



Topsail United Church

"The Church by the Side of the Road"

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER 2018

Message from the Minister

"AN EVERLASTING LIGHT"

***O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by,
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light,
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.***

The familiar and well-loved carol, "O Little Town Of Bethlehem", was written by Phillips Brooks in 1868 for his Sunday School at Trinity Church in Philadelphia. Its inspiration was a journey that he had made on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem during the season of Christmas in 1865. The hymn reflects the significance of the birth of Jesus, first to Bethlehem and then to all of humanity. (This reference is found in "...If Such Holy Song ..." by Stanley L. Osborne, published 1976.) The overall theme of the hymn is that the birth of Jesus was the beginning of God's "Everlasting Light" that would bring peace and justice to the world.

It is interesting to note that much of the action on that first Christmas is recorded as taking place at night. The story recounts that, "*In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night ...*" The contrast of darkness and light is present through all the Christmas story. Nighttime and darkness seem always to be a piece of the Christmas mood and tone.

Jesus was born at night and at a time when there was much uncertainty. It was a dark time politically and economically for Mary and Joseph. But into this time of uncertainty (through the birth of Christ) an "Everlasting Light" began to shine. Let us hear the words again - *"Yet in thy dark streets shineth - the everlasting light, the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."* The words acknowledge darkness but celebrate light overcoming the darkness.

We cannot get through Christmas without celebrating - that "everlasting Light." We read in the gospel of John, *"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God. ... in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not - overcome it."* The Christmas story has images of angels singing and everything aglow. Christmas is a time of brightness because it brings light into the shrouded darkness of life's realities.

The entry of light into darkness holds the message that through Christ we are not alone as we live our everyday lives and that we (as people of God) must also be as a light to those around us. The contrast of Everlasting light with nighttime and darkness can teach us that Christmas brings a new direction in our daily lives. To help us celebrate this new direction and to help us be a light to others, I invite you to participate in our Advent/Christmas worship services and outreach programs as an active way of celebrating the "Everlasting Light" of God's love for the world.

My wife, Dianne, joins with me in thanking each and every one of you for your support of our ministry among you. We wish you all a very joyous and blessed Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. I conclude with another verse from "O Little Town Of Bethlehem" as our prayer for peace on earth.

***For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.***

Christmas Blessings,
Rev. Bruce



***December 2 - 6:30 pm
Outreach Christmas Dinner in support of Emmanuel
House (Stella's Circle)***

***December 8 - 8 to 11 am
Men's Club Breakfast with Santa***

***December 8 - 7pm
A Baccalieu Christmas***

Presented by Topsail United Church with special guests including: Santa Claus, Vagabond, Bruce Kearley, Nick Slade, Christine Young, Crystal Vey, Fred Vey, Jack Vey, Courage Choir, Inspiration Band, The MusicBox Musical Theatre Group, Children's Choir and more.

[Visit our website to learn more about all upcoming events](#)

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE OFFICIAL BOARD

Hello friends and family:

The Harvest Festival has come and gone, and what a resounding success. Thank you to all who participated, especially all the volunteers who donated their time and energy to making this and all our church functions and events a success. Without your help and commitment, Topsail United Church would not be what it is today.

November too has come and gone which means the Christmas season is just around the corner. My message is going to be very clear; ***remember the true meaning of Christmas*** as you make your way to the shopping centers to do your Christmas shopping. We hear it all too often about the many families who wonder how they are going to survive this time of year. I ask you all to take a moment to help someone in need, say something nice to someone who needs your love and attention, put a dollar in the SA Kettle, drop of some food to the Food Bank, many of which are struggling to meet the demand. A small gesture given or donated from the heart will mean so much to someone in need, and the feeling in return will lift your soul. The truth about Christmas, or the real meaning of Christmas, is clear in the Bible. Jesus is the reason for the season, and the Bible makes it clear that the true meaning of Christmas is love.

In our last newsletter, I introduced the Mission Articulation Plan (MAP) process. The MAP is a way for our Pastoral Charge to map out its mission and a plan to achieve that mission. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that Paul Burt has volunteered to chair this committee, Thank you Paul. I am also very pleased to announce we have three members joining Paul, they are Lloyd Hobbs, Valerie Howe, and Noel Brissard. Thank you all for donating your time. Now if we had three or four more, this committee will be set to begin a very exciting process of planning our future here at Topsail United. If you're are so inclined to become a part of this process please reach out to any member or myself.

That's it for now. God Bless you all and remember, be safe, stay healthy, enjoy the season, and **KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS.**

All the Best,

Brad



Worship Schedule

DECEMBER

- 2** **1st Sunday of Advent, Communion, Mixed Choir**
- 9** **Men's Choir**
- 16** **Family Sunday, Pageant**
- 21** **Longest Night Service 7pm (Friday)**
- 23** **Baptism, Mixed Choir**
- 24** **Christmas Eve Services (Monday) 4pm, 6pm**
and 8pm
- 30** **No Choir, Andrew & Beth away**

JANUARY

- 6** **Communion, No Choir, Andrew & Beth away**
- 13** **Men's Choir**
- 20** **Family Sunday**
- 27** **Mixed Choir, Baptism**
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“Thank you” to all those of you who have supported the Food Bank with donations of food and money throughout the year.

At Christmas we ask everyone to get involved and make a monetary donation towards providing Christmas Dinner for families in need in the CBS and Paradise areas. Last Christmas the Food Bank helped 378 families, approximately 1/3 of which were single people. An increase in this number is expected this year as the number of monthly clients has greatly increased since 2017.

At Christmas each family unit will receive a gift card for the purchase of “food only”. A single person will receive a \$50 gift card, a family with 2 or 3 people will receive a \$75 gift card and a family with 4, 5 or 6 people will receive a \$100 gift card. Families of 2 or more will also receive a turkey.

Special envelopes are available for your donations or you can use your regular envelope and mark the amount for “Christmas Hamper”. Please give as you are able – every bit helps. Donations will be received up until Christmas and credited to your name and/or envelope number.

Anyone in need of help at Christmas should register with the Food Bank by calling 834-2800 before December 7th. The Gift Cards and Turkeys will be given out December 17-20, 2018.



As Christians, what we leave behind is much more than a track record of daily events. A meaningful legacy enables the gospel's message to ring clearly and ensures those who follow us will discover what it means to be church in the 21st century.

A gift in your will or other type of legacy gift can provide the church with the opportunity to explore and develop ways of undertaking ministry differently. Support that continues beyond your lifetime lays the foundation for a stable and exciting future that will continue to bring Christ's vital and vibrant message of community, compassion, and hope to others.

[Learn more about legacy giving opportunities at www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/gifts-that-last-lifetimes.pdf](http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/gifts-that-last-lifetimes.pdf)