



The Mustard Seed

Volume 14 Issue 5

Advent & Christmas 08

Central America

A manger scene is the primary decoration in most southern European, Central American, and South American nations. St. Francis of Assisi created the first living nativity in 1224 to help explain the birth of Jesus to his followers.



Mexico

'Feliz Navidad!'

In 1828, the American minister to Mexico, Joel R. Poinsett, brought a red-and-green plant from Mexico to America. As its coloring seemed perfect for the new holiday, the plants, which were called *poinsettias* after Poinsett, began appearing in greenhouses as early as 1830. In 1870, New York stores began to sell them at Christmas. By 1900, they were a universal symbol of the holiday.

Shared Christmas Traditions



England

'Merry Christmas!'

The Christmas Card Christmas cards originated in England over 150 years ago. Sir Henry Cole, the founder of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London had so many Christmas greetings to send that handwriting them was impossible. Yet he wanted to make his friends aware of the need to help the destitute on that holiday.

In the year 1843, Sir Henry commissioned John Calcott Horsley to paint a card showing the feeding and clothing of the poor. A center panel displayed a happy family embracing one another, sipping wine and enjoying the festivities. "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You" was printed on that first card.

So much for good intentions. The card drew criticism because showing a child enjoying a sip of wine was considered "fostering the moral corruption of children." Legend says Sir Henry didn't send any cards the following year, but the custom became popular anyway.



Germany

'Froehliche Weihnachten!'

Decorating evergreen trees had always been a part of the German winter solstice tradition.

The first "Christmas trees" explicitly decorated and named after the Christian holiday, appeared in Strasbourg, in Alsace in the beginning of the 17th century. After 1750, Christmas trees began showing up in other parts of Germany, and even more so after 1771, when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe visited Strasbourg and promptly included a Christmas tree in his novel, *The Suffering of Young Werther*. In the 1820s, the first German immigrants decorated Christmas trees in Pennsylvania. After Germany's Prince Albert married Queen Victoria, he introduced the Christmas tree tradition to England.

In 1848, the first American newspaper carried a picture of a Christmas tree and the custom spread to nearly every home in just a few years.

From Davids Desk

I was away a couple of weeks ago at a contemplative retreat. The purpose of the retreat was twofold: to be nurtured in our personal spiritual life and to learn ways to support others in local congregations who are interested in the contemplative life.

What's the contemplative life, you may well ask? Contemplative living is the attempt to meditate regularly, live simply, and seek unity with God and creation. Sounds lofty, doesn't it? It's not meant to be... it really is just a particular form of spirituality.

(Here's the joke of the day about a contemplative: A monk was in New York City and he'd heard of the many hot dog vendors on the streets; he decided he wanted a hot dog so he went up to a vendor and said, "Please make me one with everything.")

I learned to meditate over 25 years ago from an individual who was from a Ukrainian Orthodox Christian background. He'd been influenced by John Main who was a Benedictine monk who had started a retreat and educational centre for lay folk in Montreal. John's particular style of meditation was to use a mantra, a word or phrase that you repeat over and over while sitting in silence.

Meditation has long been a practice of all faiths. This form of prayer opens us up to new insights about God, about the world and about our own inner world. I find that meditation leads me to be more centred, focused and healthy in my spirit and my heart. As well, medical practitioners will tell us that there are lots of health benefits from meditation that can help with high blood pressure, stress, chronic pain and other medical conditions. (Make sure you talk to your



doctor about making any changes to your treatment plan.)

Meditation is the practice of listening for God. In worship we offer prayers to God, our spoken prayers. But it is equally important to listen for God in intentional periods of silence. The teaching and example is Jesus going off by himself to pray; I'm sure he prayed for others and for the world, but he also listened for the "still, small voice of God."

This time of year—for me—lends itself well to meditation and listening for God. The leaves have fallen, the nights are long and it seems to open me up to contemplatively listening for God. The fact that we are about to begin the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle also helps. I find this season to be a time of seeking God's voice and listening for the Word that is love, peace, hope and joy in our world. The lights and focus on light, Christmas Eve celebrations, and the celebration of the Epiphany all serve to emphasize the mystical presence of God and the birth of new life into the world.

During this Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season into which we are entering, may you experience new life and new hope. Use this season to deepen your own spiritual discipline whether it be meditation, spiritual reading, walking, yoga, tai chi, chi qong, or whatever you do.

And I'd like to hear from other contemplatives in our congregation; it would be good for us to see how we can support one another. We used to have a meditation group that met on Sunday nights; we'd like to begin that again but at a different time and with a slightly different focus. Any ideas? Phone me, email me, or speak to me directly.

Blessings!

The **Mustard Seed** is the newsletter of Nelson United Church



Submissions are welcome and can be dropped off at the church office.

Electronic submissions to tkbaker@shaw.ca

Check out the **website** at: www3.telus.net/Nelson_United



Webminister:
Jody Dudley



e-newsletter
Donna Strongman
(dlstrongman@shaw.ca)

Church Bulletin Bloopers

Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again" giving obvious pleasure to the congregation

Christine's Corner



*“Come celebrate life with the one who was born of woman and called Prince
Peace. Draw near unto God and be at peace.”*
(There Is A Season)

of

Our church year begins with the season of Advent (Advent One is November 30th). Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace, in our world and in our lives. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus* which literally means “coming”. Advent provides an opportunity in our busy lives to intentionally take time to reflect on the important things in life. In her book, There Is A Season, Betty Radford Turcott, is talking about Advent when she says, “The greatest gift of this season would be the gift of peace, for ourselves and for others. Peace in our spirits first, to enable us to touch others with the flame of peace. Then it can be spread to each house we visit and each person we greet. The blessing of peace is a sacred one that will rest in the heart ready to receive it.” (p.31)

This Fall our Outreach Committee has intentionally been focusing our efforts on promoting and supporting the United Church’s *United for Peace* campaign. The final session of the recent *Peace Study* offered by the Outreach Committee was dedicated to exploring the issues of “Inner Peace and Outer Action”. Finding time for nurturing our own sense of inner peace in our busy lives is a challenge, but I believe it is key to living a well balanced life where our actions reflect the faith we profess.

In keeping with our prayers for peace for ourselves, our community and our world, and with gratitude and recognition of the Prince of Peace we seek to follow, we will be decorating the Christmas tree in our sanctuary with peace dove ornaments, mini lights, and photo ornaments of our church family. We hope the simplicity of the decorations this year will be a symbol of our commitment to our core values of peace, hope, love and faith.

As we journey together, through this Advent and Christmas season, may the peace of Christ fill our hearts and our homes that we in turn may be a blessing to others.

*God of peace, you come to us as a helpless infant;
you come to us in the light of a star;
you come to us as a flame of hope.
We seek the peace that passes understanding.
We yearn for quiet times of hope
in the midst of the turmoil of our lives.
Longing for harmony we need courage to work for peace in our world
and we ask it in the name of the Prince of Peace.
Amen*

(There Is A Season)



The Observer gives us a balanced point of view. It examines issues and life experiences from many angles. Our Everyday Ethics column presents solutions to dilemma’s faced in daily life.

For a subscription to this thought-provoking magazine please contact Lou Costain, our Congregation’s OBSERVER Representative



Christmas Giving
Think 'Outside the Box'

Buy a gift with meaning!

World Vision—go to: www.worldvision.ca

From the home page you can select sponsor a child or the gift catalogue.

Mary Ann Morris (250-354-4641) has a selection of gifts from Oxfam and Amnesty International.

For more extensive shopping with these organizations go to:

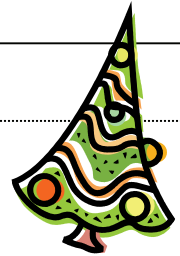
Oxfam: www.bridgehead.ca

Amnesty International: www.amnestyinternational.ca

Habondia—Pay it Forward Christmas Fair on Sat Dec 6th from 11-3 at the Legion Hall

- Women's Centre Jewellery Sale

- for details of this organization go to: www.habondia.kics.bc.ca



Christmas Tree

This Christmas, as part of our ongoing commitment to the United for Peace Campaign, the Outreach Committee will be decorating the Christmas tree in the sanctuary with peace doves. After church on Sunday November 23rd and 30th we will be asking you to purchase a dove cookie cutter which we will save to decorate the tree. (Cookie cutters can be picked up in January) The cookie cutters are \$3 each and the proceeds will go to support the United for Peace Campaign. The Outreach committee's goal is to raise \$2,000 before the close of the campaign in Dec 2009. Thank you in advance for your support.

Kamala Moore for the Outreach Committee.(352-9769)



Fran Flesaker and Sandy Potkins at the Bazaar Outreach Table

The Church is looking brighter these days - inside and out - thanks to all the painting done by Ron Snyder and Jean Elliot assisted by Jac Segstro and Roy Nelson.



**Shared joy is a double joy;
shared sorrow is half a sorrow.
Swedish Proverb**

Q What is a vigil?

A The word vigil derives from Latin and Old French words which literally meant “awake, alert.” So a vigil is a gathering of people who intentionally stay awake and alert for the presence of God. The classic times for vigils are when someone is missing, when people gather to give thanks for a joy or achievement, when there is imminent danger of some sort, perhaps war, or when people grieve a sad occasion or loss. In the Church, people gathered on the evening before Easter, known as the Easter Vigil, and sometimes before Christmas. Those in monastic communities would gather at various times during each day for a vigil; this was a time of prayer and quiet contemplation.

Here in our church, we hold a vigil on the Saturday before Advent and the first Saturday of Lent. This year, due to unforeseen circumstances, we can't hold the vigil just before the first Sunday in Advent; so, we are holding it on the first Saturday of Advent, which happens to be December 6th. We'll begin at 8 a.m. and continue throughout the day until 10:45 p.m. or so. This is our chance for quiet contemplation and prayer as the rush of the Advent-Christmas season begins.

There are books to read and book to record prayers. People pray and read and send good thoughts out into the world about peace, hope, joy and love.

As to who can come? Anyone can come. We have people sign up for an hour so that every moment of the vigil is filled by people who are intentionally praying for others or just sitting in quiet

meditation. **I. M. Curious** BUT, anyone is welcome to drop in at any moment of the day for 5 minutes, 10 minutes, or as long as you'd like to stay. Just because you didn't sign up for a particular hour doesn't mean that you can't come and spend a few quiet minutes in the sanctuary. You are all welcome as you are able. And if you'd like to sign up for a particular hour, please see Lynne Busby.

Symbolically, this vigil is about our congregation praying for peace and hoping for love in our world. It is also about our desire to turn back the forces of darkness that promote fear, hate and injustice. Mark December 6th on your calendar for an intentional time of Advent-Christmas preparation.

Do you have a question that you'd like to ask I.M. Curious?

Direct them to the Mustard Seed at tkbaker@shaw.ca

Upcoming Services

Sunday, November 30th
Advent Begins: 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary.

Sunday, December 7th
Advent 2: 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Wednesday, December 10th
Alternative Worship Experience in Lower Hall;
7 p.m. with theme of “Anticipating”

Sunday, December 14th
Advent 3: 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Sunday, December 21st
Advent 4: 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Sunday, December 21st
Longest Night Service: 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Christmas Eve: 7 p.m.
Family Service & Pageant: 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Christmas Eve: 11 p.m.
Candle-light Communion Service: 11 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Sunday, December 28th
Christmas Stories and Carols: 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Sunday, January 4th
Epiphany Celebration and Communion: 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Upcoming Events

Sunday, November 30th
Advent Supper and Learning Event: 4 p.m. RSVP to the Church Office.

Saturday, December 6th
Advent Prayer Vigil.

Sunday, December 14th
Musical Afternoon: 2 p.m. in the Sanctuary; our Handbell and Chancel Choirs with friends.

*There are two mistakes one can make along the road to truth --
not going all the way, and not starting.-- Buddha*

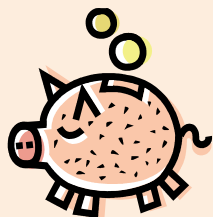


Bob Steed on the left overseeing the installation of new ceiling fans in the sanctuary

Life's Lessons

- * When in doubt, just take the next small step.
- * When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
- * Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, and wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.
 - * Forgive everyone everything.
- * If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
- * 'I've learned that making a 'living' is not the same thing as 'making a life.'
- * 'I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one.'
- * No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
 - * Yield.

Heating Debt Down to \$15,200!



Thanks to everyone who contributed to the over \$26,958 to-date in donations, and the work of Bob Steed and his crew, our new heating/air conditioning system is installed and functioning well. In addition, Fortis generously gave us a grant of \$1,125 for undertaking this environmentally friendly project.

The total cost of the project was \$42,954.04. This includes repairing and upgrading of our fans in the Sanctuary - both are now functioning. (We should also note that the Nelson Fire Department recently came in and change all our lights in the Sanctuary to the longer lasting environmentally friendly ones - not an easy task!) Great work in bringing this in under budget. Bob.

The end result is **our bank loan is already down to \$15,200** (and we are holding a bit in reserve). This is remarkable!

Finally, our first couple of Terasen bills show our heating costs cut by more than 50% compared to 2007 so we should be able to pay off the remainder of the debt from the fuel cost savings as anticipated. We need to track this for a few more months to see what our winter bills will be but by the AGM we should be able to forecast when the loan will be paid off. And it will be **less** than the 5 years originally anticipated. Again, well done everyone.

A nursery school teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

As she got to little Sarah who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. Sarah replied, 'I'm drawing God.' The teacher paused and said, 'But no one knows what God looks like.'

Sarah replied, 'They will in a minute'



THANK YOU FROM NYANYADZI METHODIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

A request from the Nyanyadzi Methodist Church, Nyanyadzi, Zimbabwe was received by Nelson United Church in November of 2007 for a donation towards their Harvest Thanksgiving Fund. N.U.C. council approved that \$370 be forwarded to the Nyanyadzi Church.



St. Paul's Trinity and N.U.C. have a long standing association with the Nyanyadzi Church.

I received an e-mail confirmation of them receiving the monies in June, 2008--which is next to a miracle in devastated Zimbabwe. Pastor Onismo Makwasha travelled to Mutari to the closest Western Union office, which is a 1 1/2 hour drive , to receive the monies.

Here is the e-mail --

“We feel the warmth of belonging whenever we have such people as you around. The congregation is humbled by your positive response and we thank the Lord for your hand in making the harvest a success. It is our prayer that the Lord, who supplies seed to sow and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity. He will make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for the donation which they received. For this service you performed, not only meets the needs of Nyanyadzi congregation but also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God.

We are also happy to inform you that we have managed to secure enough boards to complete our ceiling project. With deep affection we will pray for you because of the extraordinary Grace God has shown you. If there are other well-wishers the Church continues to find it difficult to look after the welfare of our Pastor. as the country continues to face economical challenges, food and clothes are beyond his reach, with a Family of a wife and two kids in primary school going age. It is a difficult situation.

Thank you once again.
Onesimo Makwasha-Pastor in charge of Communications.”

In June the monies were equivalent to \$9,688,072. Zimbabwe dollars. Inflation!!!

Recently letters were received with news of the health of Eleanor Maposa, the contact person for many years, of the Nyanyadzi Church. Her daughter, Rachal, had written from England. Eleanor had not been well, in and out of hospital, but now was able to walk to church again. In the letter Eleanor asks us to pray for Zimbabwe and her people.

Elaine Hurley

Coming Soon—Nelson United Church's 100 anniversary!

After the church burned in 1967, rededication was March 8, 1969 - so 2009 is not only the 100th year of the stone church building at Josephine and Silica but it is also the 40th anniversary of the rebuilt church and also the pipe organ. Watch for events celebrating these milestones



November Letter from the Nelson Food Cupboard

Incredible Food Donations

We owe big thank you to the LVR students, Nelson United Church's Outreach Group & the Kootenay Coop Grocery store for organizing successful food drives for us in the recent few weeks, as well as to all the community members who pitched in to donate.

On World Food Day, approximately \$1,500 worth of food was donated to the Nelson Food Cupboard through the Coop Grocery store, and then the Coop topped it off with a \$1,000 credit for us to spend on healthy food.

On Halloween, dozens of LVR students trick or treated on our behalf and altogether brought us over \$2,000 worth of non-perishable foods. Bravo!

Like the Dickens, Friday December 5th

Even though it is not looking too wintery outside yet, plans for our annual reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* are well under way.

Friday, December 5th, Kathryn Gretsinger from CBC radio will come to Nelson to join Corky Evans, Eileen Delehanty-Pearkes, Stephen Fowler & Bree Switzer in reading Dickens' classic Christmas tale. David Boyd will host the evening show, the Barbershop Chorus will perform Christmas songs, and the United Church Women's Group will provide tea & cookies afterwards. Once again, the performance will be held at the Nelson United Church. Doors will open at 7pm and the show will begin at 7:30. Tickets are \$10 & will be on sale at Otter Books starting on November 17th.

Holiday Hamper Season is Here

We are also busy gearing up for our Holiday Hampers program. For the fourth year in a row, we are aiming to create bountiful food hampers for 140 families and individuals in the area who need this free gift to make their holiday season cheerful & festive. As always, the hampers will be packed high with healthy foods for the recipients to have one special holiday meal plus fresh and non-perishable foods to carry them through the rest of Christmas week.

If you would like to contribute to the Holiday Hampers, you can either donate funds to help us prepare hampers or you can get together with friends, family or colleagues to create your own hamper for an anonymous family.

If you would like to donate cash, please consider doing so at the Scotiabank before the end of November because they are matching all cash donations made at their office on our behalf. Scotiabank donors are still eligible for charity receipts.

THANKS again to everyone who generously donates time, money & food to the Nelson Food Cupboard!

Highway 6 - a newspaper in 1969 has an ad that shows the flight schedules from Castlegar - one to and from Calgary and one to and from Vancouver - some things don't change very much.

Presbytery Report

Kootenay Presbytery, Christina Lake, October 17, 18, 19, 2008

Christine Dudley, David Boyd, and Alie Jonker attended the meeting of Presbytery; Peter Busby was unable attend because of family commitments.

Young people from all over our Presbytery attended this time and Doris Kizinna from BC Conference led them in a separate (successful) event. We were pleased to see several young people from our congregation, Nicolai and Mateo Pipe and Jenna Wood, be present and proud of Jenna who agreed to be an official youth representative in the future.

The theme of the meeting was “Extreme Makeover”, this was chosen because over the past couple of years we’ve been working on restructuring the way our Presbytery conducts its business and this weekend was a **total immersion** into the new system. Instead of Divisions we now have Ministry Teams who will try to deal with their tasks in between Presbytery meetings and that will allow for more time for spiritual and church development at the actual meetings. Setting of goals and policy for the teams will be ongoing for a while and is an interesting process; we hope it will be completed in about six months.

The Ministry Teams are:

- Planning and Visioning (Executive)
- Support for Pastoral Relationships
- Education and Students
- Support to Congregations
- Camping and Youth
- Societal and Global Concerns
- Nominations
- Administration, Finance and Stewardship

Representatives from Creston and Youth opened the meeting on Friday night with worship.

Koolaree and Rock Lake Camps are in the process of forming one official board.

In my opinion the highlight of the weekend was Sunday morning worship during which time we officially recognized and licensed nine Lay Worship Leaders, Elizabeth Berglund – Trail, Darlene Cockerill – Castlegar, Jean Daniels - Grand Forks, Gail Detta – Burton, Lorraine Doleman – Creston, Guy Duchaine – Nakusp, Shirley Racette – Fruitvale, Sarah Tupholme – Castlegar, and Jayne Slawson, Nelson. Congratulations to all, especially Jayne!

Rev. George Meier accepted a call to serve Boundary Pastoral Charge as interim minister for the next two years.

Because Kim MacMillan retired, we had to form a committee to complete Needs Assessment work and put together a job description for a new half-time conference minister. This work is now finished and the position is being posted by BC Conference. As a Presbytery we are encouraged to spread the word and invite qualified people to apply.

As always, we were well looked after by the hosting pastoral charge!

Respectfully submitted, Alie Jonker

"A man's character is like a fence. It cannot be strengthened by whitewash."

Kid's Page

Puzzle—Find a Holiday Decoration

_____ My first letter is in WRAPPED but not PREPARED

_____ My second letter is in STORES but not in TOSSED

_____ My third letter is in PRESENT but not in TURNIP

_____ My fourth letter is in PARENT but not in REPENT

_____ My fifth letter is in TABLE but not in BLAZE

_____ My sixth letter is in WISHES but not in SWIMMER

Holiday Puzzle *Unscramble the letters*

1. egnal _____

2. redaphs _____

3. nmearg _____

4. rtsa _____

5. sfigt _____

6. Lhylo _____

7. ahrwet _____

8. otintiepas _____

9. slebl _____

10. raclso _____

Puzzles from Fairview Chronicle—Christmas 1994

Handprint Soap Dish

Add a nice bar of soap and wrap—great grandparent gift!

Prep Time: Afternoon or Evening

What you need:

1 pound of white air-hardening modeling clay (like DAS Pronto)

Rolling pin

Waxed paper

Butter knife

2 toothpicks

Scissors

Paintbrush

Acrylic waterproof sealer

Materials: clay , paints

Instructions:

1. Knead the clay to soften it up, then roll it out between two sheets of waxed paper so that you have a 1-inch-thick slab. Help your child firmly press his clean hand into the clay. Deepen or smooth the impression with a wet fingertip, if needed. Trim the edges of the clay with the butter knife, leaving a 1/2-inch border around the handprint.

2. From the excess clay, shape four 1-inch-wide balls to serve as the soap dish feet. Carefully invert the dish onto a clean section of waxed paper. Cut two toothpicks in half and use each half as a peg for attaching a ball under each corner of the dish. (At this time, carefully inscribe name and date on the bottom .)

Wait 1 hour for the assembled dish to firm up before turning it back over, then let it dry completely as specified on the clay package.

3. Finally, apply a few coats of waterproof sealer according to the manufacturer's directions (a parent's job). Once the sealer dries completely, the dish is ready to use.



Answers:

Unscramble the letters: 1. angel 2. shepherd 3. manger 4. star 5. gifts 6. holly 7. wreath 8. poinsettia 9. bells 10. carols
A Holiday Decoration: Wreath