

THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

January / February 2012



The Great Divide

At the Parish Council meeting in January, as part of his monthly Missions report, Don Leith presented an article published in "The Chosen People", a monthly newsletter put out by an organization of Messianic Jews in the U. S. Don found it intriguing since the December issue focused, not unsurprisingly, on Hanukkah. What was interesting, however, was the tenor of the main article, "Bridging the Great Divide", in which the writer, Dr. Mitch Glaser, proposed a relationship between Hanukkah and Christmas, maintaining that the one could not exist without the other. "For years, I've tried to persuade my Jewish family and friends that Christmas is a Jewish holiday at its very core... a holiday to celebrate the birth of the Jewish Messiah." Dr. Glaser suggests that Hanukkah "is joined at the hip with Christmas... there would be no Christmas without Hanukkah." Does this spark some curiosity? Read on.

At this time of the year, you cannot walk down the street or shop at a department store without hearing Christmas carols. Yet, looking back in history, if Antiochus Epiphanes had succeeded in his nefarious plan to stamp out Judaism, the Hebrew language, culture, biblical heritage and religion would have been wiped off the map of history. If this had happened, then how could a Jewish Savior possibly have been born from the House of David, a Jewish king, in Bethlehem, a Jewish town, to a Jewish virgin, Mary?

One of the great joys of celebrating Hanukkah is that it points to an all powerful God who always keeps His promises. Yet it is still a challenge to help Jewish people and even many Christians see the links between Hanukkah and Christmas. I am not relating the two holidays because I want Christians to celebrate Hanukkah and Jewish people to celebrate

(continued overleaf)

Perils of the Priesthood



We all know that it is a challenge being an Anglican these days, probably even more so being an Anglican priest. On the other hand, although it may be necessary to display a certain flexible stoicism at Parish Council meetings, it is unlikely that the demands made of Shaolin monks – seen meditating above – form part of the introduction to caring ministry. The pre-requisite training course for young initiates to the Church, **Preparation For Proper Preaching (Part I: Jumping Through Hoops & Part II: Verbal Gymnastics At the Parish Level)** is likely a sufficient incentive to instill mental and physical fortitude in all but the most intractable students of theology, whether Anglican or otherwise. We have, of course, come to assume nothing less from the Rev. Canon Bruce Glencross, priest of long standing at Saint John the Baptist, who will celebrate twenty years in the Parish during February this year.

Twenty years is a long time and that period has not been an easy one, both for the Anglican Communion in general and Saint John the Baptist in particular. As Rector, Bruce had a few good months under his belt before the first of the great challenges, the destruction of the church building by fire the same year as his induction – an anniversary to remember later, in November. For now, we have grown accustomed to a white Tilley(?) hat making its way around the community. Ostensibly, this is worn to fend off the summer sunshine or perhaps the occasional pigeon or seagull; however, there is the question of a clandestine interest in Shaolin meditation . . .

DLP

(The Great Divide, continued)

Christmas – it is much more than that! The Hanukkah / Christmas connection demonstrates to Christians (and Jews) that without God’s faithfulness to the Jewish people throughout history, the promised Messiah could not have arrived. And this connection demonstrates to Jews (and Christians) that faithfulness fulfilled in the Messiah who was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures and came in the flesh. The disconnect between Christmas and Hanukkah reflects the deep chasm between Jesus and the Jewish people – and the disconnect between some Christians and the Jewish roots of their own faith. I crossed this divide when I was nineteen years old as I embraced Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, who completely transformed my life. Ever since then, I’ve been telling Jewish people and others the glorious Gospel message of reconciliation.

In the neighbourhood where I live in Brooklyn, it is very rare to see a home decorated for Hanukkah and a home decorated for Christmas next door to one another. The Jewish people who surround our new Charles Feinberg Messianic Center believe that Christmas is a Gentile story and that believing in Jesus, for a Jewish person, is the same as committing “ethnic suicide.” Our neighbors, almost all of whom are Jewish like us, simply do not know the Jewish side to the story of Jesus, and how He is the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, when the prophet foretold that “the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” He is indeed the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace who will one day return to reign forever on the throne of His forefather, David! The chasm separating Hanukkah and Christmas can be crossed, because Hanukkah is a story about deliverance and Christmas is the story of the Jewish Messiah!

Dr. Mitch Glaser, President, Chosen People Ministries

Further biographical information about the writer can be found at:

<http://www.chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/component/content/article/71-staff/324-dr-and-mrs-mitch-glaser>

In September, 2007, the Spiritual Leader of a local Messianic Congregation, Rabbi Percy Johnson, visited St. J. the B. and preached at the Sunday Morning service.

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Vestry

*The Annual Vestry Meeting for 2012 is scheduled to take place after the 10 am service on Sunday, February 19th. Please plan to attend this important event in our church year. **Sandwiches, cookies, coffee and tea** will be provided.*

*A **Nominating Committee** is formed every year to present a slate of names to Vestry for the elected positions needed to operate the parish. Please call **Diane Allen at 514-695-5987** if you would like your name put forward for one of the positions.*

Doubt

Doubt, the essential preliminary of all improvement and discovery, must accompany the stages of man’s onward progress. The faculty of doubting and questioning, without which those of comparison and judgment would be useless, is itself a divine prerogative of the reason.

Albert Pike

For centuries now, people have attempted to answer the question, “What separates us from the animals?”

There have been many possible suggestions: intelligence, using tools, our spiritual beliefs, and the list goes on. Well I think there is another thing that makes us unique as a species; our uncanny ability to doubt even what we know to be true.

The bond between Jesus and his relative, John the Baptist was life-long. John’s life was so intertwined with that of Jesus that as an unborn baby he leapt in his mother’s womb when they were near one another. At the start of Jesus’ ministry, John had received confirmation that Jesus was the Son of God. By the time John was in prison, he had spent much of his life baptizing and preparing others to receive the good news. There weren’t many people more committed to spreading the message of the coming Messiah than him. And yet, we hear him ask Jesus “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” He knew that Jesus was the Messiah he was waiting for, and yet we hear that he still doubted. John is not alone in his expression of doubt. There are, in fact, plenty of doubters in the Bible; perhaps the one which springs immediately to mind is the apostle, Thomas. He travelled amazing distances to spread the Gospel outside of the Roman Empire, but to this day, he is best known for “doubting”.

There is even a suggestion in the Bible that, being fully human as well as fully God, Jesus experienced the humanity of doubt. I will mention two particularly difficult times in which Jesus may have experienced moments of human doubt. Just before his crucifixion, Jesus went to Gethsemane with his disciples. While he was there, he fell with his face to the ground, praying: “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Later, while he is on the cross he says, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

So, if to doubt is human, what then is divine?

Let us return to the same three examples and see what John, Thomas and Jesus did. John boldly asked Jesus if he was “the one” or if he, John, should look for someone else. He did not keep his doubts to himself – letting them fester and plague him. He came right out with them; in return, Jesus gave him the comfort that he had indeed found the Messiah for whom he was looking. That brief confirmation must have sustained John through what we know were even tougher times ahead. For his part, Thomas undauntedly said he would not believe

unless he could touch Jesus directly. As a result of voicing his doubts, Thomas was shown Jesus' wounds. This allowed Thomas to fully experience the joy of the resurrection. Lastly, Jesus himself voiced his concerns out loud.

The Bible is clear, whenever we have doubts about ourselves, others or God, we should not keep them to ourselves – where they can harm us. We need to take our concerns to God, who will patiently answer us – as long as we are willing to accept the answer. In short, “To doubt is human, to ask divine”.

Lord, You created us with the ability to doubt even what we know is definitely true. Help us to always turn to You and ask the questions that are on our hearts – allowing you to turn our doubts into blessings and deepening our relationship with you in the process.

From a sermon by Lay Reader, Amanda Foster-Dearling



Bons mots

In the Middle Ages, Christian scholastics argued that the devil's basic strategy was to bring human beings to a point where they are never alone with their God... The mobile phone, then, seems to me to represent a major breakthrough for the powers of hell – it is a new thing, which allows the devil to take a significant step forward in her grand design. With a mobile, a person is never alone and is never entirely attentive to someone else. What is entirely brilliant about it from the demonic perspective is that so many people have been persuaded that this is not something pleasurable (a free choice) but something necessary.

Sara Maitland, 'The Book of Silence'

I am not brave enough, not willing or able to seek silence to the extent that Maitland does, but I know I shall learn to love the silences in my life, and draw on their power. I already have, in the quiet time between Christmas and New Year. I've had nothing to do and nowhere to go, and instead of feeling this as a lack, thanks to this book, I have loved and cherished the silence.

Hilary Ely, in a Review of 'The Book of Silence'

Wired yet?

When you hear the word “technology”, what comes to mind? How about that electric screwdriver that you just couldn't resist? Or, could it be the electric saw that was going to make woodworking so enjoyable – except that the saw is still in its box – unused! To be a little more up-to-date, how's your DVD player/recorder working with your flat screen television that runs on 'rabbit-ears'? Hmm, still not connected, eh! Perhaps you're having fun with your charming little Bose radio and disc player. Oh, that's right, you're finding it impossible to programme your favourite radio stations.

What about your cell phone or, if you're at all up-to-date, that would be your Smart Phone, iPad, touch-screen Wi-Fi e-Reader, Tablet or Playbook? Would that be "Android"? Does your computer have a “Touch-screen”? – Yes, that is one word. Presumably your keyboard and mouse are wireless, along with your combined printer, scanner, fax and copier. And, of course, you can instantly share photographs with others around the world.

We are up-to-date, yes? How are your friends on Facebook and your postings on YouTube? Then there's Blogging and Twittering – those two words are almost as hard to write as is “texting” and let's not forget Hockey-InsideOut, or that note that repeatedly accompanies an article in your daily newspaper that so annoyingly directs you to a web site for further information. Equally irritating is a cell phone 'ring tune' that interrupts a church service or brings a symphony concert to a halt.

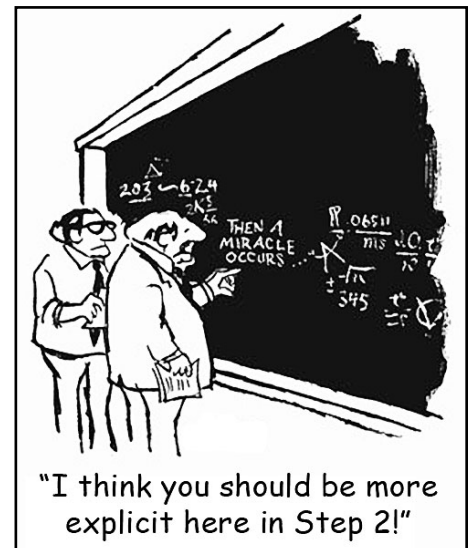
We may be dealing with a generational gap as well as a technological evolution. We're being invaded by technology but it's not only generational. Teenagers and those not yet in their teens are being bullied on-line. Gossip is no longer between a couple of neighbours, now, its net is world wide (pun intended) and whatever your age, if you're trying to stop smoking, you are already able to obtain your nicotine fix

from an “electronic” cigarette. While the market driven technological evolution continues to expand its reach it can only be blamed for the further lowering of literacy. Students' parents continue to worry about diminishing writing skills and spelling seems to be no longer required simply because the computer automatically corrects any misspelling. Laptops are set-up in classrooms, even at the kindergarten level. Who can remember a world before calculators – make that slide rules, or pens and ink wells!

We're strung out on wires! It's time to take a break. Visit the wolves at the Eco-Museum. Enjoy the wondrous trails at the Morgan Arboretum. We don't live close enough to the sea to be able to listen to the sound of the waves as we stroll along the beach (without earbuds) but we are beside one of the earth's largest rivers where we can sit with a book, or beside Lac Saint-Louis, a lake that's large enough that we might imagine its water to be saline.

Have you been there yet?

Liz Steinson



For What We Are About To Receive



During the period before Christmas, Choirmaster Barbara McPherson somehow managed to put together an Advent Cantata which involved both choirs and several readers from the congregation (not to mention the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols the following Sunday.) As a measure of thanks to those who participated and their families, Barbara suggested - and organized - a Pot Luck lunch which took place on Sunday, January 15th. (Why Barbara felt she needed this extra work and responsibility is anyone's guess!) At any rate, as is illustrated above, a tasty meal was shared by the lucky 'lunchees'!



Honesty is the best...

When everybody on earth was dead and waiting to enter Heaven, God appeared and said, "I want the men to make two lines. One line for the men who were true heads of their household, and the other line for the men who were dominated by their women. I want all the women to report to St. Peter."

Soon, the women were gone, and there were two lines of men. The line of the men who were dominated by their wives was 100 miles long, and in the line of men who truly were heads of their household, there was only one man.

God said to the long line, "You men should be ashamed of yourselves; I created you to be the head of your household! You have been disobedient and have not fulfilled your purpose! Of all of you, only one obeyed. Learn from him."

God turned to the one man, "Charles, how did you manage to be the only one in this line?"

The man replied, "My wife told me to stand here."

With thanks to Val Delacretaz

Achievements on the golf course are not what matters, decency and honesty are what matter.

Tiger Woods

Goings On



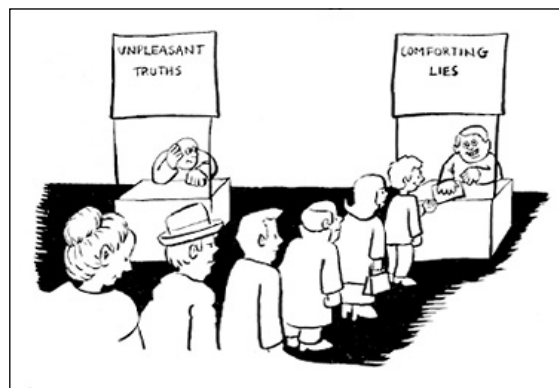
**A & B
ROOFING SPECIALISTS**

The Rectory roof has been successfully repaired at reasonable cost, thanks to the very talented André Hammond and Brent Cowan. Is there no end to what these guys can do? Free estimates on demand!



On Saturday, December 17th last, a mixed group of young and older gathered on a cold evening to sing carols in the immediate vicinity of the church. This Christmas festivity was organized by Layreader Angela Deslauriers and her son, Andreas, a Server. Over eighty dollars, together with a selection of food stuffs, was collected for donation to a local food bank.

On a parallel note, it was reported at the January Parish Council meeting that thirteen Christmas Baskets were delivered in the week before Christmas, twelve to Pointe Claire and one to a family in Dorval. Grateful thanks to all those parishioners who contributed.



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