

# NORTHLAND

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Members of the Montreal Dio Community visited Waswanipi and posed with their 'primary' host, Canon Cliff Dee.



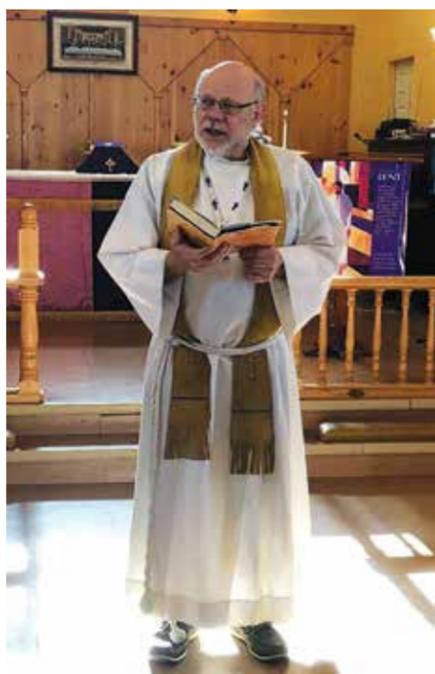
Giles St. Amour was one of the volunteers happy to help re-open St. Paul's Anglican Church.

## Waswanipi's Warmth

Article by Susan Searle, member of the Montreal Dio Community

**A**FTER A WARM WELCOME at St. Barnabas Anglican Church when we arrived on Friday evening, February 28th, our first day, Saturday, was spent at the Waswanipi Winter Arts Festival. Cleaning and stretching moose hides is not something that's done in downtown Montreal where I live. We were able to see snowshoes being constructed from start to finish. It's a long and involved process and the weaving of the toe, heel and centre fillings is really an art form. The people have a strong relationship to the land both by tradition and by necessity and snowshoes are used by many in winter, including children, but especially trappers when they go into the bush to check their lines.

Our primary host in Waswanipi was Cliff Dee, the Anglican priest of St. Barnabas Church, who has lived in the community and min-



Canon Cliff Dee, Rector of St. Barnabas' Church, Waswanipi.

*Editor's Note: In March, 5 members of the Montreal Dio Community visited Waswanipi; the trip was part of an effort to learn more about the Indigenous people in the province of Quebec.*

istered to its people since 2009. Cliff speaks what he refers to as passable Cree (although to the rest of us, it sounded much better than that) and parts of the Sunday services at St. Barnabas are offered in that language. He told us that roughly 80% of the people in Waswanipi are Anglican and that this goes back many generations. Some few years ago, a Pentecostal congregation developed and recently, there was a fire in their church. The cost of repairs is, for the moment at least, prohibitive, so they now hold their services at St. Barnabas on Sunday afternoons. It's a small but good example of how the Gospel is both proclaimed and applied here: Christians of different persuasions working together with a common goal: to worship God and stay in fellowship with other believers.

See "Waswanipi's Welcome" on p.2.

## We're Back!

Article by Dean Valerie Isaac, Diocese of Moosonee.

**A**FTER A LONG AND FRANKLY frightening closure of our churches, some of us are already back to worshipping in our buildings while others are still waiting to 'open the doors.'

With guidelines in hand, face masks on, disinfectant poured into buckets and rubber gloved hands ready to go, cleaning began in earnest at both St. Paul's and St. Matthew's parishes. Vacuuming the carpets and washing down: the pews, walls, floors, toilets, and any surface that stood still for a few minutes, small groups of people - socially distancing - got to work to make the churches ready to receive people. At each parish

See "Cleaning the Church" on page 3.



## Waswanipi's Welcome *continued from page 1.*

On our last full day in Waswanipi, we found ourselves in the church sitting in a circle with four elders: three women and one man who had agreed to talk with us about their experiences of residential schools. What I learned that morning in Waswanipi made me feel deeply sad and angry at the same time but I found myself full of admiration for the courage and resilience of the four members of the community who had chosen to honour us with their experiences.

What did surprise me, was that while each and every one of those people acknowledged that the churches had definitely had a role in what happened, they also remained committed to the church and to Christianity. Each one of the people who spoke to us in Waswanipi could easily, and some would say justifiably, have been bitter or angry towards the church. And yet they hadn't done that. They carry their memories, certainly, but they are not hostages to them. They still self-identify as Anglicans; they are involved with their church, their community, and their traditions, and their lives did not stop because of their admittedly horrible experiences. I never got the sense that they see themselves as victims.

I felt God's presence strongly that morning as we sat in the circle, listening to these people's stories. Hearing them talk about what they went through and how they had survived brought to mind what Je-



*Hockey brings people together in Waswanipi as it does throughout Canada!*

sus said in Matthew's Gospel: for human beings this would be impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

Over the four plus days of our visit, I saw evidence of Christ's presence almost everywhere I looked. Maybe that was because this was a totally new place and being away from my familiar urban surroundings made me see things differently; maybe it was the warmth and hospitality that continued throughout our stay. Certainly, the Lord's presence was tangible in the worship services - both the Anglican and the Pentecostal - and in the combined gathering that we attended on Sunday evening. I was reminded that the presence of God and Christ is everywhere. It often breaks through in unpredictable ways and in unexpected places. Our (my) eyes simply need to be open

enough to see it.

Waswanipi also confirmed what I have often thought: that the Gospel truly is for all people, in all situations, at all times. It doesn't recognize border, language barriers, or different cultures. Yes, the Cree way of life is different to what most of us are familiar with but in Christ we are truly all one family and that was made crystal clear by the way we, as visible outsiders, were received and treated throughout our visit.

I am grateful for the trip and the time we spent in Waswanipi, for the people whom we met, and the hospitality that was extended. My hope is that I will be wise enough to remember the things I learned and find ways to use them in my ministry as I go forward.

Chi miigwetch! [A Big Thank You!]



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Materials may be sent

electronically to:

[georgecribbs@yahoo.ca](mailto:georgecribbs@yahoo.ca)

or mailed to:

Diocese of Moosonee

c/o Administration Office,

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Anglican Diocese of Moosonee

## Blind Faith

*Article by Canon Phelan Scanlon, St. Stephen's Church, Constance Lake First Nation, St. Matthew's/St. Paul's, Hearst, and St. Luke's Church Hornepayne, ON*

**T**HE PANDEMIC IN WHICH we are all immersed has raised many questions for all of us. For me, it has forced me to think about the processes human beings use to acquire knowledge. How is it we come to know and believe certain things? We have seen a polarisation of thought within Canada and especially within the United States that I would have thought impossible only a few months ago. We all watch the same newscasts, notice the same case numbers, endure the same nasal swabs, yet we have a staggering disparity of opinions about the pandemic we are all experiencing! We have heard from people who deny the very existence of the pandemic.



*Canon Phelan Scanlon*

They are clouded in murky, intellectually vacuous conspiracy theories. Whenever I question the rationality of certain positions I am told, "that's what *THEY* want you to believe." No one seems to identify this omnipresent, omniscient 'THEY' but 'THEY' are out there! 'THEY' planned this

pandemic. The virus is living on a mountain with Elvis, John Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and the aliens of Roswell. Can you spell, 'paranoia'?

I speak of the concept known as 'hermeneutics': the study of how knowledge is obtained and how we choose to interpret the world around us. When I was a child, for example, I believed that 'Tobor The Eighth Man' was an historical person. Why? My hermeneutic told me that 'it must be true or *THEY* wouldn't allow it to be on television.' As I got older, I was able to grasp that Tobor was 'make-believe' and that he was the product of a Japanese film studio. Finally, at age fifty-two, I stopped believing in him altogether. It was tough coming to terms with reasonable thinking. It seems, how-

ever, that many people believe what they believe without the slightest evidence, without rational thinking, empiricism, or any verifiable experience. I have a friend whose grandmother believed that snakes gave birth via their mouths. They do not. (They do regurgitate eggs that have been incubated; when live births occur, as in boas, rattlers, or garters, they proceed from the oviduct.) But no amount of factual evidence could shake grandma's faith in how snakes become parents. Her grandma told her so and that's all the evidence she needed! Are Christians like that? Do we believe blindly? Are we delusional? Are we living with Elvis? Are we no different from paranoid conspiracists? Are we just 'magical thinkers' who have the same thought

*See "Blind Faith" on p.3.*



## Cleaning the Church *continued from page 1.*

someone was assigned tasks in different places or took the initiative to clean certain spots and the work got done!

The churches smelled fresh and clean after being shut up for months on end and it was a treat to see the dust being wiped away. Windows seemed to sparkle as the sun shone through making us all feel like it was the beginning of new and wonderful things.

While the months since COVID struck have been hard, we still did worship. We Zoomed into one another's homes on Sunday mornings and evening prayer was said seven days a week, then five days, now just three days a week. People were still in touch and knew what was going on in the church but being able to sit 'together, yet apart' made the worship in the church that much better.

Plans are still in the works to reach out through Zoom to those who still don't feel comfortable coming back to church which will enable them to still be a part of what is going on.

Since coming back, there are some things that we cannot do. We cannot sing, so we don't have any hymn books out. We cannot use the prayer books, so we use a complete bulletin that everyone can take home with them or use their iPads or whatever. We cannot drink the wine at the Eucharist but we can still take the bread. We don't have a social



Ron Isaac operated his vacuum cleaner to great effect!

time with coffee and tea and goodies but that will come later.

We do have to wear masks when entering the church, except for those who have health reasons for not wearing them. We do get to have communion - even if it is a little different. We do have one reader for both lessons and someone else for the psalm. Each has their own microphone to use and it is not touched between services so if there's any doubt, it still gets cleaned.

When it comes to speaking, we all sound a little different because we are behind face masks

or face shields so those with a hearing problem might have a little more difficulty hearing or understanding what is being said.

The difficulty came when it comes to the Eucharist. No matter how hard we have prepared, there are going to be hiccups and celebrating the Eucharist is just one of them. We have had to place ourselves a little away from the elements and come to consecrate them before distribution. When it comes to distributing the bread, no problem, right? Wrong! First, we must decide how. Whether wearing gloves or using a pair of tongs, which would work? In trying to use latex gloves, the gloves get stuck now and then and it's hard to separate the wafers. In using tongs, you have to use the right kind because some of them don't easily go into the ciborium and get just one wafer. This way, our people are safe and receive the Eucharist, something that has been missing for months. Just when I thought things were going well, it was my turn to receive. Reaching down to the paten was no problem but bringing the wafer to my mouth, I hit the face shield. Then, microphone muted, I muttered to myself and calmly reached under the face shield to receive. One down, one to go. Then it's the wine. As the only person to receive is the priest, you'd think that this

would be easy too but no. Again, reaching down to raise the chalice to my lips, there's a face shield in my way. Ding. OK, rip off the shield and drink the wine. Then clean up for the day.

Despite the hiccups of starting back, everyone is patient and kind. everyone is just so happy to be back in church with one another. We can share birthdays and anniversaries without singing and simply enjoy just being able to say hello in person.

Getting everyone out of the church after the service is not too bad. While everyone wants to stop and chat, we all realize that this is not the time for that. That will come later and then we'll be able to sit and have coffee and tea and goodies.

It amazes me that the people of St. Paul's and St. Matthew's know each other so well and have seen one another throughout the COVID pandemic through Zoom but being able to see one another and worship together and receive the Eucharist makes their week. Such joy in being able to be together is quite evident in the smiles seen over the face masks but this too will pass.

As we look at being able to continue as a whole church with the singing, the books, and the Eucharist, we await that time with happiness. While we haven't gotten the hang of all the details of being back there is hope.

## Blind Faith *continued from p. 2.*

patterns as children? This is what I want to explore in this article.

Now would be a good time to introduce Karl Popper. He was a philosopher who said that the best road to truth is 'falsifiability'. His theory goes like this: something can be true only if it can also be false. Or, put another way, if no fact or evidence can make you give up a certain belief you are well, unreasonable. For example, let's take the statement, 'The sun is shining today.' You may believe it to be true. It may even be true. But is there anything that can prove you to be wrong? Yes. If you stick your head out the door and you get soaked by rain you will be proven to be wrong. On the other hand, if you continue to believe that the sun is shining even while wringing out your clothing, you are beyond help. However, if you are willing to change your beliefs due to new

evidence you are reasonable. That is Popper.

To be unreasonable is to hold fixed rigid beliefs which you will not surrender. I have an example of this from my hospital training days. While visiting in the psychology wing one afternoon, I met a man who believed he was Mother Earth. He was sincere and absolutely convinced of his maternal identity. He held that he, and he alone, had given birth to the earth, to me, to you, and everything else in the world. He believed he existed before Creation. I remember thinking at the time, "That must have been some labour." There was no fact or evidence that could make him change his mind. He was a nice fellow anyway so there was no way I was going to argue with him. Needless to say, that man's reasoning would not please

Professor Popper. Now here's the rub: are Christians unreasonable in their beliefs? According to Popper, we are unreasonable if nothing can dissuade us from our beliefs. And that is where St. Paul steps in to help.

Popper would ask us: "Is there anything that can prove you Christians to be wrong?" The answer is from St. Paul and the answer is 'yes.' As St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15: 14-19, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also in vain." There it is. Christian faith is valid because it can be falsified. Our faith is reasonable. It is based on an historical event. We do not cling to arbitrary notions nor do we espouse a set of arbitrary opinions. Rather, our faith is a response to something that happened in human history. Christ was

raised from the dead. We have been responding to that earth-shaking event ever since. When compared to the polarising and extreme political views of today, when compared to the blind faith many have in politicians and celebrities, Christians are people of reason. (We are also people of joy because failing to respond enthusiastically to Jesus' resurrection would be absurd.) Because our beliefs can be nullified they are more likely to be true. We are, in fact, reasonable.

There is another hermeneutical weapon at work in Christian thinking, namely 'Occam's Razor'. Occam was a Fourteenth Century thinker who suggested that when trying to explain any event, and when confronted by multiple explanations for that event, the simplest explanation is usually true. This See "Blind Faith" on p.6.





*Judith Colbert-Barkel helped to prepare St. Matthew's Cathedral for its resumption of live services for its parishioners.*



*Canon Cliff Dee, visitors from Montreal, and First Nations' parishioners from St. Barnabas' Church, Waswanipi found common ground in their faith and humanity.*



*"Clean the sky! Wash the wind!" T.S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral. Diane Atherton cleaned the pews at St. Paul's, South Porcupine in preparation of the church's reopening.*

## Diocese of Moosonee Activities



*Shep and Gail Cooper came to the first service at St. Paul's, South Porcupine, after its re-opening in September, fully prepared to meet the new 'norm' for safe services by wearing their own masks.*



*The Reverend Anne-Marie Carriere of St. Mark's Anglican Church, pictured far left, helped to organize and run a special service in Kapuskasing held to honour and remember the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.*



*The Reverend Anne Stenabaugh was delighted to be surprised by her parishioners at St. Mark's who had updated their parish church's sign in time for the re-opening.*

**Blind Faith** *continued from p. 2.*

reminds me of the boy who shows up at school without his homework. There are two possibilities. The dog ate it ... or he just didn't bother doing it. Occam would say the latter scenario is more likely to be true (although when my brother was twelve the dog really did eat his homework. You should have seen him explain that to his teacher while my father stood by to verify the story).

In the matter of Jesus' resurrection there could be more than one explanation. Some explain Easter by saying that the disciples, functional and sane people, upon threat of death, with no hope of monetary gain, with no guarantee of success, deliberately lied about seeing Jesus alive and proclaimed that lie repeatedly knowing they could be crucified for doing so. Further to this, they proclaimed said lie (or they all proclaimed the same shared delusion in concert) with passion and certainty, changed their worship from Saturday to Sunday for the sake of a hoax, conned many others into believing their delusion, and pointlessly wrote hymns and prayers about an event which

never occurred. That's one explanation for Easter. The other explanation is that it simply happened. The simpler explanation is better. Let's hear it for Occam's Razor.

Let's take another example close to home. Many Indigenous people have deep roots in their traditional understandings as well as a firm conviction that Jesus is Lord. I have observed in Constance Lake that prayer, trust in God, hope in the resurrection, a sense of familial responsibility, and a strong sense of community values are as natural to people as breathing. People turn to the divine for help the way people in my home town used to turn to the yellow pages. The use of sacred Indigenous traditions along with Western Christian practices are deemed to be as essential as food. Why is this? It is because turning to God works. People know their needs ... and their needs are spiritual. For people at St. Stephen's it would be an act of irreconcilable madness to attempt a life without the Spirit. The invocation of spiritual power is a tool that works and sustains people. The people of St. Stephen's know it would be unreasonable for Jesus and his disciples to lie about the resurrection. Therefore, they are left with the

only reasonable possibility given to them straight from Occam's Razor: Jesus is Risen.

Blind faith? Unreasonable faith? Unwarranted faith? Polarising delusions? No. We have a faith based on the resurrection, something we neither invented or asked for. We merely celebrate it to this day as we experience the presence of Christ as a daily gift.

To those who believe that the COVID-19 threat is a fake, Poppler asks, "What would it take to make you give up that opinion?" If the answer is "Nothing. I believe it and that's that", then you would disappoint Popper. You and my friend's grandmother would see eye to eye. But our faith is strong because it can be falsified. Nothing can be true unless it can also be false. History is like that. And the resurrection of Jesus is a matter of historical truth and historic importance. I trust the witness of the Apostles and my experience of Christ. Without those two pillars, I am merely that 1970's song by Kansas: "Dust in the Wind". But we are more than dust. We are God's beloved. As Jesus says, in paraphrase, "In my Father's house there are many mansions. Why would I lie to you?"



**TWO MINUTE TALK:**  
**REVEREND GLADYS MATOUSH,**  
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST,  
WEMINDJI & ST. PETER'S  
WASKAGANISH, QC.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THE NORTH:** *People, land, tradition/culture*

**WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT THE NORTH:** *None*

**YOUR BIRTHPLACE:** *Rupert House (Waskaganish)*

**WHAT'S THE FURTHEST YOU HAVE BEEN FROM HOME:**

*British Columbia*

**YOUR BEST HIDDEN TALENT:** *Making a fruitcake*

**YOUR FAVOURITE HOBBY:** *Reading the Bible & fishing*

**YOUR FAVOURITE CHURCH ROLE:** *Every one*

**YOUR BIGGEST FEAR:** *drowning*

**-YOUR FAVOURITE MEAL:** *Rabbit with dumplings*

**YOUR FAVOURITE TEAM:** *Montreal Canadiens*

**WHICH SECULAR JOB HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE:**

*Band Membership Clerk*

**YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK OR MOVIE:** *Moses*

**THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS**

ELEVEN PIPERS PIPING, AS NO-ONE IN THE MUSIC GROUP CAN PLAY THE GUITAR

FIVE GOLD BISHOPS' RINGS IN THE SAFE IN THE VESTRY

FOUR CALLING BIRDS BEING SILENCED BY A CHURCHWARDEN

A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE - THE VERGER FORGOT TO ORDER A CHRISTMAS TREE

TWO TURTLE DOVES TRAPPED IN THE ROOF

TWELVE DRUMMERS DRUMMING, TO THE CONSTERNATION OF THE CHOIR

SIX GEESE A-LAYING IN THE ECO-AREA OF THE CHURCHYARD

EIGHT MAIDS WHO HAD BEEN A-MILKING, BUT WHO MANAGED TO COMPLETE THEIR DUTIES IN TIME FOR THE 10AM.

TEN LORDS A-LEAPING OVER THE MOAT DUG BY THE YOUTH GROUP

THREE FRENCH HENS-PROPS FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PLAY

NINE LADIES DANCING DURING ONE OF THE MORE MODERN CHORUSES

SEVEN SWANS A-SWIMMING IN THE FONT



# “O Comfort My People”

Article by Archbishop Anne Germond, Bishop of Moosonee.

‘Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid.’ (Isaiah 40. 1-2)

**I**MAGINE THE SCENE. The prophet Isaiah and the people of Israel have lost everything: their land, their homes, their livelihood, and their families. They feel abandoned by God. They are a people living in exile and are asking questions that go to the core of who they are as a people of faith. God’s people. “Where is God now?” they wonder. “Why has God allowed this disaster to happen?” “What kind of a future do we have to look forward to? Can we trust God anymore?” In this moment there is so much at stake, including God’s faithfulness and whether God has turned God’s back on them.

I suspect there are many people asking similar questions in this season of pandemic as we come to the end of 2020. The second wave is well underway in Ontario and Quebec and we continue to watch the number of cases rising each day. We are weighed down by our collective grief at the loss of life, the unemployment, the millions of lives affected in Canada and around the world.

We all know that when things are desperate in our lives a word of hope and encouragement from a friend makes a big difference. Enter Second Isaiah, the friend with good words for his hearers. The words are so familiar and wonderful, and we hear them proclaimed every year during Advent. “**Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.**” (Is. 40.1) His words were like a beam of light in a darkened room. Do not despair, the prophet proclaims, God has not forgotten you. Our God is the God who makes a way where there is no way. The God who once delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land will act again. Our God is faithful. All hope is not lost, because even though we might not always be faithful, God remains faithful.

The good words from Isaiah con-



*Assisting Bishop Fred Hiltz, former Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and Archbishop Anne Germond, Bishop of Moosonee, do all in their power to bring spiritual comfort to the people of the diocese.*

tinue. Israel has served her term in exile and the time of restoration is at hand. Verse after verse we hear words about God’s faithfulness during this fallow period. A new thing will happen and it will be like rain in the desert after a long dry period.

Where are God’s eyes? On God’s people of course. God’s chosen and beloved ones.

The great Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann calls these words the “poetry of homecoming” - calling on the people to remember what it was like to enter the promised land after their time in the wilderness.

If you have ever visited the Holy Land you will know that it is more dry with no green thing in sight. Just looking at it, one wonders how anything can grow there at all.

When Colin and I visited there a few years ago, we had to leave the area around the Dead Sea quickly because much needed rain was on the horizon. When it came we knew that it would bring torrents of water

across roadways that would make them impassable. But the rains would also be life giving and would provide much needed nourishment for animals feeding on the slopes of hills. The dormant seeds and pods would spring to life when touched by it and grow into fresh green shoots.

We know how the story ends. God’s people return to their homeland after the exile and even though they found it in ruins they slowly began the process of rebuilding everything from their homes to their temple. Bit by bit. One step at a time. The leadership had a new and shared vision for the future and when the time came they rededicated themselves to God with joy in their hearts.

Many people nowadays are in need of a good ‘Word’ from God. Especially those who wonder if God is still at work in their lives as individuals or communities of faith. Death and destruction will not have the last word.

God answers all doubts and questions we might have with a resounding word of hope. As Isaiah has shown, God is not only a God of the past and the present but also a God of the future who wants to turn despair into hope, weeping into laughter, doubt into faith, and despair into hope.

I invite you to imagine that future with me in 2021 by dreaming together as we keep our eyes on our faithful God in the season of Holy Discernment.

In that imagination will you keep your eyes beyond the horizon of the approaching storm and lift your eyes from the desert wasteland?

Will you dream the impossible dream of new things that spring forth - things never imagined in our former days? (Is.43)

Will you dream the wild dream that fills our mouths with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy and that yields an abundant harvest in the desert for all to share? (Ps.126)

Will you dream the costly dream that demands that calls us to deny ourselves and carry the cross for the sake of the gospel? (Mark 8)

Will you dream the hopeful dream in which our value as beloved children of God comes from the love and claim of Christ and not from societal values of wealth, status, or spheres of influence? (Phil.3)

Will you dream the other-worldly dream of a new-heaven and a new earth where there are no more tears or pain, and live the topsy turvy values of God’s reign? (Rev. 21)

Will you dream the wasteful dream that heaps blessing upon blessing on others, no counting the cost of the precious oil poured out on dirty feet? (John 12.)

Will you share your impossible, wild costly, hopeful, other-worldly, wasteful dreams with each other and with me all year long?

In Christ’s Hope, Joy, Love and Peace

+Anne

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FOUNDATION OF CANADA

Proud to be Canadian

Hope Bear has a new sweater!  
Available for purchase on the AFC Store.

[anglicanfoundation.org/store](http://anglicanfoundation.org/store)



# Christmas Traditions

Article by the Reverend George Westgate, St. John the Evangelist, Mississini, QC.

**WHAT COMES TO MIND** when you think of Christmas? It may be the birth of Jesus our saviour. There are all sorts of sights, smells, and sounds of Christmas. There are coloured lights, garlands, balls, and bobbles displayed inside and outside the house. There is the tall tree all decorated and there are stockings hung over the fireplace as well as plenty of wrapped presents placed under the tree. There are smells of the Christmas feast: a roast turkey or goose, a table filled with mashed potatoes, turnips, carrots, beets, stuffing, gravy, and cranberry sauce. Then there are baked pies, yule cakes, plumb puddings, and other sweet treats. The sounds of children's laughter fill the air as well as the peeling of church bells ringing on the crisp winter evening, and the sound of organ music and church choirs singing Christmas carols and hymns.



The Reverend George Westgate

Yet for some people not so long ago, Christmas was simpler. Parents gave up a lot of things so their children could travel home from residential school far away. The oil lamps and candles served as lights and homemade decorations were displayed within the home. Often a tree branch or a small tree covered with homemade decorations adorned the home. There might be socks hung over the bed rail and then there would be homemade presents: a carved paddle, snowshoes, knit socks, sweaters, slippers, mittens made from moose hide, and warm knitted hats that would hang on the tree. Animal hides were given as presents that could be traded to the Hudson Bay store for cash to buy dolls or hockey equipment. The smell of a simple dinner: roast goose, boiled potatoes, carrots, and gravy along with bannock biscuits. Dessert would follow: fresh fruit, nuts, pie, or cake!

Everyone must return to their own home town where they were born. Mary and Joseph lived in Nemeska and travelled to Mississini where Joseph was born. When they got to Mississini the lodge was full so they found an empty teepee in someone's backyard. The angels appeared to the hunters out hunting in the bush. The angels told the hunters about a boy being born in Mississini; he would be a great chief and how he would be found in a teepee, lying in a manger and wrapped in strips of animal hides. The hunters went to Mississini and they found the boy in the teepee just as the angel had said. They left and told everyone along the way all they had heard and seen that night. There were also elders who were following a star and they stopped in Chibougamau. They stopped and asked where the new chief was born and no one seemed to know. They continued on and followed the star to Mississini and it came to rest over the teepee where the little boy was lying. There the elders bowed down and presented gifts of beaver pelts, bear grease and blue berries. This may be what it would have been like if Jesus came to the Cree nation.

Merry Christmas from the James Bay Deanery! God Bless.

Recently, an elder told me that he was disciplined for thinking and asking the question: "What would it be like if Jesus came to the Cree nation?" He told me how one Sunday he came to church for the Christmas pageant and asked: "What if Jesus came to Mississini?"

The Christmas story was the same but it was different too. The Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada decreed that a census must



**DIOCESAN CHURCHES:** This is a pen and ink sketch of St. Matthew/St. Paul Anglican/United Church, Hearst, ON. This is one of a series of church drawings by built heritage specialist and artist, Nicky Alexander. Follow on Facebook or Instagram @na.drawingstudio

