



St. Mark's Anglican Church est. 1792
Niagara-on-the Lake, ON
Hear the Good News! Hear the Good news!

**E-News to the St. Mark's Pews
89th Edition December 10, 2021**

FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends,

One message of the Advent season is that God's future is about to break upon us with a glory that dispels the gloom of our present situation. But there's another message which is that we must learn to wait for the future with creative and joyful expectation.

The problem with the idea of Advent being about waiting with creative and joyful expectation is that it can be taken as just one more bit of nice-sounding but ultimately trivial liturgical claptrap. We know how the story ends, and so there's no surprise and no disappointment. We expect that, come Christmas Day, we will once again have presents and carols and turkey with all the trimmings. And since we know that all of our expectations will be met—or at least most of them will be—we will simply fill the intervening days and weeks with busyness and revelry and spending.

But to leave the notion of Advent expectation at that is to be content with a life lived in the shallows of existence. As Christians, you and I are called to sound the depths of our own souls, to delve into the mystery that is at the heart of things and to expect more out of life. If we don't believe that the future prospects for the world, or for ourselves, or for the Church are promising and hopeful, I think it's because we expect so little out of life, out of ourselves, and out of the Church. Low expectations yield low results and lead, ultimately, to dissipation and decay. How many people, for example, do you know whose expectation of Christmas is that it will be bleak and insufferable and lonely, a grim time to be endured? Yet do they ever do something to affect positive change, to make their experience of the season a little less dour and tedious? Or how many of us come to Church expecting nothing but a stultifying hour of the same old, same old? Imagine what would happen, what we could do, what sort of dynamism would burst forth, if we actually expected our hearts to be taken and set on fire!

We need to expect more, and this means that we need to learn to do more. It's a great temptation to simply sit around looking into the future without doing anything. If we expect good things to be right around the corner, we need to do something to help bring those good things to birth. Similarly, if we expect the future to be hostile, cold and disappointing, we need to do something to help to change the course of history. And if we expect to discover the truth of the birth of Christ for ourselves, we need to go out into the world and look for the places where he is most likely to be found: among the homeless, the marginalized, the disenfranchised. If we expect any of this to happen, we need to be God's active agents in the world.

So let us take to heart the Advent hope for the future by working to make this world a ready place for the desire of all nations. Amid all of the expectations—good and bad—that we have at this time of year, let us cling fast to the greatest of them all: that the Lord will indeed come and not be slow. He will come in the tiniest act of generosity and with the simplest word of love and in the smallest gesture of inclusion. What's more, he will come to the unlikeliest of places, in the most startling of guises and at the most surprising of times. But come he will, and so let us sing all the more of the future kingdom whose promise is greater than anything we could have ever imagined, and whose joyful fulfilment surpasses anything we could have ever expected.

Grace and peace,
Leighton

FROM THE WARDENS

Christmas is coming, the lights are up around Town, homes decorated, the Candlelight Stroll is done. Folks are smiling (we think under their masks) and a spirit of love and congeniality is visible.

The Rotary Tour at St. Mark's last Friday and Saturday saw more than 250 visitors come through our beautiful church and so many positive comments. We think we will see some come again on a Sunday. Thank you to our welcome team including Bill Ford who brought great enthusiasm to his descriptions of St. Mark's history.

Diane Turner and her cherry pie team were amazing as usual, and sold many pies. Thank you to the team! Pies are still available by calling the church office. The frozen pies are \$20 and come with easy-to-bake instructions. Gary Burroughs and his Mrs. Santa helpers, Barbara O'Connor and Alex Clarkson, created a great assortment of special gifts and treats.

The place was buzzing. We are told the pies and canned items raised close to \$5,000. Gary and his team are still cooking; stop by the church to see what is available.

A bin for Newark Neighbours will be set up in Addison Hall starting Sunday. Please bring canned goods and packaged foods. (Check the Newark Neighbours website for the most needed items). Bill Ford and his truck will do the delivery for us, so fill the bin!

Last E-News we reminded folks about the 13th month. We started last December asking parishioners to consider donating an extra month to their envelopes to help with the financial shortfall. The response was excellent and exceeded our expectations. So, let's do it again! Drop off a cheque or cash at the office or at the Sunday service. We are grateful for your support of St. Mark's.

More parishioners and visitors are attending Sunday services and we are often at capacity. We are happy to see the pews full, but this presents challenges in ensuring the Covid safety protocols around spacing are followed. Please let us know if you are coming. A great thanks as usual to the team handling registrations, Candace Walker, Rita Brown, Syme Jago, Kathy Taylor, Chris Byart and Steve Hinchliffe who each week make the process work.

We look forward with joy to the return of concerts to St. Mark's with a Christmas performance by The Newark Singers on December 19 at 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Registration is required and space is limited (note that the 4:00 pm concert is now at full capacity and there is limited space available for the 7:00 pm). A freewill offering will be gratefully accepted. Call (905.468.3123) or email stmarks@cogeco.ca to reserve.

Jean Baker is still in hospital recuperating. Dennis Hawley and Jacquie White are also in hospital after falls. Please keep them and others you know in your prayers.

Don't tell anyone, but it is Fr. Leighton's birthday on Monday, December 13th.

As always a reminder to advise the office of anyone who needs assistance , including a phone call, food delivery or some phone companionship. Or over the fence.

Stay safe – keep well

Called to Life – Compelled to Love

Your Wardens

PARISH UPDATES

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve there is one service at 5:00 p.m.

Christmas Day there is one service at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 26 there is one service at 10:30 a.m.

Christmas Greenery

We thank Jennifer Smith for the festive greenery and window boxes and Marsha Howe for the beautiful Christmas flower arrangements. We are deeply grateful for their dedication in making St. Mark's beautiful for the season.

Parking Notice – December 19

Please note parking on Byron Street may be limited on Sunday, December 19 for the 10:30 am service. There is a 5 kilometer Santa Run/Walk that day which will depart from Simcoe Park at 10 am.

Keeping in Touch On-line

Our Sunday morning services are uploaded on Facebook after 10:30 am service. Simply go to St. Mark's Niagara-on-the-Lake Facebook page.

Please use this URL to watch:

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Marks-Anglican-Church-Niagara-on-the-Lake-235477056649804/>

Our E-News and Order of Service can also be accessed through new website:

<https://stmarksnotl.org/news/news>

<https://stmarksnotl.org/worship-ministry/order-of-service-bulletin>

FROZEN CHERRY PIES SALE

Please order by emailing Diane Turner at 19ab39@gmail.com.

Pies are \$20 and are sold frozen with easy-to-bake instructions.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE NEWARK SINGERS

Sunday, December 19th at 4:00 pm 7:00pm

4 PM is fully subscribed. There are a few places still for 7 PM

Carols and Readings for the Festive Season

Free Admission. Please registered by 12 noon Friday, December 17th by emailing stmarks@cogeco.net to book a place as we have limited capacity.

There will be a freewill offering plate at the back of the Church as you leave. Come and enjoy some live music for the Season!

THIS SUNDAY'S READINGS AND PRAYERS

Sunday, December 12, 2021 – Third Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20 Earlier in the chapter, the author has spoken of the failure of Jerusalem and her inhabitants to behave properly towards God. He has destroyed other nations as a warning to them. In spite of this, God will cause Gentiles to turn to his ways: they will serve him by permitting the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem.

Philippians 4:4-7 Paul tried to finish his letter earlier, but certain concerns about the community and its members intruded. In the Greek world, rejoice was used much as we say goodbye, but here Paul means rejoice literally.

Luke 3:7-18 John the Baptist travels throughout the Jordan Valley, preaching return to God's ways and adoption of an ethical way of life under God. Now he warns against being baptised without the intention to carry out its obligations. Those who behave in this way will be condemned at the end of the age.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In the parish cycle of prayer we pray for Robin Brinsmead, Grant and Linda Brooks, and Bill and Jan Brown and their families.

We pray for those shut in their homes, Fred Habermehl, Fred Dixon, Joy Ormsby, Selina Appleby, and Joan Draper.

In the Cycle of Prayer for the Niagara Diocese we pray for St. John the Evangelist, Niagara Falls, the Reverend Mark Gladding, Priest in Charge, and the people of that parish.

In the Anglican-Lutheran Cycle of Prayer we pray for the Venerable Alan Perry, General Secretary, and the staff of the General Secretary's Office; Melanie Delva, Reconciliation Animator; Dawn Maracle, Animator, Indigenous Justice – Interim, and Trina Gallop Blank, Assistant to the National Bishop, Communications and Resource Generation, and the staff of Communications; Kyle Giesbrecht, Director of Finance and Administration, and the staff of Finance and Administration.