



Go into all the world
and preach
the Good News
to everyone.



FROM PETER'S PEN MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS AT YORKMINSTER PARK

I have so many wonderful recollections of the Christmas season at Yorkminster Park. Thirty years ago, the late Lois Bishop, who was one of the soloists in the choir, told our children that they would never forget the beauty of the church by candlelight for the service of Carols by Candlelight. I too have never forgotten that moment of first walking into our church with the sanctuary aglow with candlelight, but there have been many memorable moments when Christmas at Yorkminster Park has moved me deeply.

For example, I will never forget the Christmas we had a funeral and a wedding on the same day. The funeral was for Gerry who sold the Outreach newspaper down at the corner. The Outreach paper was a small newspaper which was published to be sold by people facing challenges such as homelessness. It provided them with both a purpose and some profits. Gerry was a fixture. In fact, every year

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FROM PETER'S PEN (cont.)

in December he would even dress as Santa Claus. When word got out that he had lost his battle with cancer people came to his funeral from far and wide; many of them facing the trials of life on the street.

Later that day there was what could have easily been described as a society wedding. Many captains of industry and local dignitaries were on hand including even the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. When the ceremony was over and everyone had left, I remember sitting on the chancel steps and sensing that all in one day we had received both the shepherds and magi of our time. Christmas at Yorkminster Park can tire one out, but it can also take our breath away as Christmas should.

In my very first year at the church, it was suggested we come up with some ideas to make the Advent IV Sunday morning service a little more family friendly, which was accomplished in part with the introduction of the children's nativity play into the service. As Kerr Spiers read the Christmas story, children dressed as magi, shepherds, angels, even sheep, and of course, Joseph and Mary processed up the aisle as their part of the story was read.

The tradition continues and today some of the children are filling roles once played by their parents. A doll always sufficed for the baby Jesus although from time to time a child or two seemed to be convinced it really was Jesus. One young Mary held the doll close and refused to lay him in the manger. The young boy playing Joseph, however, took matters into his own hands and grabbed the doll from her and threw it into the manger.



When I first arrived at the church in 1995, the 11 p.m. Christmas Eve service was lovely but very small. Kerr Spiers had only started it a year or two earlier and it was yet to become a YP Christmas tradition. Early in my tenure as Minister of the Congregation we invited the choir to participate in the service, and we conducted it by candlelight sharing the flame from the Christ candle at the end of the service as we sang Silent Night. Through the years it grew larger and larger with hundreds of visitors each year.



For many years, our guest soloist was Richard Margison, a childhood friend of mine and world renowned tenor. He sang 'O Holy Night' and the legendary Canadian actor R.H. Thompson was our reader on Christmas Eve.



In 2014, on the centennial of the famous WWI Christmas truce, we designed a Christmas Eve service to include songs and readings from that remarkable

moment when the celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace almost brought an end to the war to end all wars. Some of the readings were letters which R.H.'s great-uncle had sent home describing the scene.

We repeated the service a year later and it seems word had spread. As I looked down from the pulpit, there was Gordon Pinsent sitting in the front row next to Maureen Jennings.

For several years, our musical friend Eric Robertson had produced a popular carol sing at another location to raise money for a Christmas charity, but all of that had come to an end and Eric was in a new season of his life. And so it was that in the midst of a summer heat wave

in 2009 Eric approached us with an idea of planning and hosting a Christmas Carol sing in December to raise money for charity. And with that the City Carol Sing was born, except it wasn't quite that easy.

In our first two years we had some great performers and choirs and the congregation raised the roof singing the carols, but we needed a media partner to help get the word out and a charitable partner to sponsor the event. In our third year Citytv came on board and a partnership was born that has seen the event broadcast nationally on the Citytv network helping to raise funds for food banks all across the country. The Weston Family Foundation also came forward to cover all our costs so that every dollar raised went directly to the Churches on-the-Hill Food Bank, and



in time The Cardinal Management Group also joined us. In 2024 these partnerships enabled us to raise more than \$50,000 for the COTH Food Bank. Through the years the City Carol Sing has become a Christmas highlight in our church and in the community beyond.



Early in my tenure as Minister of the Congregation we moved the Christmas Eve Family Service out into the great outdoors of the church grounds and brought in live animals including sheep, camels and a donkey. With members of the church dressed as shepherds, magi, Mary and Joseph and even a Roman guard and a Bethlehem innkeeper. The Christmas story was told and retold to great effect. Families came from near and

far to see and hear the story before coming indoors to sing carols and sip on hot chocolate. Bethlehem on Yonge continues to this day, but the live animals were replaced with costumed animals after the year a PETA protestor tried to shut us down.

Through the years we have sometimes had to contend with harsh weather including the year it was raining so hard we even brought the poor donkey into Cameron Hall. That year as the people prayed, the donkey breyed. Likewise, the first year we brought camels we learned that like the weather, they too could be given to spitting.

The weather has gone against us a few times. In 2007 more than a foot of snow fell on the day before and the day of Carols by Candlelight. The plows couldn't keep up on either the streets or the sidewalks and the usual turnout of a thousand worshippers at Carols by Candlelight was barely one hundred. However, it may not have been as bad as I thought, because through the years I have run into at least three hundred people who claim to have been at Carols by Candlelight on the night of the big storm.

And then of course there was the ice storm of 2013 when the city had 40 hours of freezing rain beginning on December 20 which froze the city beneath 30 milometers of ice. Trees and power lines were down all across the city as the temperatures plummeted the city into a dark deep freeze. At the manse, the hot water heating system was off and the pipes were in danger of freezing. The amazing thing was that buildings along Yonge Street did not lose their power and so while most church Christmas services in the city were cancelled, services continued at Yorkminster Park.

Dale Rose and I conducted the various services and on Christmas Eve between Bethlehem on

Yonge and the Christmas Eve Candlelight, our families shared a Christmas dinner together in the church kitchen. Late Christmas Eve, Doug and Jerri Obright came knocking on our door with a portable generator and our pipes were saved and our heat restored. We will never forget that kind and generous deed. The truth is that their kind and generous act probably prevented major damage from being done to the manse.



Of course, Yorkminster Park has also become the home of numerous annual Christmas concerts offered by remarkable musical ensembles: the Orpheus Choir, the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Amadeus Choir and of course, John McDermott. The beauty of the sanctuary and the incredible acoustic is a large part of the attraction, as is the livestreaming that the church is able to offer thanks to the leadership of Dave King. I could go on and write pages on some of the Christmas memories formed at these concerts, but instead I will just say that it is a great joy and privilege to have so many people visit our church during the Christmas season and to hear such wonderful music in praise of Christ whose birth we celebrate.

I am especially grateful to William Maddox, Sharon Beckstead, Dawn King, and Jessica Willingham and our remarkable choirs, the clergy who have served at my side, Janice Ivory Smith for her communications, and the incredible support staff, both in the office as well as Ray and his team who are constantly setting up, taking down, removing the snow and keeping things clean. Please thank these friends when you see them.



Lois Bishop was right when she said that we wouldn't soon forget our first Carols by Candlelight, but there has been so much more that has been profoundly memorable along the way. I love Christmas at Yorkminster Park. This will be my thirty-first Christmas at Yorkminster Park and my last as the Minister of the Congregation, but the family will all be home and I am already looking forward to many more memorable blessings during Christmas at Yorkminster Park. I pray that we will have a profound sense of Christ's presence and the wonder of his love as we worship and serve together through this season.

Merry Christmas!

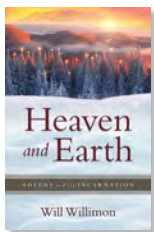
Peter



FROM THE MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP

Advent season is one of the most beautiful times of year, especially for those following the Church calendar. As the days grow shorter and the nights grow longer, Christians throughout the world mark Advent as the start of a New Year. As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus and singing all our favourite Advent and Christmas carols, we also look further ahead to a time that will take us all by surprise, the second Advent when Jesus will come again.

This time of year brings with it so many emotions. We can be feeling both joy and sorrow, grief, longing, and hopeful anticipation all at once. In our Advent study this year, Will Willimon in his wonderful book, *Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation* writes,



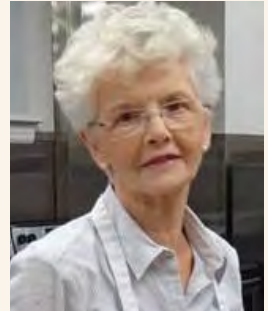
“Let me venture, in one long sentence, the good news: God almighty, the one who created the earth that we despoiled, the good Creator

who created humanity only to have humanity time and again, turn against God – this God has advented, turned toward us, taken time for us, become one of us in order to do something about the problem of us. Rejoice.”

Each week Willimon has reminded us that we do not need to climb to God, because God “has climbed down to us.” God comes to all of us and while we recall in this season that Jesus

calls us to be ready, it is the sort of readiness that invites us to live with hope in our daily lives.

This Advent tugs at the heart of many of us because we have also been preparing our hearts for the departure of Peter, our beloved Minister of the Congregation. Many of us at YP have a “my first time at Yorkminster Park” story and I have one too. It was in 2010, at Christmas, that I was blessed to meet the dearly departed Diane Letsche and it was very soon after her warm welcome that she introduced me to Peter at the door. After a lovely service in which the choir sang as beautifully then as they still do today, it was a gift to meet Peter who had a kind word for each person at the door. No wonder we will miss him. No matter how gifted Peter is, and he is indeed, he is also profoundly kind.



So, this year is a wonderful reminder to us, in a lifetime of reminders, that every moment is precious. Whether we are with our families, our friends, in the company of strangers, or with our Church family, let us savour the moments we have together and lift each other up and carry each other’s burdens in those times when we find that we are in need. As we prepare to say goodbye to Peter, to Janet, and their precious family, let us do so as people with hearts full of Advent hope. All will be well, love never dies, and Christ, Emmanuel, will remain with us, even as we look forward to that day when the New Heaven and the New Earth will be our home forever.

If you have any needs at this time or prayer requests, please write to me at pwillis@yorkminsterpark.com or call **416-922-1240**.

*The Rev. Paula Willis
Minster of Pastoral Care and Discipleship*

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER

James Thompson




James Thompson comes to YPBC as a new member on the basis of Baptism. He was baptized here in October 2025.

Not long ago, James was reunited with his friend and YPBC member, Ross Stretton, at our Noonday Organ Recitals. James then attended Easter Sunday. He feels lucky to discover what he describes as an exceptionally warm and welcoming congregation. James is a regular at our Drop-in Coffee Hour with The Rev. Paula Willis.

James grew up in Hamilton. When he was a young person, James' family split their time between visits to grandparents in Pennsylvania and those in Ontario. He has enjoyed a lifetime interest in science fiction. James studied at The University of Toronto. He has now called Toronto home for 28 years, and lives near YPBC. James has worked in the banking industry and is now exploring assisting seniors in a personal support role.

James is an engaging person. He describes his faith journey, not as a sudden awakening, but rather as a process which has gradually evolved over time. Welcome, James! YPBC is sure to benefit from your contribution to the life of our church.

Refugee

A dramatic night scene with a bright star in the upper left corner. A powerful beam of light shines from the star down towards a small, simple wooden house with a gabled roof. The house is situated on a dark, flat landscape. The sky is dark blue with some clouds. The overall mood is one of hope and guidance.

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cozy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.

malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2012/01/07/refugee/

Kingdom growth, surprise by surprise

How does the Kingdom of God grow?

Sometimes by surprising turns. Just ask Bill and Janice Dyck, Canadian Baptist Ministry (CBM) missionaries who we support through our Board of Mission. Bill notes, “I noticed a decisive change in my role during a recent visit to Guatemala and El Salvador.” Teaching Pastoring of Pastors groups has been one of Bill’s key focal points. This program focuses on the benefits of mutual mentorship groups, pastors helping pastors. Bill usually comes ready to “sell” the program. He had a Kingdom surprise. Sitting with a group of leaders planning an event for Pastors in Guatemala, he realized that they were “sold” on the program. “They were not discussing what, if, or why, but **how to implement Pastoring of Pastors.**”

The purpose of the trip to Guatemala was not just to meet with pastors, but mainly for CBM Latin America Team meetings. This included meetings with all the project partners from the countries CBM now works with in Latin America and the Caribbean.



The Summit on Leadership in Bogota, Colombia, with development assistance by Bill and Janice Dyck. A major success in outreach and partnership.

- ➔ **Kingdom surprise!** All the Global Staff from CBM in the area are beginning to be more aware of each other’s fields/ countries. With time, this means working together more closely.
- ➔ **Another surprise!** Says Bill, “Much of the leadership is coming increasingly from the countries we work in as opposed to only from Canada. The word used for this is ‘polycentric’ – leadership coming from many centers.”
- ➔ **And so the Kingdom grows. Surprise by surprise, to the glory of God.**

To learn more about Bill and Janice Dyck and their mission work, visit www.cbmin.org/staffprofile/bill-janice-dyck/



Connect with Bill and Janice

✉ bdyck@cbmin.org

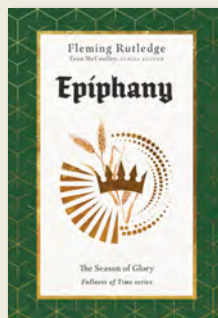
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CHECK OUT THE GLADSTONE LIBRARY

Book review by Katherine Laundry



Epiphany

by Fleming Rutledge

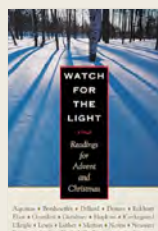
Did you know that the Feast of Epiphany on January 6 is not just about the arrival of the Wise Men, but it is the beginning of a season of the Church that stretches to Ash Wednesday? Epiphany considers Scripture passages that show us the identity of Jesus as God. This little book (in the same series as last year's Lenten study) will help deepen your understanding of the season.

Christmas Reading



Bright evening star: mystery of the Incarnation

by Madeleine L'Engle



Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas

A collection of spiritual readings by various authors.

The Gladstone Library is open before and after Sunday service.

You can also borrow books from the book cart in the narthex.

Contact the library by calling 416-922-1167, ext. 241, or email, library@yorkminsterpark.com.

You can search the catalogue at: <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/YPBlib>.

YOU'RE INVITED!

DROP-IN COFFEE HOUR

STARTS WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2026

2:00 – 3:00 PM | FRIENDSHIP ROOM

Join Rev. Paula Willis for a relaxed time of community and fellowship. Whether you're new, reconnecting, or just craving a friendly space – we'd love to see you!

GIFTS FROM ACADIA DIVINITY COLLEGE



At YPBC we are blessed by our connections with Acadia Divinity College. On **Saturday February 21st, 2026**, the President of Acadia Divinity College, **the Rev. Dr.**

Anna Robbins, will once again be a guest at YPBC and on this occasion, as the keynote speaker for our annual women's retreat. Our theme this year will be **SEARCHING FOR HOME: Homelanding, Homesteading and Homecoming**. Anna writes:

Every woman knows the ache of searching for home in the midst of chaos and instability - a place of belonging that steadies the soul, shelters us in uncertainty and helps us understand who we are and who we are becoming. Yet "home" in the Christian life is never simply behind us or ahead of us. It is something God reveals, prepares and grows within us.

SEARCHING FOR HOME invites women into a journey through three movements – **Homelanding, Homesteading** and **Homecoming** to explore how God meets us in our memories, leads us into our future and makes God's dwelling with us in the present. Grounded in the wilderness journey of Moses and the Israelites and Jesus' call to abide in Him, this retreat blends Scripture, story and spiritual reflection to help us name where we

have been, discern where we are going and discover the home God is forming in and among us now.

All women are warmly invited to this day apart to be held in YPBC Cameron Hall from **9 am to 2 pm, February 21, 2026**. A continental breakfast and hot lunch to be included. Registration information will be available in January. This is a date to save and we look forward to welcoming you. Anna will also be our guest preacher the following morning.

Another notable gift from Acadia this fall was to the Canadian church. **"The Innovation and Future Church Forum Envisioning the Future Church in Canada"**.

This event was held in Montreal, on September 28th -29th, and hosted by friends at Acadia Divinity College's Futuring Hub as well as by Missional Labs - Station M and Power 2 Change. Over one hundred leaders gathered as pastors, educators, social entrepreneurs and denominational partners, including Alana Walker Carpenter, an active member at YPBC and CEO of INTRICITI.

The Forum's imagining focused on what faithful innovation could look like in a time of uncertainty and the conversations that unfolded were not about replicating corporate models of innovation but about reimagining what it means to be the church when the very systems that once sustained ministry are themselves being reconfigured as the Canadian church navigates rapid cultural shifts: declining affiliation, growing diversity, technological disruption, and increasing complexity in people's lives.

It was emphasized that innovation untethered from spiritual discernment risks being captured by social interests rather than formed

YPBC WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (cont.)

by theological imagination. The question is not whether the church should innovate, but how it can do so faithfully, remaining rooted in identity while open to the Spirit's creative movement. Renewal begins not with strategy but with spiritual rootedness.

Dr. Kenneth Foo, Director of Church Life and Leadership for Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, affirmed that the Canadian church must remain anchored in the faithfulness of God. We stand on the shoulders of generations who faithfully planted, served, and carried the Gospel into communities across our nation. He believes that God is still speaking and still calling us forward in prophetic imagination in the midst of present challenges and invites us to courageous listening and collaboration.

The future will not be defined by our clever strategies or by the size of our gatherings but by our willingness to listen for and discern God's voice together. Dr. Foo's insight reframes innovation away from technique and toward trust. If the future church in Canada is to be both innovative and faithful, it must be rooted in discernment and shared obedience to the Spirit, not in self-sufficiency.

The Forum considered the Canadian church as an ecosystem of hope, a network of communities participating in God's renewing

work in the world and guided by theological imagination, a dynamic web of partnerships built on trust, shared purpose and mutual learning, all of which is the heart of faithful innovation. This is a movement that is both deeply spiritual and structurally adaptive.

Looking ahead, the future of the church will depend not on predicting outcomes but on cultivating readiness - spiritual, relational, and organizational. It will not be defined by programs or personalities but by the ability of Christian communities to learn, adapt and collaborate amid deep cultural transformation as together we listen attentively for and discern what the Spirit is saying to the church.

As Women's Ministries at YPBC we are committed to ongoing collaboration as we continue to discern together what fresh possibilities the Spirit might be inviting us into. The conversation continues!

Resource: The information in this article regarding the Forum, was sourced from Acadia Divinity College's Futuring Hub Blog, easily accessed online. It offers a series that features reflections from leaders who were at the Forum, sharing perspectives on what happened, why it matters, and where hope might lead us next.

Submitted by Jonanne Fenton on behalf of YPBC Women's Ministries

IONA PRAYER SERVICE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 7:00 PM

Featuring music by Iona Passage

If you are unable to be with us, but would like us to light a candle and say a prayer for someone, please email jpholmes@yorkminsterpark.com prior to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday.

The Lord is great and deserves all our praise! (Psalm 145:3)

We ended a time of **6+ years** with Heather Mackey as our faithful Director of Family Ministries. We thank Heather for her leadership and for modelling what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. We have seen what it looks like to love God, to follow His lead and not the other way around, to speak to Him first in everything, to be in the Word and obey what it says, and to fully trust Him.

We are also so grateful to her servant-hearted husband, Paul, who devoted so much of his time and gifts to Family Ministries. The theme of the last service with Heather and Paul was **The Greatness and Goodness of God**, taken from Psalm 145. Looking back at these years we see what the greatness and goodness of God has done. We recognize Him and see all that He is doing in and through Family Ministries. So, we will *“tell of Your greatness, my God and King”* (v.1) *“and tell the next generation about the great things you do.”* (v. 4.) We will continue to build upon what has been built and follow God’s lead. May God bless you Heather and Paul wherever He leads you.



Family Ministry Team

Our Family Ministry Team is excited about gathering to pray and learn more about Jesus and we are eager to model planting faith seeds with the children and youth. We continue to gather every Sunday morning at 9:45 and Tuesday evenings online to study God’s Word and pray together. It has been such a blessed time of fellowship.

- **Praise God** that Family Ministries and our Family Ministry Team continue to grow.
- **2 new families** have been coming regularly and **2 more** have joined our FM team: Monica and Tracy (class helpers)
- Tuesday night leaders’ group who meet on Zoom **completed the 10-week “Christ Centred Inner Healing” Course** by Alf Davis that Heather lead – **a gift!**

Father God, we pray to have a clear understanding of who You are and how You feel about us. We pray Your Holy Hand be upon Family Ministries, that You mold us into Christ-likeness so that we shine Your light and glorify Your name. Amen

Praise God for our DOXA Youth!

We are grateful for Isaac and Renée's leadership with our youth at this past November's CBOQ Ascent Youth



Retreat in Camp Kwasind. Eleven youth attended the Camp and enjoyed time together to fellowship, worship, and grow further in their faith. Along with the many activities they engaged in, they were also able to strengthen friendships with one another and with other church youth groups. A big thanks to the YP Women's Committee and the Board of Missions for sponsoring some of our youth to attend and help cover travel costs for all.

Lighthouse Kids Shine!

It was a joy to witness 3 more of our youth getting baptized on Sunday, November 23rd.

Zoe, Richard and Kevin were eager to publicly declare their faith in Christ and we continue to pray God's blessed hand upon them.

We praise God for baby Chiudo's dedication on Sunday, November 16th. His mom Diana is one of our Family Ministry leaders. We are all delighted to come along side one another to help nurture a relationship with Jesus.



Reminders for families

Supporting COT December 21st:
The Nativity Play children/youth will participate

December 24th:
Bethlehem on Yonge



Christmas Cup

December is here, and for Christians it marks a precious moment in the year—the celebration of the Nativity. Every Nativity scene carries its own peculiar beauty. For some, it is a place of shared joy; for others, a space of prayer, silence, and reflection. Yet for every Christian, it remains an incomparable time.

This year, I have been deeply immersed in the spirituality of forgiveness. Through encounters with patients, families, and fellow healthcare workers, I have discovered many dimensions of forgiveness – each capable of filling life with peace.

At decisive moments in life, we feel a profound need to be forgiven. It becomes an inner search – intense and sincere – focused on what we believe we have done or said wrongly. In those moments, the heart longs for reassurance. God responds with the promise found in Isaiah 43:25:

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

Forgiving those who have hurt us leads to freedom. Forgiveness contains within itself unity, restoration, and healing. And yet, how often do we hold back because of pride, vanity, or selfishness? Sometimes the wound is so deep that forgiveness requires a strength of soul we feel we do not have. But when we

refuse to forgive, relationships fracture or fade. We distance ourselves from others – and, in a way, from our own hearts and from God.

As Professor Brian Tracy reminds us:

“To be a totally and completely positive person, you have to forgive others.”

Forgiveness is a pathway toward healing. So this Christmas, I invite you to sit with a cup of coffee or tea – just you and God. Perhaps you will listen to music, or simply gaze out the window. But may you also dare to open the window of your soul, recalling moments when your words or actions fell short of what was right or loving.

As you enjoy each warm sip, thank God for His forgiveness and His immense grace. Acts 13:38–39 proclaims:

“Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you... everyone who believes is justified.”

If He forgives you, why hesitate to forgive yourself?

Forgiveness also touches our mental well-being. Resentment/ bitterness/hate often lie beneath certain neurotic or harmful patterns – sometimes shaped by childhood wounds or by projecting our own inner struggles onto others.

There is a saying: “Everything you see in another, you carry within yourself; that is why you recognize it.” In this sense, forgiveness is deeply tied to biopsychospiritual maturity.

Often, it is harder to forgive a parent, relative, or friend than it is to forgive ourselves. Yet forgiveness is a decision – one made for the sake of both mental and spiritual health. Even when the other person does not ask for forgiveness, choose to forgive anyway. Forgive from your inner self. And as you sip your drink, remember that we are all dust in the wind – and dust can shine only when filled with love. Forgiveness is, at its core, an act of love.

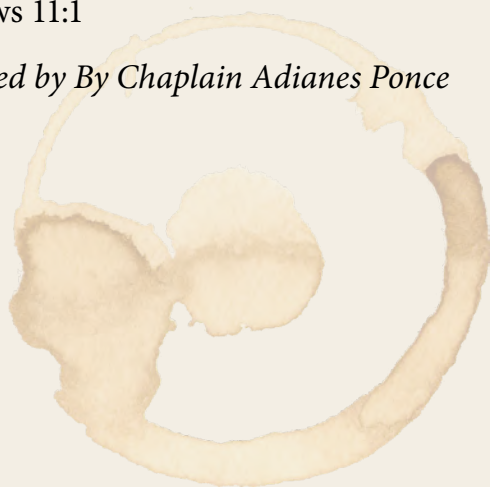
So forgive everyone, and yourself as well. And when you finish your cup, may Christmas find you renewed and ready to contemplate the star that shines in the sky for you.

P.S. Thank you for reading this far. It is an honor to accompany you on this journey and to honor what is sacred to us. May this Christmas be filled with peace, joy, and blessings for you and your loved ones. A warm, sincere embrace!

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

–Hebrews 11:1

Submitted by By Chaplain Adianes Ponce



YORKMINSTER PARK SPEAKERS SERIES

2025–2026
Friday Evenings
@7:00 pm

Continuing education lectures by outstanding speakers on topics of general interest

YPSpeakersSeries.com



Dr. Jane Philpott Physician, author, former federal Minister of Health, and Chair of Ontario's Primary Care Action Team
"Building a Primary Care System for Ontario"

16
January
2026



Michael Henry Writer, photographer, forest ecologist and author of *Ontario's Old Growth Forests*
"Witness Trees: Surprising stories of trees that predate Shakespeare, and tips on where to find them"

6
February
2026



Jim and Sue Waddington Retired Physics Professor and Nurse, respectively, and Amateur art historians
"In the Footsteps of the Group of Seven"

27
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Nic Masters Veterinarian; Director of Wildlife Health at Toronto Zoo
"Vets, Zoos and Conservation Science: how Wildlife Health professionals can help counter the biodiversity crisis"

20
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Marianne McKenna Founding Partner, KPMB Architects, Toronto
"Building Culture: Restoration & Additions to Massey Hall and Koerner Hall"

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Terry Fallis Humourist and best-selling author of *Best Laid Plans* and other books
"An Unorthodox Journey to the Published Land"

8
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2026



Prof. Andrew McDonald Brock University History Professor and expert on Medieval Scotland and the Vikings
"In Search of the Sea-Kings: the lost Kingdom of Man and the Isles, 1079 – 1275"

5
June
2026



Safe and Swaddled, Despite Snow, On Snow, On Snow

‘Tis the season – Advent! And along with our joyous Christmas celebrations often comes snow. But *this* year our first snowfall debuted *before* Advent – *before* Remembrance Day!

From November 7th – 9th our youth experienced a wonderful weekend of fun and spiritual growth at Camp Kwasind. I had the privilege of driving two of our girls to CBOQ’s drop-off spot on the Friday evening, and then the pleasure of picking them up Sunday. *That* Sunday – the one-month-too-soon Sunday of the first snowfall! It was such fun riding the wave of our youths’ excitement heading out, and then hearing their post-camp recollections, all while *I* kept my eye on the road as we crawled through snowy traffic heading back. My snow tires were already on, but I drove extra carefully, anyway, as I was carrying precious “cargo.”

Ironically, I chose city streets rather than the highway because I thought it safer. For the most part, I believe I chose correctly. However, within five minutes of our destination, while at a stop sign, we were rear-ended! My first thought was I was transporting beloved children, and responsible for their safety. Immediately I asked if they were okay; thank

God they were. Then came the jumping out of my car to talk with the other driver, through that slushy, mushy, mess of a wet snow mix still actively falling. He profusely apologized while still approaching me, sincerely concerned that we were injured, his adult daughter by his side for emotional support. We exchanged the requisite IDs and within 30 minutes we were back en route to YP. Before doing so, however, he was so concerned about the girls that he returned to our car to ensure that they were fine. He was so shook up that I felt compelled to give him a reassuring hug before parting.

The parents must’ve wondered what *happened* to us. But once we were on our way again, I didn’t call ahead. What value would there have been in scaring them when we’d be there in five minutes?

While we drove away from the scene, I put on my bravest happy face and energy for the girls’ sake – and their families, too, once we arrived. But, inside, I was rattled. Yes, my car received thousands of dollars of damage (\$11,500 as it turned out), but I was emotionally rattled for that early stretch of time at the very *thought* of what *might’ve* happened but didn’t. God’s hand was surely upon us.

By the time I got home and exhaled from the ordeal, and released my emotions with a cry, I straightened up and said a prayer of thanks to God for His hand upon us during that collision. And for continuing to watch over me while in my disturbed state while travelling the rest of the way home in my damaged-but-drivable, bungee-chord-held together, floppy-trunk car, all while my dashboard harassed me with repeated notifications that I shouldn't be driving with my trunk open!

With hundreds of fender benders that afternoon (436 in the GTA!), I anticipated that the mandatory collision reporting centre would be a disaster Monday morning. So, after some sustenance to fill my belly and settle my nerves, reluctantly, I headed back out into that still-active weather evening – floppy trunk lid, warning lights, and all – to the NW Toronto Collision Centre.

Miracle of miracles, I was *the only one there!* How could that be??? I didn't question, but, rather, gratefully ploughed through the process in 55 minutes. Thanks be to God... the waters parted for me on this leg of the ordeal. With all the tasks surrounding the accident behind me now – including 90 minutes on the phone, between my insurance company and car rental agency before heading to the centre– I drove home serenely. Because it was one of those nights where most people stayed put once they'd arrived home, the roads were amazingly empty. Without having to contend with other vehicles, I finally exhaled homeward bound.

All of a sudden, while still en route, I started conversing with God aloud, thanking Him repeatedly and profusely for watching over us earlier, and then me, singularly, during this last leg of the day's drama. I thanked Him for astonishingly parting the waters for me at the collision center; for allowing me to be the only one there, as a man stood in the

driveway with a clipboard, eagerly waving me in to be assessed (like an angel just waiting to guide me through)! I thanked God for the pleasant, patient staff that recorded my details. I thanked Him for the ease with which the whole ordeal was processed. And *then* I thanked Him for the virtually empty roads. (I even thanked God for the lovely cup of tea and vanilla-bean ice cream that awaited me when I arrived home. I *needed* that!

A good cup of piping-hot, well-sweetened tea, alongside one's favourite dessert, can settle many a rattled disposition.)

On the literal *and* the metaphoric roads of life, there are all kinds of twists and turns, slippery parts, and big hills, cavernously deep foggy valleys, *and* people that “crash and clash” into us unexpectedly. Thank God there are also plenty of smooth-going, straightforward, dry-and-sunny byways, unencumbered by barriers and blockades. But, alas, into each life a *little* rain periodically falls. (And sometimes, instead, snow, on snow, on SNOW, as English poet, Christina Rossetti, penned in 1872, for a poem originally entitled, *A Christmas Carol* – which later became known as *In the Bleak Mid-Winter*, once set to music by Gustav Holst in the early 20th century). But at least *this* time this pre-Advent tale to tell was just a single “snowball” up the side of my head that mucky November 9th late afternoon. And God's hand was upon us all throughout.

What a comfort it is to know that God's hand, *Jesus' hand*, is always upon us, especially when we experience our big and little life collisions and dramas. And so now, “at this time of the rolling year” (as Charles Dickens penned in, *A Christmas Carol*), thank you, God, not only for keeping Your hand upon us through life's daily celebrations, trials, and tribulations, but also for filling our hearts with Advent joy, swelling our love and gratefulness for the blessed

gift of sending to us Your only son – the birth of our beloved Messiah – baby Jesus! Amen! Amen! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hal-LEEEE-lu-JAH! May your *Advent Season* be *joyous*, *wonder-full*, and free of any snowballs that old-man winter might try to pitch. And if one of those unwelcomed snowballs *should* smack you up the side of the head this Advent season, or early into 2026, may God's hand be upon you and keep you safely swaddled in His loving arms – just as Mary lovingly and protectively swaddled her dear baby Jesus/OUR dear baby Jesus on that most-blessed Bethlehem eve long, long ago.

As our uplifting Family Ministries' praise

song reminds, "He fills me up. He turns me around. He places my feet on solid ground. I thank the Master. I thank the Saviour. I thank God! *WE Thank GOD...* for sending us Jesus! Happy birthday baby Jesus! We love you so!



Respectfully submitted by Nina Spencer. Nina is a (Virtual & In-Person) Motivational Keynote Speaker, Speaker Coach, Speaker Book Coach and Book Project Manager, Voiceover Artist, and Bestselling Author of Getting Passion Out of Your Profession, and A Time to Creep, A Time to Soar.



Who is my neighbour?
 **IN ACTION**

Who Is My Neighbour? Love Answered

Out of the Cold extends heartfelt thanks to **Blazing Kitchen** for preparing and donating a wonderful Christmas feast that was joyfully shared by 233 guests. Your generosity and care made this celebration truly special.

We would also like to **thank our volunteers** for their unwavering commitment and compassion to this much-needed ministry. Your faithful service is at the heart of everything we do.

Our regular Wednesday dinners will resume on January 7.

On December 24 and 31, we will be welcoming approximately **40 overnight shelter guests**, continuing our ministry of hospitality during the holidays.

We ask for your prayers for our ministry, our guests, and our dedicated volunteers as we serve during this season.



A simple ask: If you have **belts** – especially men's and larger sizes – that you no longer need, our guests would be grateful to receive them.

Thank you for your continued prayers, generosity, and support.



BUNDLE UP FOR

Bethlehem on Yonge

**Wednesday
December 24th
4:00 p.m.**

**The Christmas
Story re-enacted
in the park!**

Carol Singing, Cookies
and Hot Chocolate in
Cameron Hall.

Dress warmly!



UPCOMING SPECIAL SERVICES AND EVENTS

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| Wednesday, December 24 Christmas Eve | 4:00 p.m. Bethlehem on Yonge 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Rev Dr. J. Peter Holmes preaching |
| Thursday, December 25 Christmas Day | 11:00 a.m. Christmas Day Communion Rev Dr. J. Peter Holmes preaching |
| Sunday, December 28 No evening service | 11:00 a.m. Rev. Paula Willis preaching |
| Wednesday, December 31 New Year's Eve | 11:15 p.m. Watchnight Service Rev. Paula Willis preaching |
| Sunday, January 4 Worship IONA Liturgy | 11:00 a.m. Rev Dr. J. Peter Holmes preaching 7:00 p.m. Rev Dr. J. Peter Holmes preaching |
| Friday, January 9 | 7:00 p.m. An Evening with Peter An informal evening of fellowship with entertainment and light refreshments. |
| Sunday, January 11 Lunch and Tribute | 11:00 a.m. Rev Dr. J. Peter Holmes preaching Sacrament of Communion 7:00 p.m. Celebrating Peter and Janet Holmes |
| Sunday, January 18 No evening service | 11:00 a.m. Rev. Dr. Ken Bellous preaching |
| Sunday, January 25 No evening service | 11:00 a.m. Rev. Dr. Ken Bellous preaching |
| Sunday, February 1 Worship IONA Liturgy | 11:00 a.m. Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale Guest Preacher BHM 7:00 p.m. Rev. Dr. Ken Bellous preaching |
| Shrove Tuesday, February 17 | 5:00 p.m. Pastors' Pancake Supper |
| Wednesday, February 18 | 7:00 p.m. Congregational Lenten Study, led by Rev. Paula Willis ZOOM Based on Henry Nouwen's book, <i>Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life</i> |
| Saturday, February 21 | 9:00 a.m. YPBC Women's Retreat Leader: Rev. Dr. Anna Robbins <i>SEARCHING FOR HOME: Homelanding, Homesteading and Homecoming</i> |
| Sunday, February 22 | 11:00 a.m. Rev. Dr. Anna Robbins Guest Preacher |

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