FUND!**

Special Appearance by **Mr. Charles Dickens**

Freewill Offering for **'CHRISTMAS CHEER' & DULCISONO**

  Wear Your Mask!

Festive music featuring the talents of the **Dulcisono Women's Choir** combine with 'spirited' readings from the beloved classic and a "special Guest Appearance" by the author himself to make this a night to remember. Don't miss this Christmas favourite! Please wear your mask and bring a donation of food and funds for our local '*Christmas Cheer*' campaign.

God bless us, every one! ☺

4. "Commemorative 1921 Poppies" Still Available

It's not too late to order these special 100th Anniversary 1921 "Replica Poppies"



Parishioner Marion Leat has a supply of these special fabric poppies available for sale to the public. The cost is just \$10 per poppy, with all monies going to support veterans through the work of the Legion. Please contact Marion at 473-4748 to order.

5. St. Paul's Shaped Cookie Cutters

If you've ever wanted to express your connection to our church family through baking, now you can . . . St. Paul's now has its own cookie cutter, in the shape of our lovely church logo!

You can have one of your very own for \$10 each, with all proceeds given to our 'Blessing Box' ministry.

If you've already ordered please pick up your order on the piano! If not, please contact Daniel Klein **ASAP** at **623-7075** or dklein@lakeheadu.ca. [Cutter may not be same colour as shown.]



6. Reverse 'Advent' Calendar

You can also support our 'Blessing Box' by making us your family's '**Reverse Advent Calendar**' ~ **donate 1 item per day to our Blessing Box pantry!** Bring your items in each week or at the end of December. And you are most welcome to extend your 'Advent' givings to include the '**12 Days of Christmas**' and bring your food donation in after Epiphany!

A sincere 'Thank You' and 'Bless You' for helping to keep our pantry stocked. The long cold winter months are when want of good food is most keenly felt by those whose needs are greatest. We appreciate all your support for our BB ministry.



7. Christmas Music & Flower Memorials ~ DUE THIS SUNDAY! ☺

Sponsor our Christmas Music or Flowers in memory of a loved one or in celebration or thanksgiving for a special occasion or friend or blessing. **IN PERSON:** Fill out one of the Memorial Envelopes at the back of the church and place in Offering Bowl with your donation. **PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY** so we can get your dedication right! ☺ **VIA E-TRANSFER:** Donate to stpausthunderbay@outlook.com, note whether it is a Music or Flower Memorial, and then email your dedication to Christine at stpauls.secretary@shaw.ca (ie: "In Memory of [name] from [name]" or, "In thanksgiving for [who/what] from [name].")

Here's an example: "In loving memory of our dear friend and colleague, Pritchard Sandison Brown, with love from Bronwyn, Gig & Family."

"In thanksgiving for friends far and near, from Constance."

Dedications are due **THIS SUNDAY DECEMBER 19th**. We will publish all memorials we receive by Sunday in all of our Christmas Service Bulletins.

8. Anglican Church Of Canada's National Service of 'Lessons & Carols'



WATCH LIVESTREAM ANYTIME

<https://vimeo.com/654916501/1b6ba0f7ce>

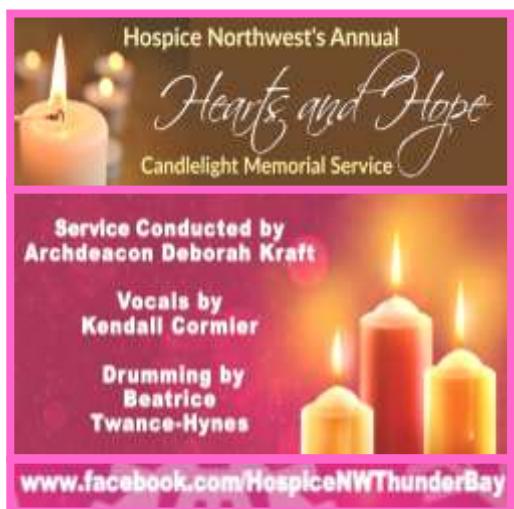
This special **virtual** service from the *Anglican Church of Canada* is powerful, illuminating, and moving . . . and you'll recognize 8 people from St. Paul's! Thank you to Daniel Klein for recording two beautiful videos for our submission. Enjoy!

9. Hospice Northwest's "Hearts & Hope" Candlelight Memorial

WATCH LIVESTREAM ANYTIME on Hospice Northwest's facebook pg: [facebook.com/HospiceNWThunderBay](https://www.facebook.com/HospiceNWThunderBay)

Are you missing someone this Christmas? Or just not feeling all that "holly jolly" this year? It's been a long haul and we are all feeling weary . . . Find comfort in this quiet candlelight service.

Let the music and poetry speak to your heart. Light a candle and remember friends and loved ones in the peaceful beauty of this special **virtual** service.



10. Thunder Bay–North Shore Deanery Advent Project PWRDF 'Vaccine Equity Fund' ~

Our Archbishop Anne Germond has requested that we as a diocese support the Primate's initiative for Vaccine Equalization by making a donation to PWRDF. If you have had your vaccine shots, you may wish to help someone in a less fortunate country to have the same opportunity. We have the privilege of being able to afford vaccines as a wealthy 'first-world' country, and PWRDF would like to offer support in different ways, such as transportation, storage, running clinics etc, to those less able to pay for their own.

If you would care to donate, you can either go on the web to pwrdfvaccineequityfund.org

OR you may send it in the mail to:

**PWRDF, 80 Hayden Street,
3rd Floor, TORONTO, ON M4Y 3G2**

If you have already received your shots and intend to make a donation, please take a 'thank you' tree ornament from our box at the back. You may also choose to make a Christmas donation on behalf of your loved ones, and can take an ornament to send them in a Christmas card. These beautiful ornaments were lovingly handmade by parishioner Jasmine Sandham as a thank you gift from the deanery for participating in our Advent project.

Thank you from your St. Paul's **PWRDF Representative, Nancy Wallace**

(Call me if you have any questions at 623 4907)

Pay it forward with PWRDF

Support Archbishop Anne's charge to Synod.

1. Get your jab.
2. Donate to PWRDF's VACCINE EQUITY FUND.
3. Receive a thank you tree ornament from the deanery.

Help our worldwide partners prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Learn more at pwrdf.org/vaccineequityfund

Go to pwrdf.org/give-today and click on Vaccine Equity Fund

or mail your cheque to PWRDF at 80 Hayden St. 3rd floor, Toronto, ON, M4Y 3G2.

THUNDER BAY-NORTH SHORE DEANERY

Parish Representative: **Nancy Wallace**, 623-4907

Deacon Coordinator: **Carol Kneet**, carolkneet@gmail.com, 1-807-476-0715

11. 'Scent Free' Personal Care Worker Sponsorship ~

I am having difficulty acquiring a personal support worker who does not smoke or use perfumed person products as I have severe allergies to both. My current personal care worker, Kamakshi, is 'scent free' but requires more clients to increase her work hours to full time so she can remain in Canada. Kamakshi has experience caring for geriatric, dementia, and physically challenged clients. Her references are excellent. She is certified in CPR and First Aid and is also certified as a Live-In Caregiver, as well as holding an MA Engl and several diplomas.

Kamakshi would be available to assist clients with bathing & personal hygiene, meal preparation, light housekeeping, laundry, companionship, and respite care. If you would be interested in co-sponsoring Kamakshi please contact me at 285-0473 or by mail: Apt 305 ~ 1209 Victoria Ave. East, P7C 1C2.

Thank you for your consideration, ~ **Lesley Walters, BB Mission Team**

12. My Sermon from the First Sunday of Advent, November 28, 2021, 'ADVENT 1' ~ "HOPE"

May we always lift up our souls to God in whom we trust. Amen

The words of this prayer are from our psalm this morning. Psalm 25 is a prayer for guidance and trust. The psalmist asks God to "*lead me in your truth and teach me.*" Psalm 25:5

Today is the beginning of the 4 week season of Advent. It is indeed a



beautiful message during this first week, the week of **HOPE**, that truth and wisdom come from God. We ask the Lord to teach us, and to lead us.

Traditionally, the first week of Advent focuses on **HOPE**. I encourage you to light one candle throughout this week and thank God for the gift of **HOPE**. Jouni and I are blessed with 4 adult children and when they were little, we gave each child one of the Advent graces and that child would light their Advent candle. Our eldest son John would always light the first candle, the candle of **HOPE**. I also encourage you to sing the Advent song that is easy to remember ~ “*Light one candle for HOPE.*”

This week of **HOPE** draws me into my family history. My middle name is **HOPE**, my mother’s middle name is **HOPE**, my daughter’s middle name is **HOPE** and my granddaughter’s middle name is **HOPE**. Why do we have this family focus on **HOPE**? As many stories do, it begins with a sad story. My grandmother Muriel was born on a family farm outside of Smithville, ON, near St. Catherine’s. My grandmother had 2 brothers and one little sister who was 6 years younger than her. The little girl’s name was ‘**HOPE**.’ When Hope was 5 years old and my grandmother was 11 years old, Hope developed a severe tummy ache. It was 1910. The pain got worse and worse for little Hope. Eventually her uncle, who was a doctor, operated on Hope on the kitchen table in the farm house. Hope’s appendix had burst and she died. As was the custom in those days, Hope was not spoken about after her passing. It was believed that the mention of Hope would upset her parents too much. We have since learned that this becomes a ‘second death’ for the family. As part of the healing journey, it is absolutely essential that the child be spoken about by name as much as possible and the memories kept alive.

My grandmother kept the memory of her baby sister alive in her heart and that is how the name came to be part of our family. My grandmother embodied **HOPE** in her Christian faith and in how she lived. However, I came to understand why my grandmother was terrified of tummy aches and was always talking about the dangers of appendicitis. I often think about my grandmother’s little sister, how sad it was that she died so young. At the same time, I feel blessed to have **HOPE** in my name, as part of my baptismal name. We have **HOPE** in the promise of our salvation, in the promise of our eternal life, and to quote from the funeral service: “*In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.*”

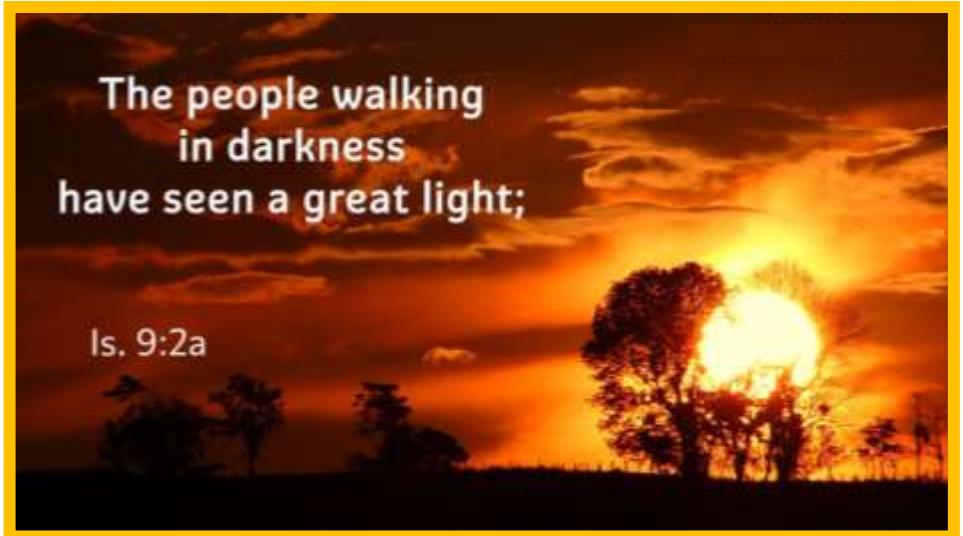
That is the promise of God’s hope. Not that our lives will be perfect. Not that we won’t have struggles and challenges. Not that things may go terribly wrong. But that “*in the midst of life we are in death.*” This is one of my favourite verses from our Anglican funeral liturgy (BAS p 576). We have **HOPE** in the darkness.

I am starting an Advent book study by ZOOM this week and we are using a book called *Hidden Christmas* by **Timothy Keller**. In the book Keller, writes about the power of light. Have you noticed that people are putting up their outdoor Christmas lights earlier and earlier? I think this is great as once we are on standard time, it gets dark so early in the evening. If I don’t start my evening walk with Wally, the dog, at *Centennial Park* by 5 pm so that we are done and back in the parking lot by 5:30 pm, we will be completely in the dark. And the walk has tree roots all over the pathways. Wally wears a bright red light-up collar at this time of year so I can always see him.

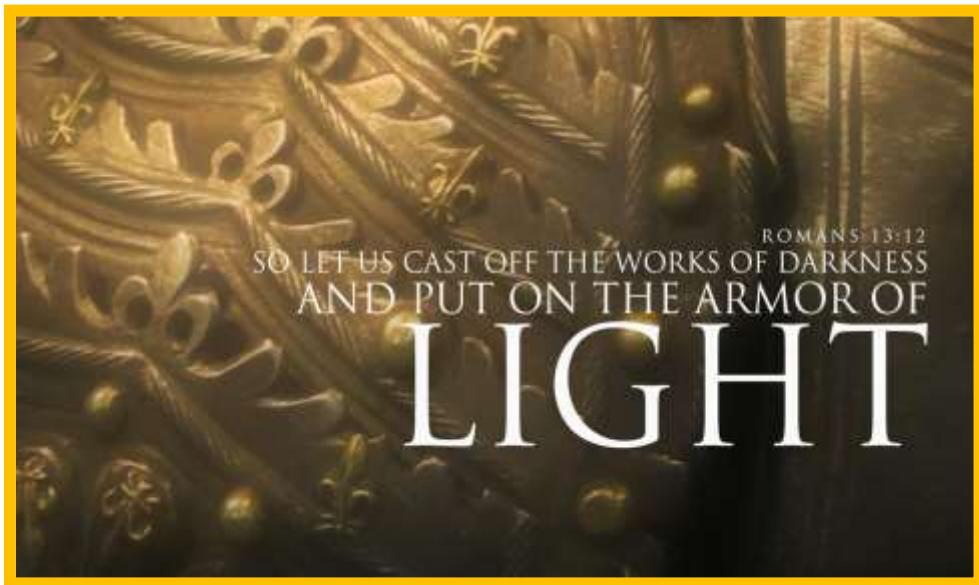
Keller quotes from the prophet Isaiah at the beginning of Chapter 1 and he calls this chapter ‘*A Light Has Dawned*’:

“*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who live in a land of deep darkness ~ on them light has shined.*”

(Isaiah 9:2B)



All the outdoor Christmas lights remind us of **HOPE**. These lights are symbolic of the reality to us as Christians that Jesus is our light and that he brought light into the world. We have God's light within us and God uses us (in the words of Keller) "*to dispel the darkness of the world.*" We cannot do this on our strength. We cannot do this on our own. We need God to enable us to see the world around us, all the evil, all the injustice, all the darkness and to do something about it. This is the promise of Advent, the promise of **HOPE**. The collect for this first Sunday of Advent reminds us of the power and the **HOPE** of God's light.



There is a story of a young woman who was eager to become an Olympic diver. She would often practice in the late evenings, on her own, in a community college swimming pool. One night, she changed and went into the pool area. She did not turn on the lights as there were skylights overhead and a bright moon. She climbed up the ladder to the high diving board and stood backwards at the end of the board ready to dive. All of a sudden, she noticed her reflection on the wall. It was in the shape of a cross. She felt called to stop, and instead of diving, she knelt down and invited Jesus into her heart. A maintenance man walked in, turned the lights on and the young diver noticed something significant. The pool was emptied of water for repairs.

The shape of a cross . . . The signs of God's presence, and of God's care, and love, and trust, are always around us.

The prophet Jeremiah lived at turbulent times in Israel, times of war and destruction and isolation. And yet he always preached a message of **HOPE**:

*"I know the plans I have for you,
says the Lord, plans to give you
a future with HOPE."*

(Jeremiah 29:11)

Jouni and I just put up our new light-up lamp post Christmas decoration outside. It is filled with LED lights and twinkles.

This light reminds me of the lamp post of Narnia, the light that gives us **HOPE**, the light of God that always lived in my grandmother, the light that truly dispels the darkness.

We prayed for "*grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.*" (BAS p. 268) Have you thought of light as armour to protect you?

I like sharing wisdom stories with you, especially at this time of year.





We are people of hope and God can use you and me to dispel the darkness. As Jesus reminds us, his words are eternal and will always be with us.

I will give the final word of HOPE to the prophet Jeremiah. It is from our reading this morning ~

"The Lord is my righteousness."

Jeremiah 33:16)

The Lord is my righteousness.

Amen.

Archdeacon Deborah+

13. My Sermon from the Second Sunday of Advent, December 5, 2021, 'ADVENT 2' ~ "The Prince of Peace"

I speak to you in the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Last week we focused on the Advent gift of HOPE. Today on the 2nd Sunday of Advent we reflect upon PEACE and upon Jesus as the Prince of Peace. The prophet Isaiah prophesies that the coming Messiah is named:

- † “Wonderful Counselor”
- † “Mighty God”
- † “Everlasting Father,” and
- † “Prince of Peace” (from Isaiah 9:6)



A couple of years ago, I did an Advent Book Study on a book by theologian Walter Brueggemann called Names For The Messiah. He devotes a chapter to each of these four names.

Here is how Brueggemann describes peace:

Peace requires the capacity to forgive. Peace requires a readiness to share generously. Peace requires the violation of strict class stratification in society. Peace requires attentiveness to the vulnerable and the unproductive. Peace requires humility in the face of exaltation, being last among those who insist on being first and denying self in the interest of the neighbour.

These are all actions that make the presence of the Prince of Peace known in our midst.

The Prince of Peace . . . The truth is that certainly Jesus was not an earthly prince. He was a poor child born in a stone manger, an animal feeding trough.

God's peace is not the same as the world view of peace. Peace from God is much more than the absence of war or conflict. Peace from the Prince of Peace is not silence or stillness or calm waters or tranquility. It is an inner state of being in harmony with God and with one another. Peace is wholeness. Peace doesn't require the outside world to be quiet. In fact, we bring our peace from God into every part of our day.

Here is a wisdom story about the meaning of peace ~

A mother with 5 small children decided that their summer vacation should begin with planting a garden. So she took her little brood to the nursery where for the next two hours they squabbled over who got to push the cart, insisted on seeing every plant in the 5 acre greenhouse, cried very hard when there were no pink petunias and broke a large clay pot. Home at last, she complained to her very patient husband "All I want is peace and quiet and some beautiful flowers." "My dear," said her husband, "I believe they call that a funeral."

Peace is the Hebrew 'Shalom' which is defined by Bishop Kevin Robertson of Toronto as "*the welfare of the whole community safeguarded by one another.*" Shalom means much more than 'hello' and 'goodbye'. It is the desire for peace, harmony, and wholeness. Peace is justice for the poor. It is repentance. It is forgiveness.

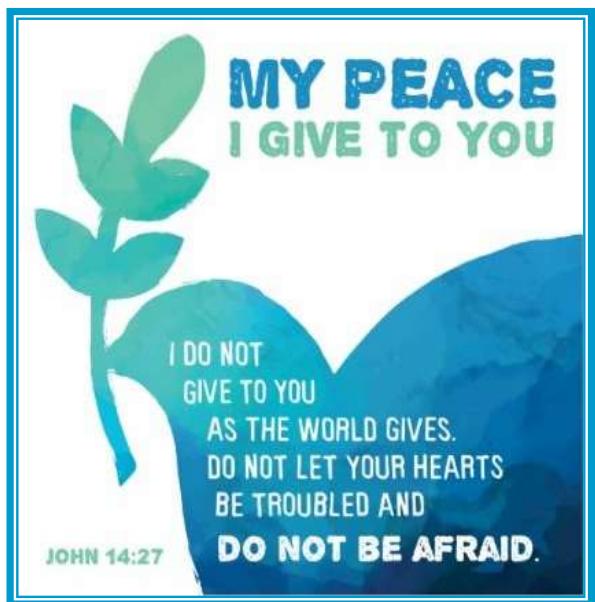
I went for a run last week and halfway through, right on Red River Road when I was heading for home, I started to reflect upon the reality that I am now an orphan as both my parents have died, my father on October 1 of this year and my mother 14 years ago. I started to feel very sad but then I turned to Jesus, the Prince of Peace and prayed for God's peace to be with me. I must tell you that I feel revitalized and filled with the peace of God that passes all our understanding. Peace is turning to that inner spring of water that gushes up to our eternal life. I did not, I could not generate that peace on my own. It was God who did it for me when I asked.

After Jesus healed a person, he would say, "***Go in peace.***" When Jesus healed the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and who reached out and touched his cloak, Jesus said to her, "***Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.***" (Luke 8:48)

In his second letter to Christians in Thessalonica, St Paul calls God, "***the Lord of peace,***" and goes on to write "***may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways.***"

The first thing that the risen Christ said to his followers in the upper room in Jerusalem was "***Peace be with you.***" (Luke 24:36)

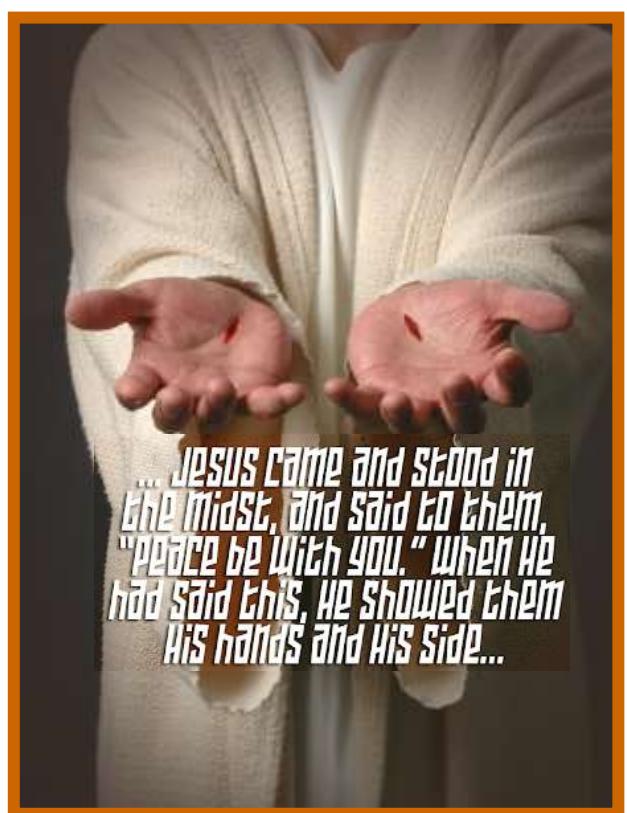
When Jesus sent out 70 disciples, he told them to say, "***Peace to this house.***" The peace of God is tied to hospitality, to healing, and to restoration.



"Peace makers" are included in The Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount ~

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God."
(Matthew 5:9)

... JESUS CAME AND STOOD IN THE MIDST, AND SAID TO THEM, "PEACE BE WITH YOU." WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE...



When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we are accepting the responsibility of receiving God's gift of peace and then sharing that peace with the world. Jesus said,

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you."

And now it is time for another story ~

There was a woman who wanted peace in the world and peace in her heart and all sorts of good things, but she was very frustrated. The world seemed to be falling apart. She would read the newspapers and get depressed. One day, she decided to go shopping, and she went into a mall and picked a store at random. She walked in and was surprised to see Jesus behind the counter. She knew it was Jesus because he looked just like the icon she'd seen on the wall in her church. She looked again and again at him, and finally she got up enough nerve and asked, "Excuse me, but are you Jesus?" "I am." "Do you work here?" "No," Jesus said, "I own the store." "Oh, what do you sell in here?" "Oh, just about anything!" "Anything?" "Yes, anything you want. What do you want?" She said, "I don't know." "Well," Jesus said, "feel free, walk up and down the aisles, make a list, see what it is that you want and then come back and we'll see what we can do for you."

She did just that, walked up and down the aisles. There was peace on earth, an end to war, no hunger or poverty, peace in families, no more drugs, harmony, clean air, careful use of resources. She wrote furiously. By the time she got back to the counter, she had a long list. Jesus took the list, skimmed through it, looked up and smiled. "No problem." And then he bent down behind the counter and picked out all sorts of things, stood up, and laid out a series of small packets. She asked, "What are these?" Jesus replied, "Seed packets.

This is a catalogue store." She said, "You mean I don't get the finished product?" "No, this is a place of dreams. You come and see what it looks like, and I give you the seeds. You plant the seeds. You go home and nurture them and help them to grow and someone else reaps the benefits." "Oh," she said. And she left the store without buying anything.

We sow the seeds of peace.

There is a beautiful prayer and song called *Make Me An Instrument Of Thy Peace*. It is called the Prayer of St. Francis. And you will hear the first two verses sung in just a moment.

First, we pray. Lord, inspire us to sow the seeds that make for PEACE. Let us sow love, pardon, faith, hope, light, and joy.

Amen.

Archdeacon Deborah+

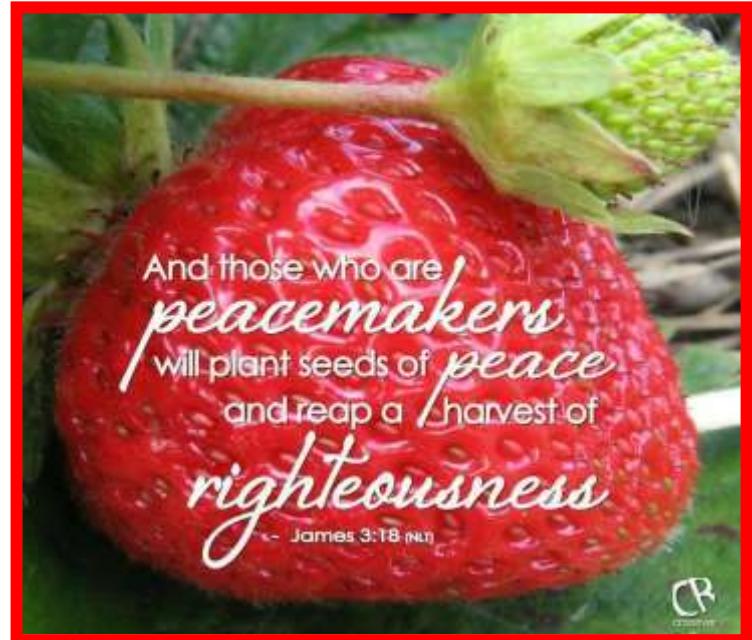
Here are the words from the Prayer of St. Francis that were part of *Make Me An Instrument Of Thy Peace* sung at the end of this sermon:

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
Where there is hatred,
Let me sow love;*



*Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;
And all for thy mercy's sake.*

*O divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born
to eternal life.*



10. My Sermon from the Third last Sunday of Advent, last Sunday December 12, 2021

'ADVENT 3' ~ "JOY"

I speak to you in the name of our God of JOY. Amen.

If I were to ask you to name some famous prophets in the Old Testament, I believe that you would start with **Isaiah** and then move to **Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel**. You might also name some other prophets such as **Micah**, **Amos**, **Joel**, or **Hosea**, but our reading for this morning is from a prophet that we know very little about. His name was **Zephaniah** (not to be confused with the prophet 'Zechariah'.)

Like all prophets, Zephaniah gave a prophecy of coming judgement from the Lord. Zechariah writes about judgment on Israel's enemies and on the wickedness of the people of Jerusalem. Zephaniah prophesied that the Lord "*will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth.*" Punishment from the Lord was coming. However, Zephaniah ends with a joyful message of hope and trust and mercy.

We call the ending of the biblical book of Zephaniah "*A Song of Joy*" ~

*"Sing aloud, rejoice with all your heart.
The Lord, your God, is in your midst.
He will rejoice over you with gladness.
He will renew you in his love."*

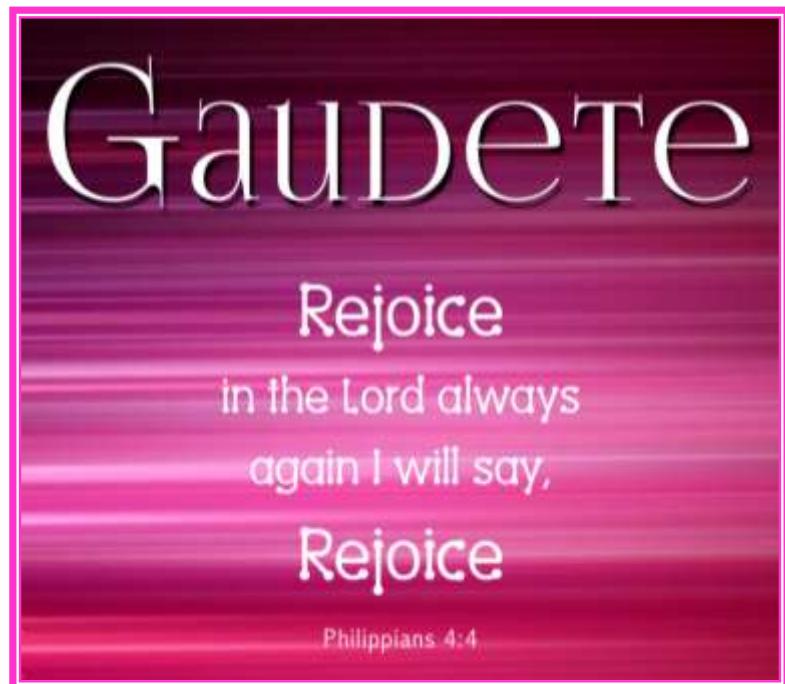
(From Zephaniah 3:14-20)

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. I am "in the pink" (I show my pink vestments to the congregation and to our livestream viewers). This is the Sunday of **JOY**. "Gaudete Sunday." Rejoice. Rejoice.

The prophet Isaiah (from our sung Canticle this morning) tells us to be **JOYFUL** ~

"With JOY you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Sing for JOY."

(from Isaiah 12:2-6)



At the end of his letter to Christians in Philippi, the apostle Paul writes a powerful message of **JOY**:

"Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

If you didn't know the Advent blessing we were focusing on this morning, it becomes very apparent from all the scripture selected for this day. However, the theme is a little harder to discern with the gospel. John the Baptist is baptizing people in the river Jordan. He tells all the candidates to be honest and be satisfied with what they have. John tells the people that he is the messenger and that the powerful one, meaning Jesus, will be coming. John is very clear that this is the good news of the gospel and the word gospel means good news. The end result of the gospel passage is that we experience JOY through the good news of our salvation.

Before the **JOY** though, comes repentance and forgiveness. Someone was recently talking to me about a beloved family member and I was told very clearly that "this person never sinned." My thought was "Oh, really!" It is true that the person never robbed a bank or got in trouble with the law or beat up anybody. But sin is any time we are turning away from God. Sin is not putting God first in our lives. Sin is experiencing anger, or jealousy, or self-centredness. Sin includes thoughts, words, and actions or inactions. I know that sin is not a popular word but the truth is that **we all sin**.

Here is how **St. Augustine** defined sin ~ "*a word, deed, or desire in opposition to the eternal law of God.*" Sin is a loss of love for God and a heightened self-love.

The truth is that when we repent, as we will in our confession this morning, we acknowledge all our shortcomings. And we turn to our God of **JOY**, our God of **HOPE**, and our God of **PEACE**.

At the end of his life, the author **Robert Louis Stevenson** said that "*to miss the joy is to miss everything.*"

When Jesus was born, the angels said, "*I bring you Good News of Great Joy for all the people!*" (Luke 2:10) Even **John the Baptist**, still in the womb of his mother Elizabeth, upon hearing about Jesus, "*leaped for joy in her womb!*" (Luke 1:44)



How much **JOY** are you experiencing? Do you want more **JOY** in your life? The key question to ask is how do we get more **JOY**? We ask for it. It is a gift from God.

When we turn to Jesus, when we ask him to walk with us during all of our adventures here on earth, we are blessed with **JOY!** **JOY** happens when we make others happy. **JOY** is a fruit of living a life of kindness and generosity.



I have been telling you wisdom stories throughout Advent and here is my story for today. Extracted here is a nugget from 'Bombay (now Mumbai) To Bangalore', one of the most heartwarming stories in this collection written, by Sudha Murty:

It was the beginning of summer. I was boarding Udyan Express at Gulbarga railway station. My destination was

Bangalore. As I boarded the train, I saw that the second-class reserved compartment was jam-packed with people. I sat down and was pushed to the corner of the berth. Though it was meant for three people, there were already six of us sitting on it . . .

The ticket collector came in and started checking people's tickets and reservations. Suddenly, he looked in my direction and asked, 'What about your ticket?' 'I have already shown my ticket to you,' I said.

'Not you, madam, the girl hiding below your berth. Hey, come out, where is your ticket?' I realized that someone was sitting below my berth. When the collector yelled at her, the girl came out of hiding.

She was thin, dark, scared and looked like she had been crying profusely. She must have been about thirteen or fourteen years old. She had uncombed hair and was dressed in a torn skirt and blouse. She was trembling and folded both her hands. The collector started forcibly pulling her out from the compartment. Suddenly, I had a strange feeling. I stood up and called out to the collector. 'Sir, I will pay for her ticket,' I said. Then he looked at me and said, 'Madam, if you give her ten rupees, she will be much happier with that than with the ticket.'

I did not listen to him. I told the collector to give me a ticket to the last destination, Bangalore, so that the girl could get down wherever she wanted.

Slowly, she started talking. She told me that her name was Chitra. She lived in a village near Bidar. Her father was a coolie and she had lost her mother at birth. Her father had remarried and had two sons with her stepmother. But a few months ago, her father had died. Her stepmother started beating her often and did not give her food. She was tired of that life. She did not have anybody to support her so she left home in search of something better.

By this time, the train had reached Bangalore. I said goodbye to Chitra and got down from the train. My driver came and picked up my bags. I felt someone watching me. When I turned back, Chitra was standing there and looking at me with sad eyes. But there was nothing more that I could do. I had paid her ticket out of compassion but I had never thought that she was going to be my responsibility!

I told her to get into my car. My driver looked at the girl curiously. I told him to take us to my friend Ram's place. Ram ran separate shelter homes for boys and girls. We at the Infosys Foundation supported him financially. I thought Chitra could stay there for some time and we could talk about her future after I came back from my tours.

I was not sure if Chitra would even be there. But to my surprise, I saw Chitra looking much happier than before. Ram suggested that Chitra could go to a high school nearby. I immediately agreed and said that I would sponsor her expenses as long as she continued to study. I left the shelter knowing that Chitra had found a home and a new direction in her life.

I got busier and my visits to the shelter reduced to once a year. But I always enquired about Chitra's well-being over the phone. I knew that she was studying well and that her progress was good. I offered to sponsor her college studies if she wanted to continue studying. But she said, 'No, Akka. I have talked to my friends and made up my mind. I would like to do my diploma in computer science so that I can immediately get a job after three years.' She wanted to become economically independent as soon as possible. Chitra obtained her diploma with flying colours. She also got a job in a software company as an assistant testing engineer. When she got her first salary, she came to my office with a sari and a box of sweets.

One day, when I was in Delhi, I got a call from Chitra. She was very happy. 'Akka, my company is sending me to USA! I wanted to meet you and take your blessings but you are not here in Bangalore.'

Years passed. Occasionally, I received an e-mail from Chitra. She was doing very well in her career. She was posted across several cities in USA and was enjoying life. I silently prayed that she should always be happy wherever she was.

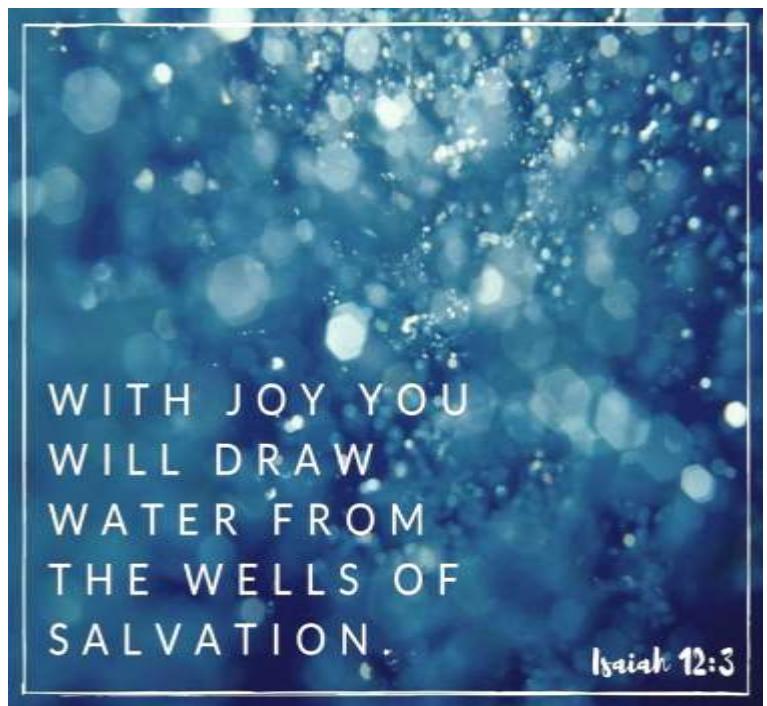
Years later, I was invited to deliver a lecture in San Francisco for Kannada Koota, an organization where families who speak Kannada meet and organize events. The lecture was in a convention hall of a hotel and I decided to stay at the same hotel. After the lecture, I was planning to leave for the airport. When I checked out of the hotel room and went to the reception counter to pay the bill, the receptionist said, 'Ma'am, you don't need to pay us anything. The lady over there has already settled your bill. She must know you pretty well.' I turned around and found Chitra there.

She was standing with a young man and wore a beautiful sari. She was looking very pretty with short hair. Her dark eyes were beaming with happiness and pride. As soon as she saw me, she gave me a brilliant smile, hugged me and touched my feet. I was overwhelmed with joy and did not know what to say. I was very happy to see the way things had turned out for Chitra. But I came back to my original question. 'Chitra, why did you pay my hotel bill? That is not right.' Suddenly sobbing, she hugged me and said, 'Because you paid for my ticket from Bombay to Bangalore!'

JOY is a gift which enables us to live with spiritual freedom. I am **joyful** that we are having the *Rotary Carol Sing* this evening when we couldn't have it last year. I am **joyful** that we can receive communion together. I am **joyful** that I am wearing pink today. I am **joyful** for your faith and for the many kind acts and words you are continuing doing with each other. I am **joyful** for the on-line service of '*Lessons & Carols*' put together by the *Anglican Church of Canada* and which includes 8 people from this parish! I am **joyful** that I can remember all my Dad's many good deeds of compassion and generosity. I am **joyful** that I can try to imitate him.

I am **joyful** that the Lord is here with us.

I am **joyful** that we can draw water from the well of our salvation.



JOY. Jesus first, **O**thers second, and ourselves ('**You**') third.

"Joy to the world. The Saviour reigns!" Amen.

Archdeacon Deborah+



Archdeacon Deborah+

"The Happy Rector & Archdeacon"

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP 2021

ALL SERVICES Masked, Sanitized, and Social Distanced

CHRISTMAS EVE:

- 5:00 PM CHILDREN's SERVICE
- 7:00 PM FAMILY EUCHARIST
- 11:00 PM HOLY EUCHARIST

CHRISTMAS DAY:

- 10:00 AM 'FAMILY EUCHARIST & BLESSING OF GIFTS'
(No Sermon ~ Children bring a New Toy to be Blessed)



'LIVE NATIVITY' 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm ~ Visit The Manger! ☺

5 pm & 7 pm Services also LIVESTREAMED on  YouTube

Watch at "YouTube / St. Paul's Media"