

FORT MASSEY STAR

Advent/Christmas
2012

www.fortmasseychurch.com

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR...

Among the Christmas songs which speak to us as a family at the manse are the words by Amy Grant in "I Need a Silent Night."

*I've made the same
mistake before
Too many malls, too
many stores
December traffic,
Christmas rush
It breaks me till I push
and shove
Children are crying
while mothers are try-
ing
To photograph Santa
and sleigh
The shopping and buy-
ing and standing
forever in line
What can I say?
I need a silent night, a
holy night*

Inside this issue:

Special FM Family Recognitions	2
Anniversary & Remembrance	3
From the Manse	4
Christmas Memories	5

*To hear an angel voice
through the chaos and
the noise*

*I need a midnight
clear, a little peace
right here*

*To end this crazy day
with a silent night!*

Many of us arrive at Christmas hoping for just that - a silent night, a holy night. We know what we want Christmas to be but we can't quite figure out the formula. The Martha Stewart Christmas does not quite seem to capture what we need. We know the traditional Bible stories which talk about angels and shepherds and wise men and a virgin birth. And some of us are fine with that while others among us are a bit wary. We know that many of these stories are myths - full of great truth - but not literal moment by moment news accounts. We know that what they are trying to say is that in this man they

saw someone different from us. Their way of saying that was to claim a miraculous birth and a host of angels to announce it. There is an angel to tell Mary, angels to sing to the shepherds, and later in some accounts an angel at the tomb. Angels have become a symbol of Christmas. Children dressed in white robes grace our nativities.

Angels adorn our trees and we sing about them in our carols

A Unitarian minister in the States wrote in a Christmas sermon an imaginary dialogue with a more conservative colleague who asks him: 'Why do you celebrate Christmas? You do not believe in virgin births. You do not believe that Jesus was a deity. You probably do not believe in angels.' Yet he does believe in Christmas and his response likely rings true for some of us:

*"True, but we believe
in songs which are born*

*in the hearts and
minds of people. We
believe that some sto-
ries deserve to live for-
ever because they tell
us about ourselves. The
angels, singing an an-
them of peace and
good-will, deserve to be
heard forever because
there are angels in hu-
man hearts. The hum-
ble shepherds, who
have ears to hear and
hearts to receive a mes-
sage of joy, deserve to
live to the end of time.
The wise men, so faith-
fully seeking the way of
the star, deserve to go
in search again each
year as long as years
shall be, for they are
the story of the quest
for ourselves."*

*May we believe.
Happy Christmas!*

Rev. Trent



NOTES FROM THE UCW

We've had two very successful fundraisers since October. *The Harvest Tea* donations brought in \$483.66. *The Christmas Tea & Sale* realized \$2445.00. To all the volunteers who helped in any way to make these events successful, a big thank you, thank you, thank you! All the funds raised go to the church and the five charities that we support. The charities are Arthur Kidston Memorial Camp, Brunswick Street Mission, Parker Street Food & Furniture Bank,

Stepping Stone and the Salvation Army.

Planned events for 2013: *Valentine Tea*, February 9th; *Book Sale*, April 20th; *Spring Flea Market*, April 27th; *Congregational Pot Luck Supper & Silent Auction*, May 11th; *Afternoon at Sinclair's Cottage*, June (date not yet determined); *Harvest Tea*, October 19th and *Christmas Tea & Sale*, November 16th.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy,

healthy New Year!

Submitted by Irene Parks



SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS



Howard Parker, taken at the Camp Hill Veterans Hospital. He received the Diamond Jubilee Century of Service Challenge Award with gratitude for our freedom, presented by the Lt. Gov. of N.S. on November 15, 2012.

We just received word that Ray Hunt will receive the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal on Sunday afternoon, December 16, 2012.

Congratulations, Howard and Ray!



"One hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of a house I lived in. It will not matter what sort of car I drove. It will not matter what the bottom line was in my bank account. I may be remembered because I was important in the life of a child."

Author unknown (Submitted by Jean Brown)

ANNIVERSARY SERVICE & REMEMBERING BILL & JENNIFER FONG

Fort Massey's 141st Anniversary Service was held on December 9th, 2012, with Rev'd Ivan Norton as the guest preacher. His sermon was entitled "Built of Hopes and Dreams and Visions" and was based on the Founders'.

In celebration of the very significant role of the Fong family in the life of Fort Massey United Church, not only was Ruth MacKenzie very honoured to be the recipient of the William S. Fong Volunteer of the Year Award, but the United Church of Canada Crest banner (donated in memory of Bill and Jennifer Fong, by the family) and a bronze memorial plaque, on the north east wall of the Sanctuary, were blessed and unveiled.

We were honoured to have present Brenda Fong and Peter and Bruce Fong (Bill's wife, son and grandson/Jennifer's mother, brother and nephew) and Frank, Jamie and Luke Turner (Jennifer's husband and sons). Other members of the Fong clan: Dow and Sharon Fong, Dianne and Brent Goodwin, and Trudy and Greg Fong were also present.

As a member of the family noted, when Bill's name was mentioned, a ray of sunlight

burst through one of the windows – showing he was still keeping an eye on things!



Fong family members during the dedication of the Fong Memorial Plaque

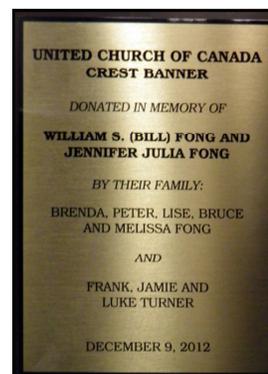


Doug Ritcey, with his daughter, Mary MacLeod, at the 141st Anniversary Service of Fort Massey Church, Dec 9, 2012. Doug sang a solo "Beulah Land."

Submitted by Ruth MacKenzie with photos provided by Ian MacDonald



Alison McDonald, Clerk of Session, making a presentation to Judith and the Rev'd Ivan Norton, with Rev. Trent thanking them on behalf of the congregation. The Fong Memorial Banner is seen hanging on the wall of the sanctuary (top right corner of photo).



Fong Memorial Banner Plaque



Fong Memorial Plaque





FROM THE MANSE - DECEMBER 2012



The Advent calendar has been hung on the door leading to the basement one more time so we know that Christmas is here. It is a homemade calendar with a large tree at the top and boxes numbered one to twenty-four at the bottom. The ornaments for the tree are stored in the calendar boxes until they make their way up to adorn the tree. Each ornament is incredibly detailed from a toy soldier with a drum to a star which, by tradition, goes up on the 24th. It is made of felt and getting older. A glue gun is now required to stand at the ready for repairs. Knowing that it was all made by hand means that we will keep it and repair it forever. We still marvel at the detail knowing that the creator had hands gnarled with arthritis. It was made with great love which makes it a family treasure.

Our runway lights are out and lit which is another sign of Christmas. Our neighbourhood is part of the light tour with the two brothers who compete each year going all out with lights. Stories are written about them in the paper as they both do it in honour of their mother who loved Christmas lights. Our small runway for Santa is not in their category but it is our small contribution along with candles in each window. But we do not always manage to light those up - one has to make it from window to window and find the plugs and some nights we are too tired to light them. So don't include the manse on your light tour quite

yet. Maybe someday. We bought lights for the yew bushes one year but realized that it would take hundreds and our few strings looked rather like a Charlie Brown tree.

And Christmas Eve is the night for building the gingerbread house. We tried one year making the various pieces from gingerbread but since no one ever eats one of these houses, we have resorted once again to the kits with all of the parts. Last year one side kept collapsing but it somehow managed to stay up with plenty of frosting. This year Beatrice is dating an engineering student who should be able to solve the collapsing wall problem. He has never built one but my sister and Beatrice who build them each year hope that his mechanical engineering courses might help.

Each family has their own set of traditions. Some of these are added to the mix gradually over the years. It is difficult when things change but most of us have learned over the years that Christmas does not come in the boxes and bags. It comes in moments - many of them unexpected. We began building gingerbread houses the year that we spent Christmas in a hotel and were looking for something to do. The Advent calendar was a gift early in our marriage. And our runway lights were bought when Tristan was coming home from out west partly to surprise him since he had always complained about our lack of lights.

As you celebrate Christmas with new and old traditions, we at the manse wish you a very Merry Christmas!

*Submitted by
Linda Cleveland-Thompson*

SPECIAL DEDICATION

On Sunday, December 2nd, 2012, the first Sunday in Advent, we dedicated Chancel Liturgical Ware for the Seasons of Advent (blue) and Creation Time (orange) given by Nancy E. Riggs in loving memory of her maternal grandparents, John A. and Sarah E. MacInnis; aunt, Mary D. MacKenzie, and uncle, E. Crawford MacKenzie; parents, Katherine F. Riggs and the Rev'd Carman W. Riggs; and sister, Katherine Anne Riggs.





Recently Annika Sinclair (age 12) and Jake Jansen (age 10) interviewed one of our Seniors to ask what Christmas was like when he was their age. They interviewed Archie Rasley, a resident at The Berkeley on Green Street, and this is what they learned.

Archie grew up in the north end of Halifax. He was ten in 1924 which makes him age 98 and a survivor of the Halifax Explosion of 1917. Although his family's home was not destroyed, he said a lot of relatives were killed including a sister who was hit by shrapnel. Besides his parents and their four surviving children, the home was shared with Archie's paternal grandparents and several cousins.

Christmas was a family affair and pretty low key according to Archie. He said the traditions of his childhood were British and New Year's was a much bigger event. He didn't remember any special events at church but did tell us about how after the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were destroyed by the Explosion, the two congregations came together and built one new building where they worshiped together - seven years before the United Church was officially formed. That new congregation became United Memorial Church after church union.

A Christmas of Archie's childhood was very different from Christmas today. Life was a lot slower, things were much less commercialized, and there were not all the commu-

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

nication systems we have today – the newspaper was their main source of news. If Christmas fell on a Sunday, Archie's family didn't celebrate until Monday. Archie received two dollars from his father before Christmas to buy gifts for his family and friends. There were a lot of things he could buy for five cents each: a ruler, pencil, leads, small sewing kit. He also remembers delivering gifts to his relatives on Christmas Day using his sled with a box on top. Archie said there was a lot more snow in those days, enough to come up to the tops of fences.

Archie and his siblings were eager to go to bed by 8 pm Christmas Eve and they got up early at 4 am Christmas morning – although their father wasn't impressed by the early hour as he had probably only gone to bed a few hours before. The Christmas tree wasn't put up and decorated until after the children went to bed and they woke to see the tree and their stockings. Archie said when he moved to Ontario in 1949 he was surprised to see people put their trees up two weeks before Christmas.

Archie's stocking would have an orange in the toe and useful gifts like toothpaste, comb, a card of laces, and perhaps something homemade. He said he never received a lump of coal! Christmas dinner would be a goose which Archie wasn't too fond of. It was many years before they had turkey and then it was a once a year treat. Christmas dessert was plum

pudding with sauce and fruit-cake that was made in August. Archie also told us about a Christmas he spent in Italy during the war – his meal came in a tin that had everything mixed together but he said it was very tasty.

Archie is not impressed with how Christmas is treated by many today. He feels planning in October takes away from the charm of the season and the waiting for the coming of Jesus.

*Submitted by
Nancy Riggs*



*“May the spirit of
Christmas bring
you peace,
The gladness of
Christmas give
you hope,
The warmth of
Christmas grant
you love.”*

~Author Unknown

