

Christmas Greetings

From the Archdeacon

“Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.” (Luke 2:4)

Christmas 2013

My dear friends in Christ across our beautiful deanery of Sudbury/Manitoulin,

Colin and I welcomed our children ‘home for the holidays’ in the early hours of Saturday morning. Both of them are away at University and we have been eagerly anticipating their arrival for weeks. We bought a real tree this year and it has been waiting patiently for their homecoming to be decorated. This evening, as the decorations were taken out of the old cardboard box they had been stored in we remembered when they were given to us, and by whom. Some of them were made with love by Caitlin and Richard in kindergarten – hard to imagine them that age anymore!



Caitlin and Richard tree decorating

I expect that our home is no different to yours as you are preparing for the coming season and all that goes along with it – the decorating, and baking and the shopping. I am sure many of you are also preparing to welcome family and friends, or are making plans to visit your loved ones in other cities and towns. For some of you it will be a time of great joy, steeped in tradition and spent soaking up memories of Christmases past. For others the time will be more difficult because the joy filled memories have been replaced with sorrow, or hardship. Many people undertake their Christmas preparations or journey to loved ones with joy, while others do it with trepidation or out of obligation.

This was Joseph on that first Christmas so long ago. He traveled to Bethlehem for a census registration, not a vacation. He had to obey the rulers of his day, even as God’s plans were beginning to unfold a different kingdom. His journey with Mary was fraught

with difficulties. Mary was heavily pregnant, about to give birth, but there was no place for it to happen.

Nothing went as planned for Joseph and Mary, but in that little town of Bethlehem, far from loved ones, new life was birthed. Jesus, God's gift to the world arrived in the midst of political events and no vacancies. He was laid in a manger, in a cattle stall. In spite of the circumstances of his birth there were unexpected visitors who heard the good news of Jesus's birth and brought gifts suitable for a king.



If the Son of God can arrive in such circumstances, so can truth, beauty and joy in our own lives - in unexpected ways and in unexpected places. This is my prayer for each of you this Christmas season. That you will find God in places and moments when you are least expecting to find him. That will make your Christmas not just merry, but holy.

It is also through the public worship of God that the story of Jesus coming to us is told most beautifully and powerfully. The story of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ continues to bring good news to all who truly hear it.

This will be at the heart of all of our Christmas celebrations in our churches throughout the deanery this year - the simple truth that God in Jesus Christ chose to come and live among us and walk the human journey. That God invites each of us into that way of life that brings hope, compassion, and good news to the world.

I hope that your Christmas celebrations will include attending a Christmas service in your home parish or if you are away, at a church nearby.

2013 has been a year of change and transition in our deanery. Let us continue to pray for those congregations that have seen some great changes - The Manitoulin Island parishes of Holy Trinity Little Current, Western Manitoulin and Great Spirit Island, St. Peter's in Silverwater and St. Mark's Garson. And let us pray for other churches that are facing challenging times in 2014, especially the Church of the Epiphany.



Congratulations to Canon Bain Peever on celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry and on his recent retirement. Congratulations to the Rev. Sherry De Jonge on her recent appointment as the Incumbent of the Island Parishes of Manitoulin, and on her ordination to the priesthood. We also said goodbye to the Rev. Paul Walmsley as he moved to Port Sydney in Musoka.

Here is Canon Bain Peever at the clericus Christmas party on Friday 13th December.

I would like to thank you all for your dedicated and faithful ministry across the deanery and in our Diocese in 2013. We are blessed with many gifted individuals, both lay and ordained who give so much of themselves. Special thanks to the deanery officials – Tim Perry, Dorothy Anstice, and Don McLeod for all their help with property matters. Thanks to the Program Associate Marion Collinson, our past Child and Youth Ministry Facilitator Cindy Derrenbacker, our Deanery Youth Coordinator Cora Felbel, to the members of the Deanery Assessment team, our Deanery Council chair Dave Stamp and our treasurer Ursula Paxton, and our Deanery ACW President Bev Vanderjagt for the way in which you serve God so faithfully. The work in our deanery you do is both vital and appreciated.

God bless you all and Merry Christmas!

Anne

The Ven. Anne Germond (Archdeacon of Sudbury/Manitoulin)



From our home to yours – a Happy and Blessed Christmas!

Colin, Anne, Caitlin and Richard.

Annunciation

By Denise Levertov

We know the scene: the room, variously furnished,
almost always a lectern, a book; always
the tall lily.

Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings,
the angelic ambassador, standing or hovering,
whom she acknowledges, a guest.



But we are told of meek obedience. No one mentions courage
The engendering Spirit
did not enter her without consent. God waited.

She was free
to accept or refuse, choice
integral to humanness.

Aren't there annunciations
of one sort or another in most lives?
Some unwillingly undertake great destinies,
enact them in sullen pride,
uncomprehending.

More often those moments

when roads of light and storm
open from darkness in a man or woman,
are turned away from
in dread, in a wave of weakness, in despair
and with relief.
Ordinary lives continue.

God does not smite them.
But the gates close, the pathway vanishes..

She had been a child who played, ate, spelt
like any other child - but unlike others,
wept only for pity, laughed
in joy not triumph.
Compassion and intelligence
fused in her, indivisible.

Called to a destiny more momentous
than any in all of Time,
she did not quail,
only asked

a simple, "How can this be?"
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel's reply,
perceiving instantly
the astounding ministry she was offered:

to bear in her womb
Infinite weight and lightness; to carry
in hidden, finite inwardness,
nine months of Eternity; to contain
in slender vase of being,
the sum of power -
in narrow flesh,
the sum of light.

Then bring to birth,

push out into air, a Man-child
needing, like any other,
milk and love -

but who was God.