

## Coop's Scoops # 144, Tuesday December 22, 2020



Three more sleeps! Oh the excitement rising in many, many young hearts ( of any age) today. In our time and culture, there seems to be more excitement over Santa arriving than the birth of Jesus. I actually like the kneeling Santa picture I've posted today. Of course it is simplistic and fanciful, but it at least tries to channel some of the excitement in the best direction. I've no problem with Santa also causing excitement....Christmas is the big celebration that the Church has given to the world, in whatever form it is celebrated. Are you excited? I hope there is some new joy just waiting to emerge when you open your eyes on Christmas morning!

The **Birth of Jesus**, and our remembrance of that spectacular day, is a real cause for real joy and a real basis for real hope. Did you notice all the "real's"? So much in our day to day lives, especially in this year of pandemic, seems smushed over with "maybe's", "don't know's", "rumours", "probably's", and conflicting information sometimes beyond our comprehension... "REAL" means different things to different people.

Solomon records the words of Agur, son of Jakeh, in Proverbs 30. Here is what Agur counts as REAL. **"Every word of God proves true: He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him"** – v5a. And there were four things he counted as REAL and MARVELOUS! **"Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise: The ants are a people without strength yet they provide their food in the summer; the badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the rocks' the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; and the lizard can be grasped in any hand, yet is also found in King's palaces"**. If you read the whole chapter 30, you'll find other things that amaze yet are "sure" as sure can be. The common thought and simple message is that **what** GOD creates has enduring purpose, and **how** GOD creates is marvellous, and **who God is** remains unshakeable and utterly good. To bring that all to a point, no matter what is swirling about us, no matter what may be reported as true, or false, or good or evil, the one unchanging utterly true thing that we can totally believe in is

the Character Of God! As revealed to us by the prophets and by the One who is Himself the Word.

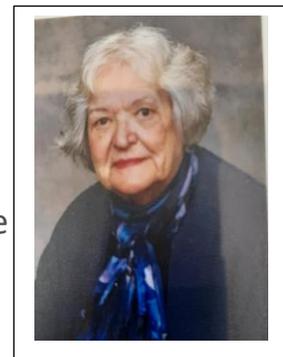
In this time of confusion, anxiety, and loneliness when what we have known can be lost in the chaos of what is constantly changing, may we all cling tight to the unchangeable character of God. He is Spirit. He is Love. He is Truth. His will is to give us a future full of hope.

**For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)**

*(That's your Scripture for today, and your homily all up front!)*

### **News from the Parish:**

It is with deep sadness that I tell you of the death this morning of our beloved Noni Rogers. With her family gathered round, receiving the best of in-home palliative care and firmly embraced by her faith, Noni completed her life upon this earth with dignity and courage. She leaves a big hole in the hearts of her family, in her friends, in St. Thomas, in our communities and yes, in the world, for her presence and her kindness were keenly loved. There will be a Celebration and Remembrance at a later date when Covid restrictions are lessened. I offer a true story as a tribute to the wisdom and love of Noni, whom I have known since becoming her Priest in 1999 while serving in the Parish of Muskoka Lakes. Noni had come to St. James the Apostle in Port Carling with her grandson Andrew one morning. He looked to me to be about 8-10 years of age. He came up during Communion with his grandma, and, with permission, I broke off a piece of the Bread and gave him a blessing. He seemed very serious about all that was going on. At the end of the service, last hymn just finished, I heard his voice from the back of the church "Grandma, who gets the trophy?". (when you think of it, a chalice really does look quite a bit like a trophy cup!) And Noni didn't miss a beat. She said simply "Andrew, in God's house, EVERYONE gets the trophy!" That's a picture of God's love that I have never forgotten. Thank you Noni for everything from all of us who loved you!



“ Rest eternal grant unto Noni, O Lord, and my light perpetual shine upon her. May her soul, and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. “



Don't Miss the Christmas Eve Service from St. Thomas, for LOB and St Thomas congregations! You will get a separate email with a live link to the service which will be posted on St. Thomas Facebook Page and the Deanery of Muskoka website. If you simply click on the blue link any time AFTER 5pm on December 24<sup>th</sup>, you will be able to worship with others in the virtual sanctuary. The service will remain posted for at least a week. I am asking that were possible we open the link around 7pm just so we can have the visual picture of each other worshipping “together” in our hearts and minds.

We wish a very Happy and Holy Christmas to all the families and singles who are helped by the Winter Pantry of St. Ambrose Church. During the most recent lockdown be assured that the Pantry remains open to bless those who struggle with food insecurity. Thanks to all who donate to the Pantry and to those faithful volunteers, led by Susan Pond, who make it all happen!

The buildings at LOB and ST Thomas are closed for the next four weeks by order of the Archbishop, and the Premier of Ontario. There may be some longer response times to messages and emails at this time. Mail and messages will be checked at least twice per week. As I have no internet service where I live, I am allowed to be in the office alone to do essential virtual work, but will also be working from home as much as possible. Your patience is appreciated very much! In any emergency please call me directly at 705 205 0549 (cell) or 705 646 8934 (land line).

**Fun and Faith Contributions:**

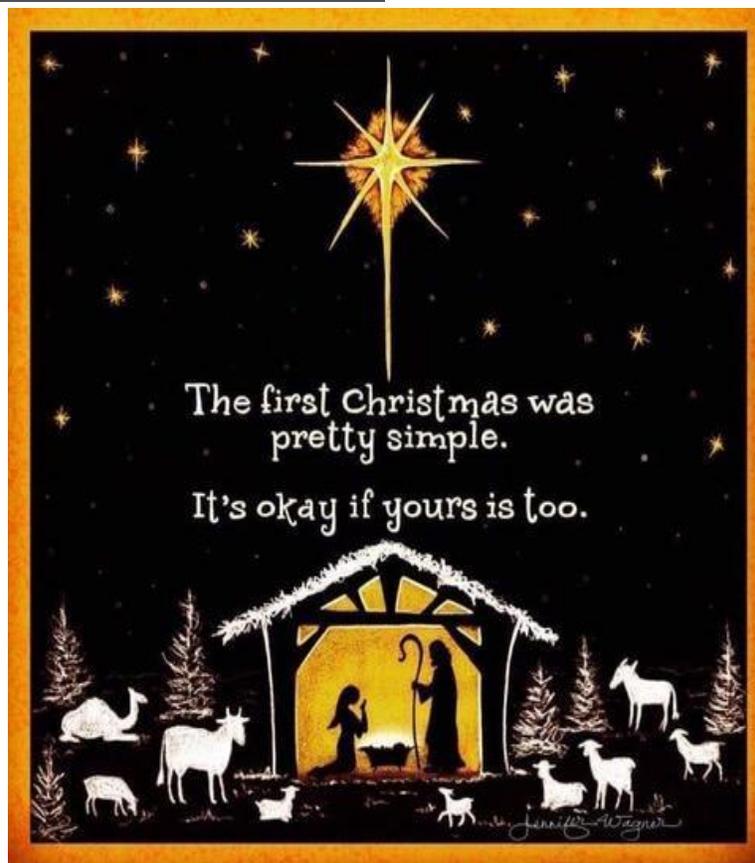
**Joanne cunnington sent in this invitation:**

**Christmas Eve Services:**

## **Living Nativity**

We are excited to offer a new Christmas Eve tradition at Bracebridge United Church with our Living Nativity. This drive-thru, live nativity scene will be hosted at the Muskoka Highlands Golf Course from 4:00pm - 7:00pm. Gather your household in the car, bring your favourite mug of festive hot cocoa and take a drive back in time to that unforgettable night when the shepherds gathered in awe, the kings bowed low, the angel song rang out in the heavens and the baby Jesus was born under a star-filled sky.

And from Jacquie Howell..... good news!



So I'm getting older and I'm not as well balanced as I once was and my Doctor recommended I put a bar in my shower. I have to say, I'm really quite happy with it.



### A Prayer for Christmas Week:

“When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with the flocks, then the work of Christmas begins: To find the lost, to heal those broken in spirit, to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all peoples, to make a little music with the heart. And to radiate the Light of Christ, every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say. Then the work of Christmas begins. This is our work, and this, Lord Jesus, is Your day! ”  
— Howard Thurman ( adaptation of “ I am the Light of the World” , Songs for a Gospel People)

### Blessing:

**Lord God, you have filled our hearts with joy; unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given! We bless and thank You, Almighty Father, we bless and receive You, Saving Son, we bless and share You, kind Holy Spirit, that all the world may be one and live to praise your name. May you remember always that the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is upon you and in you this day and forever. Amen.**

- Judie+