

A Christmas Message from the Bishop

*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

As I look back on the first Christmas Eve service that I shared in as a very new bishop, ten years ago, I was filled with a whole host of hopes and fears! What was true then, continues to be true a decade later, that we live in and minister in, a church and a world that rarely experiences the peace and stillness that this wonderful Christmas hymn speaks of. When we reflect upon the last line of this first verse, one could possibly be forgiven for struggling to find hope and meaning in this promise: "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

As I come to this last celebration of Christmas for me as the Bishop of Niagara, however, I want to acknowledge and give thanks for the ways in which so many hopes and dreams have found expression in our work together and that so many of our fears as a church have been laid to rest.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we will open our hearts once again to the story of a man and a woman whose circumstances were not of their own choosing. Matthew's gospel tells us that Joseph's first thought, when he was told that Mary was pregnant, was to have her dismissed quietly. Luke tells us that Mary's reaction was one of fear and disbelief. It sounds familiar!

As they discerned their future, God spoke to them and compelled them to embark upon this long and challenging journey as a family and they drew strength from each other and from the presence of God who walked with them every step of the way. In this holy season I also give thanks that this has been our experience in the Diocese of Niagara, in much of what we have set out to accomplish.

As we come, once again, this year to celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus the Christ, we seek to fully embrace the truth and the promise that God is with us; that God loves us and is inseparable from our human experience and reality. We understand that this does not mean that, from now on, everything will be perfect. We know that Christmas was the beginning of yet another journey that would take our Lord to the cross. The story of the birth of the Christ child reminds us, nevertheless, that there is no situation and no life that is beyond the reach and the desire of God to enter into and to change in new and dramatic ways. It has been my great privilege to witness the gift of this transforming love in parishes and in ministries across the Diocese of Niagara and in the many places I have traveled to around the world.

For me this beautiful hymn, "O little Town of Bethlehem" continues to be a meaningful prayer and steadfast promise:

*O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!*

Office Hours for the Christmas season

Please note, the office will be closed at 3:00pm on Thursday, December 21 and re-open on Tuesday, January 2 at 9:00am. We wish you all a safe, peaceful and joyous Christmas season.

And a reminder, if you have any 2017 expenses you'd like to be reimbursed for, please submit asap.

This Week at Inca



Carols and Lessons

Sunday, December 24 at 10am

Christmas carols and seasonal readings, with special music performances by the Incarnation Festival Choir and Strings

Christmas Eve Services

4:30pm – Family friendly

7:00pm – Holy Communion with carols and candles

10:30pm – Holy Communion with carols and candles

New Year's Eve Day, December 31

8:30am Holy Communion, spoken service

10:00am Holy Communion, choral service



WOW, what a night!

The performers were outstanding, the church was warm and inviting, the volunteers were helpful and engaging, the choirs and musicians were delightful and the audience was impressed and thankful. It truly was magical and memorable. Thank you to everyone in the Incarnation community for supporting this effort.

If you'd like to see a highlight video, you can [go to our website](#) and view it there.



Contemplative Fire – Returns in January

Contemplative Fire is space and time to reflect, meditate, review, and recharge your emotional, spiritual and physical life. We provide a short time of hospitality starting at 8pm then we gather together as a contemplative and intentional community. We seek to enable reflection and meditation for all, from the novice to the experienced person.



Incarnation Choir Rehearsals Wednesdays at 7:15

If you are interested in sharing your voice, please join us at one of our Wednesday rehearsals, or speak to Charlene after a 10:00 service.



Wing and a Prayer – Returns January 25

We meet at 6:30pm at Monaghan's. Cost: \$25 per person including food and drink. RSVP Winkie Macdougall. Everyone is welcome!

Community News



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Every year between January 18-25 is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Christians around the world are invited to pray for the unity of all Christians, to reflect on scripture together, to participate in jointly-organized ecumenical services, and to share fellowship.

The theme for the 2018 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes to us from the Caribbean region. The ecumenical team chose the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15:1-21) – a song of triumph over oppression – as the motif of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

[Download your Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018 materials today.](#)

This & That



Looking to Volunteer?

We have lots of way you can get involved. Positions include: altar prep, greeters, readers, hosts and coffee preparation. **Youth** can gain some volunteer high school hours. Training will be provided. Contact Julia Lockhart if you are interested in helping out. Don't forget to mark changes to the schedule on the master copy in the office.



Milk Bag Collection

We're still collecting Milk bags for the kids at Ellengale Public School



Our recycling efforts! New procedures

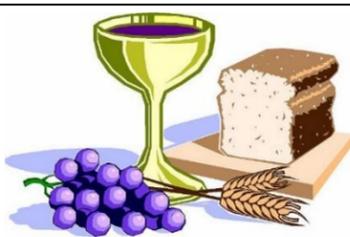
Thank you to all our hard-working volunteers who prepare the coffee and help with the set-up and clean-up of our premises. The daycare has been testing a new green bin routine with much success. We have almost completely eliminated critter attacks!

- Start a new **SMALL** green bin for each service or event. Before leaving, tie off the bag and move the **SMALL** green bin waste to the shed and deposit into the **LARGE** green bin. This will eliminate any critter attacks. No green bins are to be left in the kitchen or out the back door after each event. If you don't know where the key to the shed is located, please ask a Warden or office staff.
- Green bin liners are located in one of the 3 stacked multi-coloured baskets in the kitchen on the counter by the small sink
- All recycling must be emptied after each coffee hour or event. The large blue recycling bins are located at the back door. Please dump all recycling into the larger bins before leaving the church.



Changes to Order of Service or Bulletin News - Any changes need to be sent to the office by Tuesday, noon. office@incarnationchurch.ca

Nametags let people know who you are and make it helpful for people to put names to faces, especially for newcomers



Receiving Communion

All people at Incarnation are invited to receive the bread and wine at communion. The bread is received from the priest who stands between the servers who offer wine from the common cup; choose whatever side is free. You may choose to receive from an individual wine cups available to the left of the altar. Take one, consume the wine and replace the empty cup in the same spot. We hope this provides an inclusive approach to communion where all are welcome.

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

	Dec 24 @ 4:30	Dec 24 @ 7:00	Dec 24 @ 10:30	December 31
Bread Making	Julia Lockhart	Julia Lockhart	Julia Lockhart	J. Lockhart
Altar Prep	Anne Moniuk & Michele Stevens	Anne Moniuk & Michele Stevens	Anne Moniuk & Michele Stevens	A. MacNaughton
Coffee 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	Barb Gowing
Coffee 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	L. Hickey
Host/Greeter	Penny	Stacey Ann Williams	Stephen Hutchinson	S. Hutchinson
Reader 1	N/A	Graham Hughes	Michele Stevens	B. Abrams
Gospel	Tracey/Aiden	Ofor Aligwekwe	Mervyn Russell	G. Hughes
Prayers	Penny	Jeff Bowden	David Wieler	M. Russell
Offertory 1	Mary Loeffler	Suma Boby	Terry Burk	N/A
Offertory 2	Ella Loeffler	Mathew Zachariah	Winnie Burk	N/A
Offertory 3		Graham Hughes	Mac Morrison	N/A
Offertory 4		Denise Bold	Pearl Moffat	N/A
Server 1	Claudine Boulert	Denise Bold	Pearl Moffat	A. MacNaughton
Server 2	Ann MacNaughton	Stacey Ann Williams	Patricia Russell	B. Hanna-Morrison
Wine Cups			Leslie Hickey	c. Boulert
Counting	David Jenkins and Pearl Moffat			J. Lockhart

Please Note: Thanks to all of you who update the master copy in the office – very helpful for me!

[DOWNLOAD THE JAN/FEB SCHEUDLE HERE](#)