

**Prayer of Thanksgiving:** that God not only reveals who He is but also reveals his loving and giving character. **“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,” (Ex 34:6 ESV)**

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

**Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton** - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

---

**ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF November 2018**

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday

**In Saint John** , worship services will be November 11 and 25

**Communion-** on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

**Address: Moncton**—70 King St. —Sage building;

**Saint John**—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**Discipleship group at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vautour –Wednesday, November 21 at 7:30 PM.**

---

**Prayer update:**

**(For members to see additional information please see FOR MEMBERS ONLY THIS WEBSITE**

**California fires** - please pray for the for the thousands upon thousands of people who have flee the raging fires. Some have lost all their physical belongings and some have lost their lives. These are the worst fires yet burning in California.

**The good news of the gospel is a message to be shared with others.** Please pray that God will give us the love and wisdom to be able to share this message with others in a loving, clear and confident matter as we participate in his missional work on the earth in our generation.

**“5 ¶ Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” (Col 4:5-6 ESV)**

**Please pray** that God will put an end to the senseless violence happening in North America continent and other parts of the world.

**Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance** so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

**Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9-10)** as our world is suffering so much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

**Pray for the world and for all people:** we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **“1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,”** (1Ti 2:1-3 ESV)

---

## INHABITING THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: CHRISTMAS

By [Ted Johnston](#) - [October 05, 2018](#)

This is part 3 of a series looking at the Western Christian year. (from <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2018/10/inhabiting-christian-year-christmas.html>)

Last time we explored the meaning of Advent---the season of waiting. Now we'll look at Christmas--- the season of wonder. Christmas is a *season* (12 days), not just one day. As noted by Robert E. Webber in *Ancient-Future Time*, Christmas "points to the mystery of redemption that took place in the incarnation" (p. 57). Note the two elements: incarnation and redemption. Christmas celebrations within the church should address both for, as noted by Thomas F. Torrance, they are inseparably linked in God's plan of salvation through Christ:

*It is in the resurrection that we have the unveiling of the mystery of the incarnation: the birth and resurrection of Jesus belong inseparably together and have to be understood in the light of each other.... We are to think of the line from the birth of Jesus to his crucifixion as the line of the hiddenness of God, the line of his activity in penetrating into our estranged existence, in order to get beneath our burden of sin and judgement and to get inside our death. But there is also a line from his birth to his resurrection which is the unveiling of God, a line that becomes fleetingly manifest in the transfiguration as also in the healing miracles and the other manifestations of Jesus' creative power. (Atonement, pp. 218, 219)*

### Jesus: the Light of Life

During Christmas Season, we celebrate not only the birth of Jesus into the world, but also his birth in us. The miracle of new birth (regeneration) results from Jesus' incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension---the full scope of the gospel story, well-represented in this passage:

*We proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus' sake. For the same God who said, "out of darkness let light shine," has caused his light to shine within us, to give the light of revelation---the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:5-6, NEB)*

Many churches celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World, in a Christmas eve candlelight service (Christmas Vigil). As with all worship services during Christmas Season, this one views the birth of Jesus in the light of all that our Lord has done and is doing for our salvation. This underscores the importance of seeing each celebration in the Christian year as part of a unified whole---the full gospel story. As noted in the introduction to this series of posts on the Christian Calendar, the annual liturgy provides a powerful means by which we are enabled to *inhabit* the story of God, thus making it our own.

### God become man

During Christmas Season we celebrate the mystery of God uniting himself with our humanity as noted in this ancient prayer:

*Today is born of the virgin him who holdeth all creation in the hollow of his hand; He whose essence is untouchable is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a babe. The God who from of old established the heavens lieth in the manger: He who showered the people with manna in the wilderness feedeth on milk from the breasts. And the bridegroom of the church calleth the magi. And the son of the virgin accepteth gifts from them. We worship thy nativity, O Christ. (Ancient-Future Time, p. 62)*

Speaking of the stunning miracle of the incarnation, Bobby Gross wrote this:

*Christmas---not just the single day but the festival of twelve days---offers us anew the gift and draws us again into this mystery: Word-become-flesh, Creator-turned-creature, immensity-contained, fullness-poured-out, power-made-vulnerable, eternity-subject-to-time. All this self-giving by God for our sakes---a gift immeasurable, a love incomprehensible. (Living the Christian Year, p. 64)*

Noting that the incarnation is an inconceivable mystery, T. F. Torrance wrote this:

*...This is a mystery that is not conceivable in ordinary human thought---it is a miracle. And if [believers] know something of this miracle they will know that even in their knowing of it is a very wonderful thing, that it is an act of God. They know the mystery by faith, in the power of the Spirit, but not by themselves alone. It is a gift of God. (Incarnation, pp. 87-88)*

### The wonderful exchange

Concerning what was accomplished via the incarnation, Gregory of Nazianzus wrote this:

*Man's nature is made new as God becomes man; he [God] remains what he was and becomes what he was not. (Ancient-Future Time, p. 62)*

Christmas Season celebrates this new event, this new becoming, in the life of God. It also celebrates a new event, a new becoming in the life of humanity, the reality that the incarnation not only brings God to human nature, it brings human nature to God in what the early church referred to as "the wonderful exchange." The apostle Paul put it this way:

*For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)*

Laurence Stookey puts it this way:

*Christmas is the enfleshment of God, the humiliation of the Most High and divine participation in all that is painful, ugly, frustrating, and limited. Divinity takes on humanity, to restore the image of God implanted at creation but sullied by sin. Here is the great exchange Christmas ponders, that God became like us that we might become like God. God accepted death that the world might accept life. The Creator assumed temporality to redeem creation from futility. (Calendar, Christ's Time for the Church, p. 106)*

Christmas Season is thus a powerful reminder that what we humans could not attain because we could not raise ourselves to God, the Word of God (God's eternal Son) attained by descending to us---becoming one of us---*Emmanuel*, God with us. During Christmas Season, we celebrate both the mystery of God becoming human and the mystery of our own person united with Jesus, and through Jesus united with the triune God. *Glory to God in the highest!*

### A time to celebrate and contemplate

Christmas also reminds us that the wonderful exchange is *all of grace*---a gift we could never earn or deserve, one that accomplishes what we could never achieve---union and communion with God. Given this wonderful, mysterious truth, Christmas Season is a time for both great rejoicing and for quiet contemplation---great thanksgiving coupled with profound humility. Through these spiritual disciplines, we enter more fully (embrace more completely) the union we have with Christ by the Spirit as Jesus, at Christmas, is born anew by faith in our hearts.

I urge pastors and worship leaders to design their Christmas Season worship services to provide space for both celebration and contemplation. In 2018, Christmas day (December 25) is on a Tuesday. With the fourth Sunday of Advent being December 23, you could hold your main Christmas Day service on Christmas eve (December 24) or on Christmas day, and/or have a Christmas Season-themed service on Sunday, December 30 (the sixth day of Christmas). To help in your planning, here are the Revised Common Lectionary readings for those services:

<b>Nativity of the Lord</b> December 24 or 25, 2018 ( <i>Christmas Eve or Christmas Day</i> )	<u>Isaiah 9:2-7</u>	<u>Psalms 96</u>	<u>Titus 2:11-14</u>	<u>Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)</u>
<b>First Sunday after Christmas Day</b> December 30, 2018	<u>1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26</u>	<u>Psalms 148</u>	<u>Colossians 3:12-17</u>	<u>Luke 2:41-52</u>

**GCI principle** website and Moncton Websites—[www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca), [www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton); For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—[evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)*