

CHRISTMAS 2022

Rector's Christmas Message



For the first time in a very long time, I am ready to let loose on Christmas! I say that with cautious optimism and just a pinch of trepidation. The small apocalypse of the pandemic that we have endured is behind us... is it not? The journey to Bethlehem has seemed so hard these last three years. The little town in which all "the hopes and fears of all the years are met..." seemed distant, as we were separated from each other. Cut off, masked off.

I no longer want to stand or sit six feet from someone that I would much rather hug. I no longer want to hold back from singing my favourite Christmas carols! I have had enough of holding back. I might even drink from the Common Cup this Christmas!

Holding back is antithetical to what Christmas is all about. Christmas is a time of opening our hearts and mind to the reality of Jesus coming into to the world. And it is the time for us to manifest that love for each other by opening our arms - to everyone. It is God's invitation to the ultimate family festival, where known and stranger, near and far, humble and wise, rich and poor are one community of love. The social and political arguments we have are of little consequence to God: Love your neighbour as yourself, has a way of reordering our lives and perspectives. We are all are loved and embraced and accepted equally.

This Christmas, I don't want to hold back. I am more sensitively aware of all forms of missing. Loved ones who have passed are closer; family who stay home for safety or who live far are nearer; those suffering from loneliness and isolation are much dearer. My awareness of what is happening to others in the world is heightened: from people migrating away from climate change-affected places, conflict, and war; to those confronting hate or poverty or abuse or persecution, or exploitation or starvation.

If we feel held back or have to hold back in all the restrictions and limitations of our time, we are, if anything, people whose hearts and minds also hold so much more than just the past two plus years. The story within each of our hearts tells a more profound and wondrous truth: God sent a Child into the world who did not hold back. Who lived life to its fullest with outstretched arms open and wide.

Whether you and I manifest the resurrected Jesus in church or at home, in how we support our community, or care and love for our family, friends, or neighbours - hold nothing back. Let Christmas birth in you more love, awareness, empathy, generosity, kindness, compassion, goodness, and forgiveness to all you encounter.

May God's blessing and peace be with you and those you love this Christmas.
Merry Christmas, Nick +

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Anyone who is able and wishes to make a Christmas offering and wants a tax receipt for this year, should ensure that their donation is dropped off at the Church on or before Friday, December 30th, by 12 noon. Last-minute contributions can also be made on Year's Eve or you can do it online via the "Donate Now" buttons (at the top and partway down on the right) on the Church website through <https://ascensiontoronto.ca/>. Thank you for your continued support.

LEAF CLEANUP DAYS

There were an awful lot of leaves on the property on October 29, leaf cleanup day. We weren't very sure how many people would turn out to help but the weather was just right, a crisp, dry fall day with little wind. We were hopeful. Gradually people arrived until there were 15 of us, everyone dressed to work and joining teams as needed. In just over 2 hours we raked and filled 62 leaf bags: the grounds were as spotless as we could make them. Just look at those pictures of our happy, smiling faces. But ... it was not over as the maples take their time dropping leaves so we had another work day on Saturday, November 19. Many thanks, to everyone to came out to clean up the front of the church property.



Carole Bell

BIBLE DISCUSSION on the PSALMS

Our discussion series on a number of the Psalms was not only well attended but gave everyone an opportunity to share ideas, thoughts, and perceptions in an open friendly non judgmental manner. The participants were extremely pleased with the series and are anxious for a new Bible discussion series to be started in the New Year. All are welcome to join us.

Rev. Chris Horne





Volunteers (shown being honoured above) are key to the success of Café 65 events. We honour and thank them.



A TRIBUTE TO REV. VERNON La FLEUR

Rev. Vernon La Fleur was born in Guyana, South America, where he worked for over thirty years in the medical profession. He has been an active member of the Anglican Church since birth, and it was his wife Stella who prompted him toward the Priesthood.

In November 1990, he answered the call to Divine Orders and was ordained. In 1993 he and Stella immigrated to Canada, where he served at numerous Churches in the Diocese of Toronto, settling at the Church of the Ascension as an Honorary Assistant in 2010.

Fr. Vernon has never forgotten his roots and has been involved with the Canadian Friends to West Indian Christians. He has contributed his time generously to God’s Ministry in our Church, pastorally visiting parishioners in their homes and long-term facilities, preaching, and celebrating on Sundays. He has a passion for the gospel, enjoys bible study, discussing scripture, prayerful meditation, listening to good music, leading us in prayer, and singing with his powerful voice and many other areas of ministry in which he has distinguished himself.

Fr. Vernon and Stella are a team. They are the proud parents of seven children, twelve grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Ian, his eldest child, followed his father in God’s work as an Ordained Minister. He befriends whomever he meets and only sees the best among his acquaintances. At the end of the year, Fr. Vernon will formally retire but will thankfully continue as an Honorary Assistant serving when and where he can. On Sunday, December 18th, we will honour and thank God for how he has blessed us over the years.

By Ron Joshua

DO YOU LIKE TO SING?



Our new Praise Chorus is now singing during the 10:30 services. Practices are on Thursdays at 2 pm. We need more voices including men. Come and join us when you can. Please contact Rev. Chris if you need information.



PROPERTY REPORT

Thanks to all those volunteers who helped out on our Parish Work Days and in our preparations for Christmas; the Peace Garden has been put to rest, but we will continue to celebrate with beautiful floral arrangements and lights. The steam condensate tank was repaired and the boilers were started up; Enbridge has been busy, replacing our gas meter, installing protective posts and then replacing a section of gas supply pipe. The Church and Parish Hall were converted to LED lighting, a step towards the Greening the Ascension. There are numerous ongoing small repairs, but we have had to make a number of major capital repairs to the church building totaling over \$75,000, so please continue to donate to the **Rector's Appeal**.

GIFT CARDS

We sold \$5,570 worth of Gift Cards and the church made a profit of \$276.54. May thanks to all who ordered Gift Cards.

TREASURER AND BOOKKEEPER

Urgently needed – treasurer and bookkeeper for the church. Please contact the office or Fr. Nick if you or someone you know is interested in this important position.

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Submissions for the *Ascension Times* (Easter Edition) must be in by **March 19, 2023**.

Send to toot@interlog.com or ascension@ca.inter.net or drop it off at the Church Office.