

• GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION •



YPBC NEWS

December 2015

A classical painting depicting the Virgin Mary seated and holding the infant Jesus. She is wearing a red robe with a dark sash. To her left, another woman in a dark, patterned dress and a black head covering stands in profile, looking towards the child. The scene is set against a dark background with dramatic lighting.

YPBC Women's Retreat

6 February 2016

see Page 6

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Cover - **The Newborn Christ Child**,
Georges de La Tour (1593-1652),
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes,
France.

Christmas themes, Robertson Window



Comments and suggestions for future
editions are welcome. Please send to:

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The next newsletter will be published
in March. The deadline for
submissions will be announced.

Paul R Hill

As I write, December is hours away and as always the month that leads us to Christmas is full of concerts, services and other obligations. The church will be filled on numerous occasions, but everyone on the staff and team will be stretched to go the extra mile. Our families have often had to pay the price of our busy Decembers which undoubtedly is why some clergy I know don't look forward to Christmas.

Every year about this time I think of a seasonal song I first heard sung by Natalie MacMaster, the Cape Breton fiddler, called Get Me Through December. Written by two Nova Scotia songwriters the folk song has become part of my personal Advent tradition. In these early days I will often listen to it in my quiet moments.

Get me through December
A promise I'll remember
Get me through December
So I can start again.

Now that you have had a chance to get over the initial shock that some clergy may not enjoy Christmas, the truth is, I love Christmas and all the activity: if I didn't it would be torture. But still the thought of all that needs to be done as December draws near can be overwhelming. But that is why I listen to the song. It isn't my song. I think of it as Mary's song.

I've been to the mountain, left my tracks in the snow
Where souls have been lost and the walking wounded go
I've taken the pain no girl should endure
Faith can move mountains of that I am sure...

When I think of all that Mary must have gone through in the month leading up to Christ's birth I am in awe and wonder of her faith as she too must have prayed to simply get through December. The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem takes approximately ten days by foot. Now it is almost impossible to make the journey because of the political divide, but such a divide made the journey home impossible that first Christmas too.

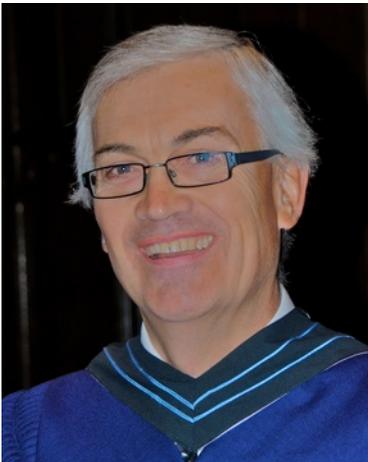
And then I think of Jesus and wonder what on earth God was doing entrusting his unborn son to the womb of this young inexperienced girl with the long journey ahead of her. Who was she to be given the Word made flesh? I am not sure I would have entrusted such a treasure divine with anyone, but God did and still does and not with Mary only. I marvel at the outpouring of God's vulnerability, trust and love for this world at Christmas then and now. Mary must have sensed God's love alive inside her and it was this grace that saw her through. I pray that we not lose touch with that same grace entrusted to us and that it may come to life within us in new ways this Christmas. Do you see why I love Christmas? How can I keep from singing?

Merry Christmas!
Peter

MUSINGS FROM THE MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE

"The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs....I made it beautiful with its mass of branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden." (Ezekiel 31:8-9)

"We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with silver." (Song of Solomon 1:11)



Every family has its Christmas traditions. For many Christians, an essential part of the yuletide season is the decorating of the Christmas tree. I remember that as a child, there was something comforting about the ritual of securing a tree for our house.

We would usually go to a place where you could cut down your own tree. My father would then get it all set up in the stand, and place it in our living room. Once he got the lights on the tree, the rest was up to us as children. My mother would bring out our boxes of decorations, including some old ornaments that had

been passed down through several generations. Garlands and tinsel shared space on the tree with these ornaments – old family heirlooms mixed in with newer decorations. The final “topper” was always an angel, which was so old it always seemed rather ragged. But we loved decorating that tree. It was always done the first week of December, and marked the start of our Christmas celebrations.

Our English word “ornament” comes from two Latin derivations: one meaning “trappings or embellishment” and the other meaning “to equip or adorn.” No one knows for sure when the idea of the Christmas tree began. But the most popular theory states that the tradition was started by an 8th century monk who came to Germany to preach. He is said to be the first to bring a fir tree to the German people to decorate, claiming that its triangular shape represented the Trinity. It was first decorated with candles. Another tradition holds that the great reformer Martin Luther introduced tree ornaments and decorations in the late 15th and early 16th century in Germany. Whatever the origin, tree ornaments are now a big business, with a diverse array of hanging shapes and messages.

Maybe it is the poignant memories that make the Christmas tree such a special symbol for me. Maybe it is the memory of the fir or pine tree filling the house with its rich scent. Perhaps it is the memory of bringing out those old ornaments and feeling their texture in my small, child's hands. Maybe it was a sign of feeling safe and loved by my family as we celebrated this special holiday together. In truth, it was all of these things. But when I entered adulthood; when my Christian faith matured; when I made my own commitment to follow Jesus as a disciple, my view of Christmas changed. There was still that sense of wonder, but in a different way. The wonder was not found in the tree of the ornaments, but in something else. The tree pointed to the truth behind the season – the wonder of a God who loved us so much that he did something amazing to redeem us – he became one of us. In something that defies comprehension, God became a man in Jesus, and eventually died on a tree (cross) to secure our salvation. It is a story that never grows old for me, even though there are many in our world who cannot comprehend it.

One of my favourite authors is the preacher and writer Frederick Buechner. In one of his sermons, he speaks of the One who dwells in eternity coming to dwell in time – God taking on flesh. He describes it in this way: “For those who believe in the transcendence and total otherness of God, it radically diminishes him. For those who do not believe in God, it is the ultimate absurdity. For those who stand somewhere between belief and unbelief, it challenges credulity in a new way. It is not a theory that can be tested rationally because it is beyond reason and because it is not a theory, not something that theologians have thought their way to. The claim is, instead, that it is something that has happened, and reason itself is somehow tested by it, humankind’s whole view of what is possible and real. Year after year the ancient tale of what happened is told – raw, preposterous, holy – and year after year the world in some measure stops to listen.”

Buechner’s words remind us of that ancient tale that never grows old for the people of faith. The hymn writer Katherine Hankey put it this way: “I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true; it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.”

During this Christmas season, as you hear that ancient tale once again, may all your spiritual longings be satisfied. May the Christmas tree be a reminder of the tree (cross) of sacrifice and the tree of life – symbols of God’s love and care for each of us.

MINISTER OF DISCIPLESHIP

The Miracle of Christmas ...Awaits Our Response

Matthew 1:18-25

These days I seem to be walking around with my head constantly revolving, my eyes trying to appreciate all the creative depictions of the wonder of the season. One painting, in particular, captured my attention — a portrayal of that first Christmas night and what took place in a lowly manger.

In the painting, Mary and the baby are prominent figures. Jesus is laying on a bed of straw with the radiant light of the Bethlehem star shining down on him. Mary is kneeling behind him. She has on a beautiful blue robe, hands clasped in prayer; her face



the picture of gratitude and praise.

The shepherds are there too, on the right. One of them is holding a lamb, seemingly anticipating the coming of the “lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) To the left, some townspeople are coming up the road to

worship the newborn King. And in the background are the animals - an ox, a donkey, a goat, a lamb.

Then there is Joseph, in the background, looking, not at Jesus, like all the others in the painting, but looking up to heaven, scratching his head, with this look of, “I don’t get it.”

Perhaps, if we could read his thoughts, we might hear him pondering, “What in the world is going on here? What does all this mean?”

The great thing about Joseph is that even though he didn’t understand all of what was going on, he still accepted it and celebrated it. He still trusted God and embraced it.

We are not unlike Joseph!

We can’t possibly comprehend the full meaning of Christmas. It comes to us wrapped in divine mystery and wonder and awe. Yet, like Joseph all we need to do is celebrate and embrace and welcome it.

My prayer is that you will find time in this season... to pause...to look up...even scratch your head...and in the midst of the wonder, find the assurance that God is with us and because of this, we can live in radical trust and all-embracing hope.

The miracle of Christmas...awaits our response!

Blessing of Peace,
Rev. Deborah Ban



With Open Hands

*Hope means to keep living
amid desperation
and to keep humming
in the darkness.*

*Hope is knowing that there is love.
It is trust in tomorrow.
It is falling asleep
and waking again
when the sun rises.*

*In the midst of a gale at sea,
it is to discover land
in the eyes of another.
It is to see that he understands you.*

*As long as there is still hope,
there will also be prayer
and God will be holding you in his
hand.*

Henri Nouwen

CHRISTMAS GREETING



I can hardly be happier than when I see little ones getting excited while singing about the coming of baby Jesus or older children while dressing as a character in the Nativity. What could be better to fill a child's heart

and mind as they prepare for Christmas?

May we all feel the same joy at this celebration of the coming of Jesus: Immanuel; 'God with us'.

Blessings to you and your family this Christmas.

Miriam Little

Director of Children's Ministries

2016 YORKMINSTER PARK BAPTIST CHURCH RETREAT

Mark your calendar! Yorkminster Park Baptist Church will be gathering for an all-church retreat on May 13 – 15, 2016, and you are invited!

The retreat will nurture inter-generational fellowship and be an opportunity for the congregation to bond closer together and grow in their Christian faith. It will be held at the beautiful Jackson's Point Conference Centre near Sutton, which is approximately an hour and 15 minute drive north of Toronto near the south shore of Lake Simcoe.

This is the same location of the 2014 YPBC retreat, which participants remember with fond memories.

"The 2014 retreat was special for the connections, the stories, the new friendships and the renewal of old," says Amy Charette. "Jackson's Point was an excellent and accommodating site, and I look forward to being back again in 2016."

A Retreat Planning Committee was struck in the Fall of 2015, and under the leadership of Kathleen Wilson, is moving ahead with preparations.

The retreat will begin at 7:00 pm on Friday, May 13 and conclude at 1:30 pm on Sunday, May 15. The weekend will feature a range of activities including small group sessions, reflection and prayer, worship, nature walks, board games and sports. If you are unable to attend the entire retreat, a Saturday-only option on May 14 is available.

Pre-registration is required. The registration fee depends on the length of time you participate, and the type of accommodation you choose (hotel, lodge, cabin). There is a limit to each option, and registration is on a first-come basis until all of the rooms are booked.

A bus will depart Friday evening at 6:00 pm from the church and return on Sunday with an expected arrival time of 3:00 pm. Transportation forms will be available to book a seat.

A retreat information session will be held after the morning service on January 31st and a registration booth will be available on February 7th, 21st and 28th after the morning service.

Additional details will be shared at the information session and included on the registration forms, which will be available on the church website or in the Narthex and Centre Hall.



"The retreat provides an opportunity to deepen the friendships formed in Toronto, which would not otherwise have a chance to develop," says Eva Guo.

"I look forward to the retreat in 2016."

submitted by Trevor Sinker

**FROM THE WOMEN'S EXECUTIVE...
INTRODUCING SISTER SUE MOSTELLER...
YPBC Women's Retreat Speaker – February 6,
2016**

My life-journey has been one of relationships with wonderful and amazing people, some of whom were disabled, and all of whom shaped my growth and transformation. They have been my teachers, helping me to understand that love is possible, and that God's spirit calls us to walk together, learn to forgive and experience the Kingdom of God on earth.



Sister Sue Mosteller came to Toronto from Ohio in the eighth grade to attend boarding school with the Sisters of St. Joseph. Over time, she was drawn to and won over by the open friendliness, kindness, compassion and spiritual vitality of the Sisters on which she thrived. By the time she completed high

school she wanted to become a Sister herself and eventually entered the order.

Following Teacher's College and teaching positions in Barrie, northern British Columbia and Toronto, Sr. Sue obtained her BA at the University of Toronto in 1967. While she was teaching, a friend took her to a lecture by Jean Vanier, founder of the *L'Arche* community in France in 1964, which eventually became an international network of communities responding to the needs of people with disabilities who were not recognized for their gifts and often rejected from ordinary life in society. (The *L'Arche* community, *Daybreak*, began in Canada in 1969.) Commenting on the Vanier lecture, Sr. Sue recalls that she was moved in her heart by this man of God who so radiated God's presence.

A short time later, she and a friend, Sr. Marie Paradis, attended another retreat led by Vanier at Mary Lake where Sr. Marie was asked to organize an international pilgrimage to Lourdes for people with disabilities, their families and other young people. Sr. Marie asked Mosteller for assistance in this task and only after shared prayer did she agree. The two Sisters chartered two and a half planes and went to Lourdes with 500 people from Canada and the US and joined 12,000 others from 14 countries. This included the *L'Arche* community of *Daybreak*. The experience had a powerful effect in which Sr. Sue felt deeply affirmed and strengthened to risk more of herself to work with those whose needs had previously intimidated her. She considers this to have been a turning point in the story of her vocation.

Upon returning to Canada from Lourdes, Sr. Sue asked to live and minister in the *Daybreak* community. This was in 1972 and her Superior affirmed her call. For 40 years, she lived with men and women with disabilities as she also served as Community Leader and the International Coordinator of *L'Arche*. During this time she published two books in English: *My Brother, My sister* and *Body Broken, Body Blessed* as well as a book in French: *A Condition D'Aimer: Joies et Difficultes de Vivre Avec les Notres*.

In Sr. Sue's most recent book, *Light Through the Crack*, she tells her own story and those of the people she has known throughout her life. She writes about her family and upbringing, the 50 years she has spent with the Sisters of St. Joseph, her years of involvement with the *Daybreak* community and her close 20 year friendship with Henri Nouwen. (When Nouwen died in 1996, he entrusted Sr. Sue with his estate, making her the literary executrix of his works.) With grace and humour she explores the relationships she has formed and the difficulties that go with them. She has learned, experientially, that it is impossible to live with people over the long term and hide your flaws and vulnerabilities.

In November 2011, Tyndale University College and Seminary conferred on Sr. Sue Mosteller the degree Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa). In 2012, she rejoined her Sisters in a Toronto convent and works

for the Henri Nouwen Legacy as a Trustee, a Society Member and with Henri's Archival Collection at the University of Toronto, St. Michael's College. She continues to connect with her friends at *L'Arche Daybreak*, lectures around the world and leads retreats and workshops. We are so pleased that Sr. Sue has agreed to lead the YPBC's Women's Retreat this year.

THEME: CHANGE.. And the Journey of the Heart

WHEN: Saturday February 6, 2016 from 9:00 am (registration) to 2:30 pm

WHERE: The Marriott Courtyard Hotel, 475 Yonge Street, Toronto, less than a block north from the College St. subway station. Please note new location. (Car pooling and public transit are recommended.)

FEE: \$50. Light refreshments and a hot lunch will be provided with gluten-free and vegetarian options available. Registration forms are available in the YPBC centre hall and narthex.

All women are warmly invited to what promises to be a renewing, soul nurturing day apart with Sr. Sue. We look forward to welcoming you.

(The information for this article was largely sourced from Tyndale's introduction of Sister Sue when she received her Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) 2011)

submitted by Jonanne Fenton

PRIMETIMERS

Primetimers meets on the third Tuesday of each month in the Friendship Room. **Simply bring your lunch. Coffee, tea, juice, dessert and warm fellowship are provided free of charge.**

Anyone who needs transportation to and from the church and/or a sandwich need only call the Church Office at 416-922-1167 and leave a message with Denise.

December 15, 2015 – Tom Hayes, retired Art Teacher:
Christmas in Art and Song

January 19, 2016 – Don MacDonald, retired Veterinarian:
Stories from a Lifetime of Veterinary Care

February 16, 2016 – Rosemary Aubert, internationally acclaimed Author: *Demystifying the Mystery Writer's Craft*

March 15, 2016 – Corey Keeble, retired ROM Curator: *What You've Never Heard About The Sinking of the Titanic*

TRANSITIONS

Since the last newsletter there have been several milestones in the life of the church.

Baptism

Luke Reyes

Deaths

Helen Speller

Barbara Ann Cowie



YORKMINSTER PARK GALLERY



Sue Ennis – *Abstractions in Colour Movement*

Opening reception: Sunday, January 10th following the morning service.

In this show, Sue Ennis explores paintings that are driven by intuition and colour. The paintings have no predetermined subject matter, but only the deep appreciation of energy, colour, and the light that emerges from both of these. The process involves reflection and reaction to the movement of the colours laid down.

Continues through February 18th, 2016.

Randall Speller – *If Winter Comes . . .*

Opening reception: Sunday, February 21st following the morning service.

Randall Speller's paintings focus largely on rural Ontario, on the farm fields, fence rows and forested woodlots that are shaped by time, weather, and the effects of light. And snow! Quite by accident many of these new paintings reveal the subtle pleasures of the winter landscape. As the poem suggests, however, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Continues through March.



Jessica Masters – *Open Air*

Opening reception: Sunday, April 3rd following the morning service.

Jessica Masters' pastel paintings often portray what is important to her: things that have an impact on her life --- her family, her history, the landscape surrounding her. Regardless of subject matter or medium, she strives to create an atmosphere and mood in each piece that viewers will connect with.

Continues through April.

