



# ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

*The Oldest Church with the Youngest Ideas*

Advent 2024

Dear Friends,

A friend of mine and I were recently reflecting on the power of words. We were inspired by an article that we had both read in the *Toronto Star* in which the writer considers a simple exercise: she wants one word to encapsulate the Spirit of Christmas this year. Picking a word proves to be anything but simple, and it leads her into a variety of considerations about the unsettled state of our world: the concerns many people have around affordability and the rising cost of living, the polarizing of politics, the strangeness of the weather, the wars that keep escalating, not to mention the personal fears and worries that each one of us carries and that don't magically evaporate with the Christmas season. This article doesn't end with a word, it ends with a question. What festive word would you choose?

This got me thinking about the four words that guide us through the Advent season as Christians: hope, peace, joy and love. Depending on which worries or blessings are most central in your life right now, you might experience each of these words as descriptive or aspirational, as gifts that you see at work or as prayers that you hold close. These words could feel far off or very near to the heart. We light one candle each week as we make our way toward the celebration of Jesus' birth, the light of God born into our world.

There is something poignant and poetic about each of these words taking us closer to The Word. We believe that Jesus' birth was God speaking with intentional love and mercy into our hurting world. When we say that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," we are saying that in this peasant baby, born into our world in complete vulnerability to a family who had every reason to feel frightened and alone, God was joining us fully and completely in the challenge and beauty of being human. If we want to know what God is like and what God cares about, we can look to Jesus. And if our hearts feel heavy and our concerns for the world around us are significant, we don't have to generate hope, peace, joy and love on our own. These words are descriptive of God's agenda and God's activity. Two of the most important things that we can do in Advent are to keep our eyes open for where and how God is at work and to keep our hearts open for God's friendship and love to help ease our burdens, lighten our steps and guide our path.

Our worship through the Advent season and into Christmas is honest and beautiful. There is space for tending to our vulnerabilities, for lifting up our fragile prayers and needing for God to meet us in the uncertainties of life.



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And there is joy in the gifts with which God has always blessed us: in gathering as community, joining our voices together in song, telling our beloved stories, lighting our candles, creating space for quiet and song, making room for the colour and texture and flavour of this festive season, as well as the moments of quiet and honest reflection that we need too.

What word resonates with you this Advent? What word feels the most real and descriptive of where you are? And what word do you most want and need to bless you? What word would you use to express the landscape of your heart? And what word would be your prayer for our world right now?

I pray this Advent and Christmas that our words—many and varied, honest and needing as they may be—will be heard by God and that we see and hear and feel God's response. I pray that The Word will speak into our words—our gathering, singing, praying, serving, feeding, befriending, giving and caring—and bless us, this church, and our world in ways that feel powerful and tender, real and loving.

Yours in Christ,

The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnic

with The Reverend Canon Tom Vaughan.

## **Holiday Services 2024**

**December 1<sup>st</sup>** - First Sunday in Advent

10 am Soup Sunday and Wassail Party.

**December 15<sup>th</sup>** - 4pm Lessons and Carols Service

**December 18<sup>th</sup>** - 7pm Blue Christmas Service

**December 24<sup>th</sup>** - 4pm Family Service

7pm and 10pm Candlelight and Carols

**December 25<sup>th</sup>** - 10am Christmas Day

**December 29<sup>th</sup>** - 8am and 10am services

**Church Office will be closed December 24<sup>th</sup> – January 2nd**

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