



# The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener

# ON EAGLE'S WINGS

December 22, 2019

Available online at [StJohn316.com/OEW](http://StJohn316.com/OEW)

## What Are You Singing These Days?

*Elaine Duncanson*

This time of year one hears more music than ever. Some of it is great, some of it terrible and much of it mediocre. Some of it is amusing parodies of familiar tunes and recent events. A friend sent me a version of "New York, New York" in which the singer, supported by a chorus and a band, bids farewell to a less than welcome citizen as he transfers his residence to Florida. That earned a chuckle.

On a more serious side, choirs are rehearsing for services, concerts and various spectaculars. Choir directors have chosen the music with care to provide variety, follow a theme, please the listener, and suit the competence of the singers. Some of the most beautiful music has been written for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

When I was young two women were discussing when one should start singing Christmas Carols. Early December seemed much too soon while there might be only one Sunday after the middle of December and that was not enough to sing all the favourite carols. The problem is solved if one celebrates Advent. There are four Sundays to sing the 28 Advent hymns in our book. Then there are the twelve days of Christmas for all the Christmas carols with some of them used in the service of Lessons and Carols.

In Fredericton there was an "Advent Carol Service" in aid of the Food Bank where many church choirs sang one piece. Most of them chose Christmas music, sometimes secular music, while the Cathedral choir always sang an anthem from their own Advent Carol service the Sunday before. I spent time thumbing through the hymn book in front of me wondering why they steadfastly avoided all Advent music. Every year.

We have many lovely hymns for the Epiphany season. If you look at the words of the hymns for these three seasons, you will be reminded of the prophecies from ancient times, have guidance for your personal preparation for the Second Coming, relive the birth story in all its wonder, a chance to rejoice with the shepherds and angels, see how the story spread outside the confines of community and history. Why would anyone cut short the story with only a few central choices?

For a couple of years I had the opportunity to sing with a French choir. For their Christmas concert they sang all the favourite carols of their community. Once I said to another chorister that it was a treat to sing a new selection of carols and she was surprised that they were new to me. Each community and linguistic group has their own music. It is a pleasure to share music that is a little different from what one normally hears. The Welsh hymn "All poor folk and humble" is a favourite of mine. I learned a Polish carol "Infant Holy, Infant lowly" years ago when I was trying to play the piano.

It is a pity that stores and malls clutter the air with so much silly noise expressing fantasy or worse. There is so much fine music that could lift spirits and put people in good humour. But it might not encourage them to spend more on things that are not really wanted or needed.

Come to our carol service and hear the prophecies in word and music and prepare yourself to celebrate Christmas Day with family and friends. Keep singing a merry tune. Church choirs are often reminded that "He who sings, prays twice."

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The next issue of On Eagle's  
Wings will be available on  
January 26th.

# Nurses Notes

*Elsie Millerd, Parish Nurse*

## Joy to the World

As we await Christmas, we anticipate, among other things, to experience “joy.” We hear about “glad tidings of great joy” in the carols that are playing around us and on Christmas cards we receive. What is the nature of this joy and how do we experience it? Does it come from Jolly Old St. Nicholas? Do we find it at a party with neighbours, colleagues or family; as a gift under the Christmas tree; or with loved ones around a table laden with the turkey dinner and all its trimmings?

For some people the experience of joy is very unfamiliar. In a book which I have been reading this Advent, *The Book of Joy* by Douglas Abrams, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama try to identify this joy for which our souls yearn. First, they discuss the obstacles to joy that we often experience: fear, stress and anxiety; frustration and anger; sadness and grief; despair; loneliness; envy; suffering and adversity; illness and fear of death. In their discussion they demonstrate how these obstacles prevent joy but also how they might be overcome as a pathway to healing and the discovery of joy. The book of James in the Bible calls us to treat such trials as “pure joy” for they develop in us endurance leading to mature faith (See James 1: 2- 4). This is an interesting way to reflect on joy.

In scripture we read:

“You show me the path of life, O God. In your presence there is fullness of joy.” (Psalm 16:11)

Here, I believe, are some clues about how we will find the gift of joy which the Lord desires for us. We will find this joy as we walk in the presence of the Lord, a presence which is righteousness and peace. In the Gospel of John we hear Jesus speaking of this joy. He tells his followers that the path of grief and pain will lead eventually to joy (John 16: 16- 24). In the New Testament, too, Paul speaks of the joy he desires for the people he mentors and says that this is a gift of the Holy Spirit. He offers this prayer:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (*Romans 15:13*)

Paul’s joy is found in the joy of the people he teaches.

Both Archbishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama make meditation a daily spiritual practice. Scientists have discovered that meditation helps with processes in the middle prefrontal cortex of the brain so as to elongate the space between stimulus and response. This allows us time to choose our response from one of “fight or flight” to one that is more appropriate for building loving community. These spiritual leaders identified eight pillars of joy which we could choose to develop and use in our journey to wholeness and joy. They are: reframed perspective, humility, humour, acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, compassion and generosity.

Health, wholeness or well-being is not necessarily an absence of illness. The biblical image for wholeness is shalom. It is this wholeness which Christ brings into our world in His healing presence with us. We sing of this in Isaac Watts’ hymn, *Joy to the World*:

No more let sin and sorrow grow, nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found.

It is this shalom for which Paul is praying for the new Christians of his time. Let this also be our prayer for each other at this Christmas season.

*May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Resource: Abrams, Douglas. (2016). *The book of joy: Lasting happiness in a changing world* / Douglas Carlton Abrams, Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu. New York: Penguin Random House.

## Choices – A Christmas Reflection

*Reprinted from St George's Anglican Church, Georgetown, ON*

When we look at pictures of the Christmas story it is like everything has been airbrushed. The light is soft, the stable clean, Mary and Joseph looking relaxed and radiant. This looks lovely on a Christmas card but it is a far cry from reality. This has the unfortunate effect of disconnecting us from the story. These were real people, facing uncertainty and hardship. Their lives were lived in the harsh light of reality. Mary and Joseph were cold, exhausted and ragged. A stable is smelly and dirty. A manger is a rough wooden box that holds the feed for the animals. The child was not Joseph's and if Joseph had rejected her, Mary could have been stoned to death. Their engagement was not properly done according to the social rules of the day and the couple would have faced social condemnation. It was a rocky start for any marriage and an uncertain beginning for a baby.

The wonder in this story for me is in all the places where choices were made. God chose Mary and Joseph, good people, salt of the earth, but poor and humble. God chose this particular time to be born into the world, a time of occupation by a foreign power and political unrest. God had all people and all times to choose and God chose not an optimal time, but a time of uncertainty. God came at the worst of times to an ordinary family to stand in solidarity with us.

Mary also had a choice. God asked Mary to bear God's son and, after she cleared up some technical concerns ("How can this be, since I am still a virgin?") she chose to be part of God's plan. It was a courageous decision and it was her choice.

Joseph had chosen Mary to be his wife and while they were still engaged, he discovered that she was pregnant with a child that was not his. He had decided to end the engagement quietly to save her disgrace, but before he could act, an angel visited him and told him the child was of the Holy Spirit and to take Mary as his wife. Joseph chose to listen to the angel, despite the whiff of scandal that would surround him. Joseph chose to be the earthly father of Jesus, to take him as his own.

The shepherds joyfully chose to accept the great honour the angels had given them and left their flocks to rush into Bethlehem to see the Messiah. They chose to leave the sheep alone, vulnerable to thieves and predators. Shepherds were the lowest of the low, one step above beggars and this choice put them at risk for their jobs, their well being.

The magi chose to leave the security and comfort of their homes, their country on a long journey fraught with danger to worship a king, that was not their king, a God that was not their god.

All these choices exposed those making the choices to uncertainty, to danger and yet they were choices made with courage, with trust, with faith. To those around them, they must have seemed like poor choices and yet the underlying feeling for each of them was one of joy and peace and hope with the common thread of God's love tying them together.

We also are asked to make choices. To choose God over worldly concerns. To set aside time each day to be in God's presence. To choose to nurture a relationship with God. To reach out to others who cry out for our help. To choose to serve in the kingdom of God. How you choose to celebrate this Christmas is important. May God be with you in all your choices.

Taken from: <https://stgeorgesgeorgetown.com/2015/12/09/choices-a-christmas-reflection/>

# Bales

Nancy Chittick

For many years, each January, St. John's has packed boxes of gently new and used clothing to be shipped to Kenora. We do this in conjunction with other churches in our Deanery.

We will begin collection of clothing now. Any clean, gently used clothing is accepted but especially needed are warm, winter items. Shoes or boots are accepted as long as they are in good condition. Clothing may be left in the labelled box under the table in the Narthex or in the church office. Clothing will be collected until January 19.

Volunteers will be needed for packing which will take place in the lower parish hall between 10:00 and noon on Saturdays Jan. 4, 11 and 18. Volunteers will also be needed to load the boxes into cars and to deliver these boxes to St. Jacobs on either Jan. 22 or 23 (to be determined).

If you are willing to volunteer or have any questions, please speak to Nancy Chittick or Jennifer Uttley.

## About the Bale

Once a year in January St. John's ACW packs boxes of new and gently used clothing and other needed items to be shipped to Kenora, a small city (approximately 15,000 people) in Northwestern Ontario, close to the Manitoba boundary and about 200km east of Winnipeg. Like many northern towns, it was a company town and when the mills closed there was a lot of hardship and unemployment. There are 3 Indian reservations close to the town and numerous Indian settlements scattered throughout the area.



The merchandise we send is used to supply a shop called 'Twice is Nice' in St Alban's Cathedral, Kenora. People come and shop and pay a small price for what they purchase. Anyone who can't pay is given what they need.

## Recycling

Enid Emery

We have just sent another large batch of stamps off to the Leprosy Mission-- now known as 'effect hope'. These used postage stamps are collected and sold to Stamp Dealers to raise money for the treatment of this dreaded disease--- Yes! we do still have cases in Canada, however they are now easily treatable with modern drugs.



When you get a new pair of spectacles remember that the A.C.W. will recycle your old specs for you. They can be remade into spectacles for folks in 3rd World countries.

There are boxes for both these items on the shelf in the cloakroom outside the choir practice room.