

## Holy Land

This was my first visit to the Holy Land. We had a terrific holiday overall, but I found our 4 days in Israel disturbing.

We were supposed to dock at Ashdod for two days and Haifa for two days, but as we were approaching the coast, the Israeli Defense Force launched a missile attack on a Hamas training camp in the Gaza Strip and the port of Ashdod was closed to cruise ship traffic. We were diverted to Haifa for all four days in Israel. The down side of this shift was that it took longer to drive from Haifa to Jerusalem and Bethlehem; the up side was that we got to see more of the countryside.

Every day we saw sections of the security wall that separates Israel from areas under Palestinian administration. About 4 or 5 metres high, surmounted by razor wire with guard towers at its corners, it gave Palestinian villages the unmistakable look of a prison. The only Palestinian area we visited was Bethlehem and the contrast between the quality of life on either side of the wall was obvious. Israel is a modern, clean, highly developed, efficient, and wealthy country. Palestine is not. This distinction was reinforced by the Israeli settlements on occupied land around Jerusalem. In my mind, I had been expecting small encampments. What we saw were instant cities of a dozen or more brand new apartment buildings. Most



A bar-mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem

troubling was the "Pilgrim's Map of the Holy Land" in which the 1948 boundaries of Israel are not shown. The entire West Bank (which was occupied by Israel following the Six Day War in 1967) is shown as Israeli territory with differently shaded areas to indicate Palestinian or joint Israeli-Palestinian administration. The potential for a Palestinian state just isn't on the map.

The Old City of Jerusalem was dirty and crowded – and none of the Christian holy sites suggested even a hint of sacred space. The problem wasn't the tacky religious commercialism of the Via Dolorosa, lined as it is with storefronts hawking icons and trinkets. It was

more the lack of historical integrity that attempted to pass off sites from the Fourth Century (or later) as the "actual spot where Jesus...". The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was a dismal disappointment – far more reminiscent of death than resurrection.

In contrast, the Western Wall was big and vibrant as bar mitzvah candidates danced with scrolls of the Torah while their female relatives sang and showered them with flowers and candy. This is the holiest site in Judaism: a buttress wall, all that remains of the Temple of Solomon and its successors on Mount Moriah. The last Jewish temple was destroyed

by the Romans in 70 AD. Since the Arab conquest in the seventh century, the Temple Mount has housed the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. It is the third holiest site in Islam (after Mecca and Medina) where the Prophet Mohammed is believed to have been taken up into heaven by the angel Gabriel to meet God face to face. In the New Testament, Luke says Jesus ascended into heaven from Bethany – just across the Kidron Valley from the Dome of the Rock. One guide book I read described Mount Moriah as "the most contested piece of real estate on the planet".

While some of the religious sites

were disappointing, the land itself was beautiful. The visit changed the way I read the Bible. It also caused me to ask: why is this "Holy Land"? Why would God and the human imagination choose this particular narrow strip of arable land beside the Mediterranean Sea as special or even divinely appointed? Scarred as it is by conflict and strife, why this land?

I began to glimpse an answer one day as we were driving along the base of Mount Carmel and our tour guide talked about Megiddo. He explained how this was an important site in the ancient world because of its strategic location guarding a narrow pass. Whenever the great powers of the ancient world wanted to trade with each other or make war on each other, they had to follow the Fertile Crescent – that band of arable land that stretches from the Nile River in Egypt to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in modern Iraq. The Holy Land is in the middle of this ancient highway which became an important military artery for the Roman Empire. They called it the Via Maris or "maritime road". Along the Mediterranean coast, this route is interrupted by Mount Carmel and, to get around it, armies and traders would have to turn into a narrow pass at the site of ancient Megiddo. As a result, Megiddo was conquered and re-conquered many times in its history.

That's when the penny dropped. What makes this land holy are not the things it contains, but where it stands. God's land of promise is the meeting place of great powers and at its heart lies the Abode of Peace, Jerusalem. This is a "holiness" defined, not by the space it occupies, but by

the spaces between which it may mediate. It is important, then, that the Holy One calls chosen people to hold this space in between and to make it a place of peace.

You may be more familiar with Megiddo by its biblical name, Armageddon, which the Book of Revelation envisions as the site of the final conflict between good and evil. (Rev 16:16). In 1949, Holocaust survivors founded a kibbutz there which remains to this day, a mere 7 kilometres from the West Bank. As in ancient times, Megiddo stands in-between.

It's easy for us to criticize the actors in Israel/Palestine from the security of our homes in Canada. It's so tempting to talk about oppression and injustice and cluck over lost opportunities for peace and reconciliation, but none of us can claim any special achievements in this arena. You see, I think we all share a calling to become a holy place – a sacred space defined not by what we are, but what we are in-between. We are called to a righteousness marked not by what we can push or advance, but by what we can reconcile and make whole.

History, both ancient and modern, demonstrates how peacemaking is an impossible vocation – yet it is our calling as children of the living God and worthy of our best efforts. This Advent, may God prepare within us a holy place where the Prince of Peace may be born and thrive – so those among whom we live will make peace in love with justice.



## HAVE YOU HEARD?

by Judy Jupp

- Can you believe that yet another Christmas Market has been organized by over 190 volunteers, and has been set up, and taken down, after tons of hours of hard work? We made approximately \$26,000 on Market Day alone! Sales have not stopped because of stuff still in the Narthex, and expenditures have not been submitted. Working together, laughing together, and sometimes agonizing together sure helps build community. Here's to us!
- Christopher Ernst, son of Wendy and Dave, has earned his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Toronto. He shall henceforth be referred to as Dr. Christopher Ernst. Congratulations!
- Eleven veterans marched down St. Christopher's aisle on November 6th at our Remembrance Day services. Our thanks for their attendance, and for their contribution during the Second World War. We will always remember.
- On Sunday, November 13th, we welcomed the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, who is the National Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada. His message of hope for all people was well received, as was his humour and gift of friendship.
- Breaking the Silence" on Saturday, October 22 was organized by Sue, and the planning team, to try to break the barrier to our inability to talk about mental health. This was a courageous endeavour, and those who attended left the church with more information about this important subject.
- The 18th and 19th of November was our Diocesan Synod. This is the annual general meeting of the Diocese of Niagara. Our clergy and lay delegates attended this meeting. Bishop Bird was in the chair. All thorny problems, and money issues are carefully scrutinized and dealt with, so that we can go forward with everything solved.
- As this Messenger comes out before Christmas, we hope all the stickers in the Narthex have been "taken", so that our families who need help have been looked after. This organizing of help is a huge job, and faithfully done each year by Sue, and Liz Woloshin, and other caring volunteers!



Remembrance Sunday, November 6th, 2011

Front Row (L to R):

Ian Hay, Bill Gasson, Murray Baldwin, Bob Foster, Gordon Brownhill

Back Row:

Norm Segger, Ron Forbes, Wilf Devney, John Smith, Wilf Darby, Don Taylor

## The Christmas Rush

One of the amazing things about the Christmas season is that so many of us, especially families with children, who already lead busy, full and hectic lives, manage for a few weeks of the year to get even busier! Often we push ourselves, trying to make sure that this year 'The Magic' happens and that the wonderful chaos of Christmas Day is well orchestrated. I hope and pray it all goes well with you this Christmas time.

But the bigger problem doesn't seem to be abating – the problem is not, I am convinced now, a lack of time, but our busyness and stress. There is so much pressure, particularly on parents and young people; to do more, achieve more, have more, and to turn the wheels of our activity ever faster.

The causes of this pace of life are far bigger than we realise – it is a "first world problem", but its symptoms are ever more worrying – stress, tiredness, an unaccountable feeling of insufficiency, depression, arguments, conflict. It means that the voices of those wanting us to do something more seem to be shouting ever louder and our resources are stretched ever thinner.

It means that the Church finds itself caught in a hard place, wanting to be an active community, doing more and growing our ministry, but also needing to find ways to be a place of refuge, quiet and refresh-

ment.

The first Christmas was a busy 'day in the life' – with Roman census activity making crowds flock to small towns, inns full, parties and reunions in full swing, military activity on high alert for signs of rebellion, angels appearing, stars moving, animals bustling and crowded in their stables, and a young couple frantic and fearful as the time of birth drew near, and then the screams of childbirth and a newborn infant. There is nothing peaceful about Christmas.

Yet, we hail the newborn prince of peace. We sing of a Silent Night. We hear of a town laying still and for me, the most peaceful time, perhaps of the whole year is the ending moment of midnight mass, when all has been done and in the darkness and quiet of candlelight I remember that something sacred has come into the world and nothing is meant to be the same again.

That sacred thing was God, fully incarnate, made flesh. But he did not appear as a fully grown man. That he came as a child matter -- he had no option but to be and rely on his parents. Just 'being' is an art that we are losing; making time to rest, to be who we are without distraction or stuff, delighting the fact of our being. Some people call it prayer, whatever you call it, do it this Christmas. Take time to rest, to be, it is the way God made you and it is the greatest gift we have.



Shine will be performing their new pageant this year on Sunday, December 18th. All children aged from 6-12 are welcome to come and be part of this exciting play. If you want to take part, you will need to attend the dress rehearsal on Saturday, December 17th 9am-12noon. Please let Mike Deed or Mary Jane know if you will be coming. Shine rehearsals will resume on Thursday, January 19th, 2012!

## Youth Group Christmas Toiletries Drive

In Hamilton, many teenagers sleep on the street every night. Often they are at risk and face issues of addiction or the need for special support. The Living Rock Youth Centre seeks to support these young people. Our Youth Groups would like to make a difference too, especially at Christmas, by collecting the toiletries that these young people need.

- December 4th Shampoo and Body Wash
- December 11th Facecloths and Hairbrushes/Combs
- December 18th Individual Chocolate Bars

## G.I.F.T.

On January 8th, G.I.F.T. is going to launch our latest adventure in the 'Shake It Up Café' where, over the weeks until Easter we will explore God's recipe for our lives! Be prepared for lots of tasty crafts and watch out for our 'Bring Your Parents To G.I.F.T.' Sunday! Don't miss our exciting launch day with all sorts of games, crafts and cooking. Also, watch out for our MEGA FOOD DRIVE staring January 15th – the children of G.I.F.T. invite you to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of others by sharing food week by week.



## All Saints' Day 2011

by David Collard

All Saints' Day is usually a rather overlooked religious holiday for us Christians. Other holidays like Christmas, Easter or Ash Wednesday gather large amounts of people at the church to celebrate but All Saints' Day usually has a small attendance and this year was no exception. However this did not stop the children and youth from having an educational day to learn more about God, the saints and themselves. The day started off with the children getting to know each other, and the youth preparing cookies for a later use. Then after a gathering, and a talk from Mike about worship, the different age groups separated for activities. The youth went with Mike to learn about biblical history and traditions, ceremonies and the Ark of the Covenant, while the children split off into groups to learn about prayer and worship through creative activities and games. After a half hour lunch, the youth walked to Spencer Smith Park to walk the labyrinth, while the children walked a smaller version inside the church. Near the end of the day, we all prepared packages of cookies, tea and cheerful cards to give to those in need – a way of worshipping the God we meet in others. We finished with an overview of the day and communion. Then the parents came to end our fun! I'd encourage all kids to join us at Ash Wednesday this year and All Saints' Day next year for even more fun (and even less school).



Join us  
on  
Dec. 3, 2011  
at 7pm  
**“We’re  
having  
a  
Party”**  
to  
celebrate  
Mary Jane’s  
ministry  
among us.

**O**n his trip, Steve saw several images of St. Christopher and managed to get photos of a couple. On the left is a modern mosaic from the Baptistery of Lydia in Philippi (Northern Greece). Far more impressive in colour than in black and white! The one on the right is an icon from a shop in Cana (next door to Nazareth) in the Galilee, Israel.

## From The Registry

### Baptism

Oct 30 Nathan James Totten-Pitt

### Deaths

Oct 29 Ida Marie Johanna Beekmans

30 Arthur Richard Hutchings

Nov 10 Florence Eleanor Meares



**W**e are inviting all the women of St. Christopher’s to join our group. We meet on the second Monday of each month in the Family Room at St. Christopher’s. Each month we welcome speakers with interesting topics, work related or life experiences. Over coffee, tea and refreshments we share fellowship and information and have fun. Our next meeting is December 12. Please join us for an informal evening; share some Christmas goodies, meet new friends and learn more about our group. For more information please call Gloria Bilous 905-637-7306 or Marva Worrell 905-336-2841.

# TAKE THE LEAD – MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

by Carol Henley

**M**aking St. Christopher's a vibrant, faithful community that makes a difference in the lives of others is the work of many people both clergy and laity. In fact, we recently estimated that over 300 members provide more than 46,600 hours of volunteer time each year to carry out the ministry that we undertake! We all have gifts to share and helping people to find meaningful ways to serve is a goal we work hard to achieve.

Each year at our Vestry meeting we elect parishioners to the following key leadership roles: Wardens, Lay Representatives to Synod, and Parish Council Members at Large. Finding the right fit between the requirements of the position and the gifts of the candidates ensures St. Christopher's will be stronger, more vital and more effective in the delivery of our ministry and mission. Here is what some of our members have had to say about their experience serving in these roles:

"Being Deputy People's Warden has been an incredible journey thus far", commented Lisa Morelli. "I have learned and am continuing to learn more each month with regard to the inner workings of St. Christopher's Church. Being a part of a wonderful team makes the job much easier. We have many varying talents and by working together we can tackle anything. Perhaps it was a higher power calling me to be in this role. I know for certain God led me to St. Christopher's Church, which I consider to be my home away from home. Should

anyone be considering joining the Corporation, do not hesitate to talk to me."

Joanne Gallagher had this to say about joining Parish Council as a Member at Large, "Honestly, I feel that I have received more than I have given! As a new member of the church, being on the Parish Council has helped to further "baptize" me in the spirit of St. Christopher's. It has helped me to know the values we share and has confirmed for me that this is my spiritual home. As a member of the council, I have been able to learn about the other committees and the ongoing challenges of maintaining the church and running all its programmes. This has fostered a renewed commitment to try and support the church as much as we can. In the past when I attended church, I was a passive "consumer". Sounds terrible doesn't it? Now I'm a member of a family."

"As a Lay Representative to Synod, I value the opportunity to work closely with the clergy and other lay leaders of the parish as well as some of the corresponding leaders of other churches", writes John Stephen. "I am happy to be a member of this group and would encourage others to consider the opportunity in the future. As I write this, I am just home after my first of two days at the Diocesan Synod. The Synod is the annual general meeting of the diocese. We listened to the Bishop's charge, or statement of the policy directions for the diocese for the coming year. The vision for the diocese is symbolized by a stylized

flower with 5 petals, each petal representing a different area of focus. One of these areas is about creating a generous culture of stewardship and much of today's discussion revolved around learning what other churches in the diocese are doing with respect to this topic and what new ideas we might be able to bring to our parish."

If you would be interested in exploring these roles further, job descriptions for each position are available in the office. These include an outline of the responsibilities of the role and approximate time commitment required, the skills and experience which would be helpful,

length of the term of service and some of the benefits to both the volunteer and the parish. You can also speak to any member of the Parish Council (we are identified as such on our name tags).

Our Vestry meeting next year will be held on Sunday, February 12th but we would appreciate receiving nominations for these positions by December 31st of this year. There are a couple of reasons for this. All of these leadership positions provide an opportunity to have an impact on the ongoing operations and future direction of the parish. Having time to confirm that the gifts and desires of the candidate and the demands

of the role are a good fit helps to ensure that the experience of serving will be positive for both the volunteer and the parish. This process of conversation and discernment avoids having "winners" and "losers" on the day of the Vestry meeting and lets us focus instead on our gratitude for the gifts of time and talent of our members and their willingness to enhance the Life-Giving, Life-Affirming and Life-Changing mission of our parish through their service.

If you would like further information about the nomination process, please speak to the Rector or inquire in the office.

## TOURTIÈRE! A LA MODE DE CHEZ NOUS...

by Carol Henley

**T**he way St. Christopher's does tourtière (traditional French Canadian meat pie) is really something to experience! Over the course of six weeks each autumn a team gathers one morning each week to create a total of about eight hundred pies which are sold to parishioners, their friends and neighbours and at the Christmas Market. One of these mornings is devoted to making apple pies from fabulous Ontario Spy apples. This year's team consisted of 37 people who shopped, chopped, pared, cooked, cut lard, made and rolled pastry, filled, crimped, tagged and bagged, boxed, loaded freezers, washed up and sold pies with great good humour throughout! Thank you one and all. This project team will have raised about \$6,000 this year for the church by the time the last pie goes into an oven.

Beyond the organizational, culinary and financial elements is a wonderful opportunity to make new acquaintances and deepen existing connections. Gathering around the island for the morning at St. Christopher's is to experience some of the best of our community – friendship, support, and service together. I am very grateful to have been a part of this talented team. There is a spot for everyone in the kitchen at tourtière time. If you think you might like to participate in some way next fall, just let the office know and we will be sure to let you know of our plans in advance!

Here's a final word about our product which came to us from a friend of one of our parishioners. "I always thought my sister and I made the best tourtière outside of Quebec. Over the years I have tried many and rejected all. Now I must admit defeat to an English speaking Church in Burlington. First off, the size of filling to pastry is perfect. Secondly, I never wanted that aroma from the oven to quit; I knew it was going to be perfect. Thirdly, I now know that my adding cubes of bread to the juices (and fat) produce altogether too much grease, which in fact is not necessary for the flavour and texture at all. Felicitations to you all. No wonder these sell out. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!"



# Christmas Market 2011





The Messenger is published monthly for the parishioners of St. Christopher's Anglican Church. All questions or concerns should be directed to the Messenger Editor, c/o St. Christopher's Parish Office, 662 Guelph Line, Burlington, Ontario, L7R 3M8. Call 905.634.1809.

Thanks to this month's contributors: *Steve Hopkins, Mike Deed, Sue Nicolls, Libby Stratton, David Collard, Carol Henley, Judy Jupp, Ken Beeby and Sandra Rudge*

## MAILING ADDRESS

### Let's Stay Connected!

Sometimes, e-mail is the easiest and fastest way to share information or ask your opinion. Don't be left out of the loop! Please make sure we have your current e-mail address by sending a message to [staff@stchristophersburlington.com](mailto:staff@stchristophersburlington.com).

If you no longer wish to receive a hard copy of this newsletter, please let us know.

# Christmas

Around the World



Sunday, December 11th

Christmas Musical Performances at 4:30 & 7pm  
Refreshments following each performance  
Tree Lighting & Carol Singing 6pm

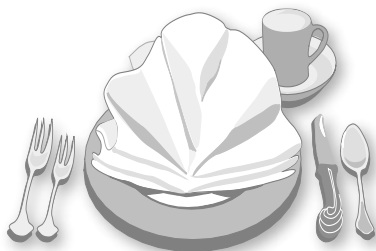
You're Invited

## Blue Christmas

A quiet,  
reflective  
celebration of Christmas

Thursday, December 15, 2011  
at 7:30 pm

All are Welcome



### Seniors' Christmas Worship & Luncheon

Thursday, December 15th - 11:00am

This service and lunch, originally designed especially for those unable to get to church without assistance, have now been extended to include anyone who wishes to join us. Come for worship at 11:00am, as we celebrate the Eucharist together, followed by a hot lunch and a sing-along of carols.

If you are able to drive, cook, or help in the kitchen, contact the office 905.634.1809.

## Christmas Worship Times

Saturday, December 24th

4:00; 6:00, 8:00\* & 10:00\*

\*carols 20 minutes before service

Sunday, December 25th

One service at 10.00am

Sunday, January 1st, 2012

One service at 10.00am