The Olive Press

December 2015

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Editor's Letter

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things."

Hebrews 1:3

Just as the brilliance of the sun can't be separated from the sun itself, the Son's radiance cannot be separated from God.

God's work of redemption began with humble beginnings. A stable became the birthplace of the King of Glory, and that night God showed us His favour through the birth of His son.

With the anticipation of Christmas, this edition of *The Olive Press* features stories of the passionate joy felt in the miraculous birth of Jesus; the importance of acting out our faith at home; and experiencing the presence of Jesus when abroad. We also have a follow-up report from one of our past contributors on how God has powerfully fulfilled His plan since we first read his story in September's edition.

As well, we have a new face joining T*he Olive Press* team. Jamie Anderson-Reid has taken on the role of graphic designer, beginning with this edition, and we're looking forward to our future collaboration together. A *huge* thank you to Deanna Tonini for her steadfast dedication, generous contribution, and brilliant design work since the newsletter's redesign in 2012.

This season is a gift: Love came down and hope was born. May you feel the radiance of God's glory through our Saviour and King sustaining you in all things.

Karen

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The Lord's Supper:

We celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month: December 6th, January 2nd, and February 6th, during the 9:15 and 11:00 AM services.

Vision:

To be a God-Centred, Christ-Like, Spirit-Filled community church, actively serving and nurturing one another and our neighbours.

We seek to **Invite** people to enjoy the riches of Christ's grace, **Grow** in Christ together, and **Serve** with our passions and talents in Christ's Name.

Faith Fish Collection:

The next Faith Fish collection will be: February 21.

Does OCT 31 = DEC 25?

Recently I received a 'tongue in cheek' email, cc'd to me, from one of my beloved elders to another beloved elder.

"I am writing to you out of a deep pastoral concern for our minister Martin and to seek your counsel. I think, out of ethnic self-loathing, he is rejecting his Celtic roots and protesting a bit too much about Halloween and its deleterious influences. He must want to psychologically run as far from the pagan origins of All Hallows' Eve that his ancestors celebrated. But what is most confusing to me is his absolute exuberance about Christmas Day. As an engineer, surely he knows that OCT 31 = DEC 25, no?"

Two further emails bounced between the two elders, one highlighting the strict math equation of the above. Do you see the truth in the math? I used to work as a computer program designer so it quickly dawned on me how OCT 31 equates to DEC 25.

Counting using a decimal system, our usual way of counting, would mean that the number 25 equates to two times ten (2x10) plus 5. However there are other counting systems – for instance, binary; or hexadecimal; or even, for some beloved (and smart) elders, the octal system. In such a system the number 31 equates to three times eight (3x8) plus one, which is – lo and behold – 25. As such, OCT 31 does indeed equate to DEC 25.

However, if we leave the math to one side, does Oct 31 = Dec 25? Most of you know my answer. Rather than focusing this Christmas article on "that-day-that-should-never-be-named," I would like to talk a little about the assertion above; my apparent 'absolute exuberance' about Christmas.

Why am I exuberant about Christmas? When I became your minister (many, many years ago), I was asked to write my first Christmas article for the predecessor to *The Olive Press*; and I began that article with these words: "I love Christmas. Oh, I wish it could be Christmas every day." That assertion is still true!

Why?

I accept that there is a lot about the cultural celebration of Christmas that has its origins in pagan rituals. For instance, the Christmas Tree is considered by some to be the Christianisation of a pagan tradition and ritual surrounding the winter solstice, which included the use of evergreen boughs, and an adaptation of pagan tree worship. I accept that there is a lot we do – me included – as part of our Christmas traditions that we do without thinking. In fact, in more ways than one the math above accurately reflects our behaviour.

There are a lot of things I love about Christmas, as I've stated in previous articles; but why do I wish it could be Christmas every day? What is it about Christmas that leads me to be *absolutely exuberant* about it?

> *There were sheep-herders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.*[1]

[1] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Lk 2:8–12.

I'm guessing you knew I was going to quote that. You know that, above and beyond anything else, I love proclaiming the real reason for the season. Christmas is about celebrating the coming of our Lord Jesus, in the flesh, to redeem His creation – including you and me. On Christmas Eve I am not remotely interested in gathering together with you at SASS to celebrate the coming of Santa Claus later that night. I am not remotely interested in singing songs that talk about mistletoe, sleigh rides, and turkey. I am not interested in wishing anyone a 'happy holiday'. I want to gather with my brothers and sisters in Christ and celebrate with all my being that Jesus Christ considered what it meant to be God and as such He was born as a baby, just as I was, to live and die to save me. Can I hear an *Amen*?!

I could go on and on and on about that, but there is one crucial aspect about Christmas that I want to share with you here. I believe that Christmas reminds us that there is, in fact, a redemption story currently going on in the world. More than that, when I participate in remembering and celebrating the birth of Christ I am aligning myself to that redemptive narrative. I am participating in a proclamation to the world that *the world needs redemption and that I believe Jesus Christ is that redemption*.

I want to proclaim in word, song, and deed to the world that Christmas reminds us that we, like the shepherds, do not need to live in fear; because we have a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, who came to set us free and give us life in abundance – His overflowing everlasting life – right here, right now. (Side note – surely this is one of many reasons why Oct 31≠Dec 31.) Do you now see why I wish it could be Christmas every day? I long for us to proclaim Jesus every day. *The world needs us to proclaim Jesus*. I want to participate in anything that shines light into the darkness. I want to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the One True Bright Morning Star who arrives when life is so engulfed in lifelessness and hopelessness and tragedy; He comes, He appears, and He will go into your miry pit to help you out of it.

I am absolutely exuberant about Christmas because Jesus Christ is the Absolute Way, the Absolute Truth, and the Absolute Life for this world – and if I get a chance to share that Good News with others I will, every single time. Won't you?

Let me close with this: I am not trying to redeem Christmas. I am not trying to make a distorted cultural tradition better. I see Jesus as the very centre of Christmas and so I want to keep Him – He who is the Main Thing – the main thing when it comes to my participation in Dec 25.

Perhaps that is the reason why I struggle so much with the other date in question. And so I leave my beloved elder who inspired this article with this question: "Where is Jesus in what occurs all around us on Oct 31?"

This Christmas I invite you to become absolutely exuberant about sharing the good news that will cause great joy for ALL people.

"Today in the town of David a Saviour

has been born to you;

He is Christ the Lord."

Spread the news this year.

Oct 31≠Dec 31. Thanks be to God!

Joy to the world – the Lord has come!

Martin

Submitted By Corlea Smit

Tradition seems to mean more this time of year, doesn't it? There's something about the Christmas season that brings out the comfort and closeness of our childhood memories, and I personally love to see these stories grow from one generation to the next.

Of course, traditions adapt over time. For our family, that is especially true. Immigration to a whole new country with a whole new set of traditions has allowed us to shape and reshape our family traditions over the last 18 years since we arrived in Canada. Some changes were not optional; we're not surrounded by our extended family anymore. Some were joyfully embraced; who wouldn't want to build a snowman and roast a turkey?! And others were so valuable that we held on to them despite the distance of many miles and the passage of many years.

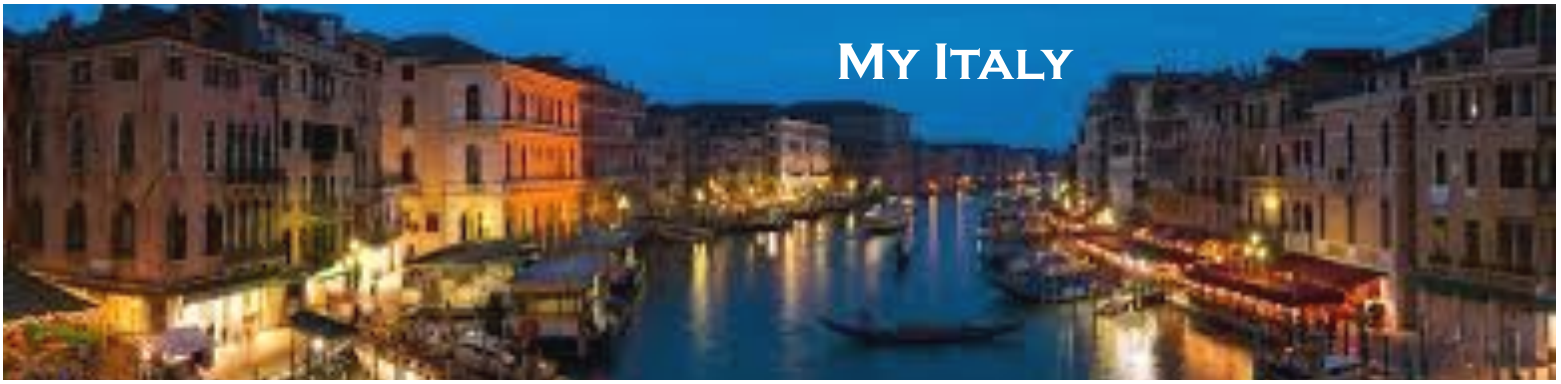
I remember our Christmases in South Africa very well. School was out – since this was also our summer vacation – and our aunts and uncles from both sides of the family came together for the holidays. If you count all the cousins and add in all the parents and grandparents, and eventually the spouses and kids, there would be easily 30 or more of us meeting for a Christmas 'braai' for just one side of the family! We'd often spend time at the beach, and pretty much each year we'd have a big gathering at our place. My dad's sister lived right behind us, so we had twice the yard space for playing and two swimming pools to entertain the kids. The moms served cold cuts and watermelon, the dads had the braai going. When we went to Ouma & Oupa's, Ouma inexplicably forgot to buy the ice cream for dessert every single year. But she always seemed to have an extra tin of condensed milk that she had opened to make dessert and then ended up not needing it. To think of it now, my mom must have just shaken her head at her own mother's habit of leaving the tin and spoons out on the kitchen table for us to pick at as we ran in and out of the house. And it took us *years* to catch on to why poor Oupa was always sent out to buy the missing ice cream about 10 minutes before Santa would arrive! Santa showed up at the front door with his big bag, and we'd all huddle in the living room for presents. And sure enough, just as Santa said his goodbyes and disappeared down the road, Oupa would come back (from the garage where the deepfreeze was, now that I think of it!). Oh, I wish you could see the look on Emmie's little face when Oupa Nico had to leave last year for ice cream and missed Santa's arrival!! Big brother Naithin could barely contain his excitement to help sneak the Santa suit out of our car! He just beamed at the chance to help continue this tradition for his little sister, and Christo and I can't wait to see this tradition continue on over the years. I hear my cousin in Cape Town shows up on a Harley in Oupa's suit each year… That's new!

When we weren't with the cousins, we went to the airfield to which my dad belonged (he did a bit of recreational flying at the time in a little Cessna). This Santa arrived by helicopter, and I remember watching the video recording of this event years later – I was so enthralled that I actually got up off the couch and walked towards the TV when Santa called my name. Some memories do that to you, don't they? Something so heartfelt stays with you.

But it's not all Santa and white sandy beaches. There's a part of my Christmas memories that not only transcended generations and immigration – this experience even transcended languages! You may know that my uncle Willem was a missionary in the Transkei for his entire working life. Some of my fondest memories were his Christmas services. Usually he brought his family down to Cape Town for Christmas, but sometimes we went up to Dicoligny. We'd attend his Christmas service delivered entirely in Xhosa, and I'd enthusiastically try to follow along in the hymnal as best I could with my limited school-based introduction to the language. My pronunciation was hysterical and I couldn't keep up, but then

it didn't matter one bit. I was wrapped up in the passion I felt from this community. Even as a youngster, I knew something was different about the hearts of these men and women in that church. I know now that they had to know extreme pain to feel such powerful and true joy. I can see now that they allowed themselves to be so wholly wrapped up and transformed by the celebration of Jesus's birth, as well as the excitement and passion of the season, only because they knew too well what it meant to be without that peace and comfort. You and I know this passion. We know this inexplicable joy that makes our muscles jump, our eyes well up, our hearts race, and our voices sing out – no matter in what language!

So let's carry on our traditions, and let's tell our stories. Let's celebrate Jesus together, and let's allow ourselves to get consumed by this miraculous story. Let's embrace that powerful, passionate joy and get truly wrapped up in the excitement of Jesus this Christmas!



My Italy

Submitted By Eileen Maharaj

Italy – the very name evokes in me such a variety of memories and emotions. The aroma of the distinctive foods, the beautiful light on the honey-coloured tuscan stone, the sumptuous architecture of Venice reflected in the canals. I am sure everyone who has been there has a favourite image.

During my recent trip I enjoyed all these, and more. One particularly memorable event occurred in the Baptistry of Pisa. This masterpiece took more than 200 years to build – from 1152 to 1363. While everyone heads for that magical wedding cake of a tower leaning at an impossible angle, few enjoy the stone inlays and sculptures inside the baptistry edifice.

What I had not expected as we toured the baptistry was an acoustical demonstration. At one o'clock that afternoon we were asked to be silent for a few moments. A young lady came forward and sang one note. We were awed as we heard that note echoing around the cylindrical building, the dome, and us. Then she sang another note, and another. All three notes continued, the reverberations forming a major chord, beautifully clear, the first note undiminished but blending perfectly with the later ones. Even the young children were awed by this sound.

Southern Italy also had its surprises. Yes, the churches are just as numerous as in the north (they have churches like we have Starbucks!), but unlike the north, the south was not so blessed with rich aristocratic families to endow public art. Hence, the Michelangelo, da Vinci, and Giotto masterpieces are absent, and in place of these are pieces of artwork provided by their students.

In Lecce, we stopped to admire yet another church; I have now forgotten which one. What I will never forget, though, is hearing a violin and cello play the opening bars of 'I Know That My Redeemer Liveth' from Handel's *Messiah*. I left my tour group at the door and headed to the altar screen where a young soprano joined the two string players. Her high E soared around the dome and the solo rang with a bell-like quality.

Someone advised our Italian tour guide that this was a famous English piece of music not to be missed, and the rest of my tour was also able to enjoy this acoustical wonder.

I was so privileged to experience these echoes from the past. It was a bit of heaven on earth.

Handel's *Messiah* will no doubt be performed closer to home over the Christmas season; as you celebrate the birth of the promised King may you be blessed by the gift of music.

"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." - St. Augustine

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."
Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

Supporting the Sunday School
At SASSPC, we are blessed with a large number of children and youth in our congregation. Throughout October and November, children from pre-school to Grade 3 and their parents gathered during Sunday School classes to talk about "Faith at Home." The discussion focused on fostering Christian faith in our everyday lives, and the library proudly supported this venture by having books, DVDs, and CDs available for each age level. The library will continue to assist the program in 2016 as the older grades meet.

Colour Coding of the Children's Books
The library has set up a colour coding system to help you choose a suitable book for your child's reading level. Children begin to read at various ages, so we offer books with large, dense print and lots of pictures for the early reading stages.

1. RED DOT – Books with a red dot on the spine are suitable for children in Pre-school, Kindergarten, and Grade 1. Many of these books are found in the *I Can Read* series located in the red baskets by the library windows. This covers Pre-reading, as well as Levels 1, 2, and 3. As you read these books together, you will be able to see at what stage your child is reading.

2. BLUE STAR – Books with a blue star on the spine are suitable for children who are beginning to read with little or no help. The next step is "chapter books" with longer stories and more challenging words. Some of these books can be found in the blue baskets by the windows. Look for series names on the edge of each shelf.

3. YELLOW DOT – Books with a yellow dot on the spine are suitable for Grades 7 and up. These books have been chosen for content that appeals to teenagers. There are a variety of fiction and non-fiction titles with many of the fiction books in a series, so look for the series labels on the shelves located in the library alcove.

Advent – Yes, Christmas is A-Comin' In!
Last year during Advent we sent home four books with every child in Sunday School so they could open one book each Sunday to share with the family. This year, we are repeating the program throughout the four-week Advent season, which begins on November 29. If you have children in this age group, please make note of this upcoming event.

New Arrivals
There are a number of new titles for adults in the display area and on the shelves.

Fiction:
Somewhere Safe With Somebody Good, by Jan Karon
Come Rain or Come Shine, by Jan Karon
The Canary List, by Sigmund Brouwer
Unspoken, by Dee Henderson

Non-Fiction:
Posturing With God, by Dan MacKinnon
Learning to Walk in the Dark, by Barbara Brown Taylor
100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know By Heart, by Robert J. Morgan
Boundaries in Dating: Making Dating Work, by Henry Cloud and John Townsend
Take the Risk, by Dr. Ben Carson (with Greg Lewis)
(Yes, this is the Dr. Ben Carson who is currently running for President in the USA)

Look for a full list of new titles of books and DVDs on our News Board in the church hall.

Periodicals
The *Presbyterian Record* is a monthly Canadian magazine published by Presbyterian Record Inc. Each issue has an article by the current Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, presently Rev. Karen Horst, and many items of interest reflecting what is happening in churches across our land. Recent issues have carried articles by Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, Amy McLachlan, Dr. Ross Lockhart, Rev. Laurence De Wolfe, and Rev. David Webber, to name but a few.

Check out Dr. Farris's article on "The Patty Test" in the March 2015 issue, and a most moving story in the October edition on Dr. Tony Plomp who is now coping with stage 4 cancer. In the same issue, Elaine Wilson's cheery face appears!

We have two copies available to borrow each month. You can also access the content online at www.presbyterianchurch.ca. It is well worth finding out what is happening in our widespread denomination.

The Library Team
Questions or comments? Call Winnie at 604-929-7398.

A Perfect Gift For Christmas

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"
Matthew 5: 48

In her book *To Love As God Loves*, author Roberta Bondi uses her keen ability to synthesize the thoughts and writings of the Desert Fathers (early Christian monks) to approach present day misconceptions around the idea of perfection. Bondi writes that the modern view of perfection "suggests a compulsive person that is never satisfied with anything, who is nit-picking over details and tied up with guilt, and whose favorite pastime is catching other people in mistakes." As a result, perfection has become something that has nothing to do with our spiritual life and is far from being a virtue; rather, it is one of the worst defects, usually associated with Pharisees and people whom Jesus confronted.

As Bondi indicates, a fine notion of perfection is found in the lives of the Desert Fathers, who thought that "to be a perfect human being, a human being the way God intends human beings to be, is to be a fully loving person, loving God, and loving God's image." What's more, these Church Fathers thought, "an ability to love is the very goal of the Christian life." They took the commandment to love the Lord their God and their neighbour as the central and most important commandment of the entire Bible, and as the soul of the Christian life.

With each chapter, Bondi outlines various virtues that the Desert Fathers pursued: love, humility, harnessing the passions, prayer, and the pursuit of God. Perfection is found through a disciplined heart and it is something to live by. All these disciplines that the Desert Fathers practiced had the purpose of enhancing their capacity to love. For them, a genuine Christian love was the true expression of perfection.

A significant aspect of the spirituality of these Church Fathers that Bondi also develops is prayer, an integral component of the monastic life and the way of fighting the passions. Prayer provides the perfect space for introspection. "To look inside ourselves and see what is going on is a crucial part of breaking free of the passions." This allows us to see in ourselves that which can be hurtful to others "so that we can do something about what needs to be corrected and strengthened." It is not in order to increase our spiritual ego that we pray; rather, prayer seeks to improve our capacity to love.

Finally, Bondi portrays how the early Desert Fathers understood what it means to love God. For them, the maturity and level to which we love God is always reflected in the manner we treat one another. They believed that "we cannot love and learn of God even in our prayer unless we learn to approach others without pride." Therefore, the "Greatest Commandment" represents the heart of the Christian life and the essence of what it means to follow Jesus.

Bondi's approach to the Church Fathers is a very useful resource of spirituality to modern Christians. She presents a good connection between the early Desert Fathers and modern Christianity since their struggles, teachings, and disciplines can help Christians a great deal today to live a better spiritual life. The Desert Fathers teach us that perfection is something to be pursued. When do we realize that we have grown in perfection? When we see an improvement in the quality of our love, in our relationships with God and our neighbours.

Perfection is something to be cultivated and not to be purchased. A common passion of our modern world is consumerism, but as the Desert Fathers teach us, only with prayer and giving ourselves the time and space for introspection will we realize how much we have in our lives that we do not need. How significant today, in our highly noisy culture with all the latest phones, computers, and technologies, is this notion of introspection and silence. In my personal experience, I have found silence to be a great place to grow, to know myself, and to listen to God. As Christmas approaches, I would like to give a different kind of present to my family, something that cannot be bought: a perfect love. So they can be loved as they deserve, as God loves them.

When Jesus was talking about love and forgiveness, he challenged his disciples to "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5: 48). May His challenge be every day in our hearts, not only for this Christmas but also for this new year.

Daniel

God Has a Plan - Fulfilled

Submitted By Jean Paul Booyens

In my last article, I wrote about my journey through a difficult phase of my life, where just as I'd earned my chartered accountant designation I was let go from my workplace of four years. A long job search ensued, in which God kept my spirits up with His Word, and eventually culminated in a six-month contract at a Big Four accounting firm followed by a three-month contract at a small accounting firm. At the conclusion, I wrote of wanting permanent full-time work to keep myself going, but that I was excited about how God would meet that need. I wish to tell you that as soon as the last article came out, He acted powerfully to address my situation.

Things got interesting towards the end of the three-month contract. I was trying to persuade my boss to make my position permanent, but realized it was unlikely as nobody had sufficient work. Simultaneously, I was called for an interview with another firm and I was wondering if I should just go to it without letting my boss know. Through a devotional that referred to a Bible verse (Galatians 6:7, "You will surely reap what you sow"), I realized I had to be honest, so I told my boss. Fortunately, he allowed me to take all the time I needed for any interviews. I went to the meeting but, unfortunately, that posting fell through.

After a period of waiting, all of a sudden I had a week where almost every day involved an interview. That Wednesday, I was interviewed by a very friendly partner, and on the way out the receptionist asked me in a most gentle, kind way how it went. I felt absolutely wonderful about the place. The partner said he wanted my reference list that day and no sooner had I agreed than I realized I did not have the information at work and could not access it from there, either. I almost melted down from frustration. I told my boss what had happened and he let me go home early – even though it was only the start of the day!

The next afternoon, I received an informal offer from that company for a permanent full-time position, and that Friday the formal agreement arrived. I reviewed it very carefully, prayed about it, and discussed the situation with a trusted advisor. And so, I accepted the position. At long last, my job search was at an end.

I started work at the new public practice firm on October 5, 2015.

I would never have been able to get through this without God's guidance. It has been a truly wonderful experience. God helped me navigate a very difficult period of my life and I am much stronger and much more knowledgeable for it. I learned that no matter how bad it gets, God always has a plan and can always work things out for good. And so this year, I will celebrate Christmas Day with a full and thankful heart for a permanent full-time position.

I would like to sincerely thank you for your prayers, which, together with God's grace, have ended a lengthy job search and allowed God to demonstrate His never-ending love.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3: 5-6

The Penny Drops: Iron Intake

Medically Speaking

With the approach of Advent, I find myself looking forward to enjoying Christmas fare. I love mince pies, Christmas pudding, and just a small dollop of brandy butter! My Grandmother would always follow the tradition of hiding a penny coin in the pudding. Whilst I hoped to be the lucky one, I also wondered what would happen if I swallowed it? Yikes – would some small piece of metal harm me?

As a physician, I am frequently prescribing metal to my patients – not in quite the same format as a piece of coinage, but as ferrous gluconate, or ferrous sulphate. Many people struggle with iron deficiency anemia; a lack of iron in the body that results in less hemoglobin per red blood cell and therefore less oxygen reaching the tissues. This causes fatigue, breathlessness, palpitations, light-headedness, poor tissue healing, and – for children – the risk of poor development. We diagnose anemia based on a blood test that shows a low level of hemoglobin; however before full anemia sets in, there is a period of iron deficiency, when the hemoglobin is normal but the body is using up its iron stores. Again, this is tested by a blood test that checks ferritin or iron capacity in the body. As many as 1 in 4 people may be iron deficient without knowing it, and are therefore at risk of becoming anemic. Those most at risk are menstruating women, pregnant women, vegetarians or vegans, those with poor absorption due to diseases like coeliac disease or colitis, or regular blood donors.

We lose iron through normal turnover in the body (red blood cells are constantly being removed and new ones made), excessive bleeding, or chronic health conditions that increase the body's demand. However, we only take in iron through our diets, and so our diet is key to ensuring that we get enough iron.

Iron comes from either animal products (heme iron) or vegetable iron (non-heme iron). Our bodies like to absorb both, together. If you don't eat meat, then you need to take in double the quantity of non-heme iron. Men need about 11mg of iron a day, whilst women need 18mg.

Vitamin C increases our iron absorption; soda drinks, tea, coffee, and dairy products will reduce iron absorption. In fact, our bodies will preferentially absorb calcium over iron, so if you swallow an iron tablet with a glass of milk you may as well not bother taking it.

So let's return to our Christmas menu! Let's see how much iron we can pack into that dinner. Starting with a traditional fish starter you could consume 2.3mg of iron in your salmon pate – or, for the vegetarian, 1.4mg in your hummus. Turkey with nut stuffing will add another 3mg, and with potatoes you'll be up to 5mg. A meat-free option using tofu and lentils could pack in as much as 10mg, so let's say you've taken in about 50% of your daily recommendation after your first two courses. But here comes the pudding! Raisins, sultanas, figs and apricots are very iron rich. A portion of each contains 100% of your daily recommendation! Add in the molasses, grated apple, chopped nuts, and flour and you have a pudding densely packed with iron! Finish off your dinner, if you have room, with some dark chocolate-coated almonds and you will be completing your meal at close to 250% of your daily recommendation. AND, with all that added iron to boost your oxygen carrying capacity, you'll be racing out the door for a brisk walk to work off the calories!!

As for the penny? Well, of course, a penny is made of bronze and will do nothing for your iron intake – but please don't choke on it! May I suggest you carefully check your spoonfuls before you eat?! Take time, don't rush; dinner is about fellowship and conversation, not fast food and indigestion!

By Dr. Nicola Walton-Knight

The Story of Bobotie - A South African National Dish

Submitted By Nickie Booyens

When the Dutch founded the settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, they had been sailing between the Netherlands and Indonesia for at least 50 years. Their seamen suffered incredible deprivation on these journeys. By the middle of that century the Lords Seventeen, the directors of the Dutch East India Company, decided that a refreshment station was required at some point between Batavia (now Djakarta), their capital in the Far East, and Holland. The obvious choice was the Cape of Good Hope, which is around halfway along that incredible journey.

Commander Jan van Riebeeck duly arrived on 6 April 1652 with some 90 men to establish a refreshment post at the "Cape of Storms," as the Portuguese had originally named it. By 1657, van Riebeeck realized that he needed labour at this far-flung outpost where no one wanted to serve. So he freed some of the Dutch East India Company men from their regular roles to become Free Burghers, the intention being that they would farm the outpost and grow wheat. It soon became clear, however, that the mere handful of Free Burghers would not suffice.

Eventually slaves from Indonesia, already in the employ of the Dutch East India Company at Batavia, were brought to the Cape. They were much sought after because of their various trades and their general proficiency. They brought with them the Moslem faith, a unique fast-paced music, an incredibly sharp wit, and a lot of useful terminology that quickly found its way into the national language of Afrikaans. Last but not least, they brought with them a number of food dishes. As time progressed, these folks became known as the "Cape Malay," though they are by no means from Malaya.

The most famous of their dishes is **Bobotie**, a combination of minced meat, curry, and fruit chutney, along with various toppings, including banana. The first recipe for Bobotie actually appeared in 1609 in the Netherlands. It was originally made with a topping of custard. While the dish has undergone some considerable modification through the centuries, the recipe below still captures the essence of the original.

Many of you enjoyed this dish at the recent potluck, as well as on other occasions. I have been asked to provide the recipe, and so here it is. I will be acting as judge for the next occasion when we get together and you are all invited to try your luck!

Bobotie with Banana Topping

Beef Mixture:

2 medium onions
1 clove garlic
2 tablespoons sunflower or canola oil
4 teaspoons medium curry powder
1 ½ teaspoons turmeric
1.5 kg lean ground beef
1 granny smith apple
½ teaspoon lemon zest
juice of one lemon
4 tablespoons Mrs. Ball's Peach Chutney
1 cup white bread crumbs
1 dessert spoon salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
1 cup dry white wine or beef stock

Topping:

3 tablespoons smooth apricot jam
1 tablespoon lemon juice
3 ripe bananas
12 whole almonds
1 cup milk
2 eggs

Peel and chop the onions and garlic. Heat the oil in a heavy bottomed saucepan or cast iron pan and slowly fry the onions and garlic until soft. Add curry powder and turmeric and stir-fry lightly. Add the ground beef, loosening it with a large fork and frying it slowly.

Roughly grate the apple and add it to the beef mixture together with the lemon zest, lemon juice, chutney, breadcrumbs, salt, and pepper. Put on the lid and simmer for 30 minutes over low heat. Add the wine (or beef stock) and mix well.

Put the mixture in an ovenproof dish with a volume of 3 litres (12 cups). Dilute the apricot jam with the lemon juice and brush over the mixture. Peel the bananas and cut into slices. Arrange the banana slices and almonds on top of the beef mixture.

Beat the eggs and milk together and pour over the mixture. Let it stand for a while so the egg mixture can soak in and penetrate.

Bake approximately 45 minutes at 375° F until the egg mixture has set and is golden brown.

The above will provide eight portions to be served with chutney, coconut, chopped pineapple, and mixed salad.

The Burning Babe
By Robert Southwell

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty babe all burning bright did in the air appear;
Who, though scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed,
As though his floods should quench his flames, which with his tears were fed.
"Alas," quoth he, "but newly born, in fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts, or feel my fire but I!
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;
The fuel justice layeth on, and mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."
With this he vanished out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas Day.

Missions Fest®
VANCOUVER

January 29-31, 2016

Submitted By Helen Arnet on behalf of MEMT

Christmas is always such a blessing as we celebrate another anniversary of the birth of our Lord Jesus. There are myriad awesome December moments we relish as we decorate the church, belt out all our favourite carols, marvel at the beautiful music from our Christmas Choristers, or watch a Sunday School play – often shared with visiting friends and relatives.

All too suddenly, the New Year is upon us and we start our normal routines all over again, but with the sure knowledge our Lord is with us always and is there to guide and encourage us as we continue to follow His example.

As we transition from Christmas, the highlight of January is always **Missions Fest;** January 2016 features ***Mission: Being or Doing*** and this year's speakers will be following through on just that!

Danielle Strickland – an officer in The Salvation Army, Ms. Strickland is internationally recognized as a leader, speaker, writer, justice advocate, mission developer, and church planter. She is currently doing grassroots community work in a marginalized community in Edmonton and leads Stop The Traffik, an anti-human-trafficking campaign, in Canada.

James Hudson Taylor IV – born and raised in Taiwan, Jamie gained a deep affection and identification with the Chinese people. This has carried over to 30-plus years of ministry, most recently with OMF International (previously China Inland Mission started by his great-great-grandfather, Hudson Taylor). Over the past decade, Jamie has been involved in the exciting emergence of the church in China through cross-cultural missions, for which he has provided training and mentorship.

Dr. Michael Oh – executive director/CEO of the Lausanne Movement (Lausanne.org) founded by Billy Graham, the Movement connects influencers and ideas for global mission. As a young Korean man, Oh became a missionary to Japan and founded CBI Japan (cbijapan.org) in response to Christ's challenge to 'love your enemies'. Michael has degrees from the University of Pennsylvania (BA, MS, PhD), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (MDiv), and Harvard University (MA).

Richard Cunningham – director of UCCF (The Christian Unions), Cunningham was a founding co-convenor of the European Leadership Forum and is currently a member of the Church of England, College of Evangelists. He is passionate about helping Christians be confident in the truth, relevance, and beauty of the Gospel, and equipping them to be engaging and effective witnesses at home and overseas.

Club 67 is one of several popular youth rallies at Missions Fest, and one our SASSPC teens like to attend. SASSPC continues to be a sponsoring church for Missions Fest and MEMT participants.

The **2016 Missions Fest's Special Project** is providing **+CARE KITS** for the **Union Gospel Mission,** based in downtown Vancouver, and we encourage the congregation to participate with MEMT to support this wonderful local mission.

Please see the Missions & Evangelism Ministry Team (MEMT) notice board for more information.

Kathy's Christmas Cake

Submitted By Enid Fourie

Ingredients:

500 g raisins
500 g currants
500 g sultanas
500 g orange peel
250 g red cherries (halved)
250 g green cherries (halved)
500 g flour
500 g sugar
500 g butter
500 g chopped pecans or walnuts
1 dozen eggs
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon mixed spice
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup brandy, plus extra to pour over cake when baked

Method:

Place raisins, currants, sultanas, and orange peel in a large bowl. Check for stalks, etc., then pour one cup of brandy over the fruit and stir. Cover and set aside overnight.

The next day, preheat oven to 300° F. In a mixing bowl, whisk together sugar and butter until creamy, then add eggs one at a time. Fold in flour, baking powder, and all the spices. Stir well.

Add the nuts and macerated fruit. Carefully fold in the cherries last.

Line one large and one small baking dish, including lids, with two layers of aluminum foil. Pour batter into the dishes and cover.

Place pans in oven. After 30 minutes, reduce heat to 250° F. Bake smaller pan for about three hours or until filling is set (insert a cake tester in the centre). Bake the large pan for approximately one more hour, checking to make sure the centre is cooked before removing from oven.

When cool, drizzle more brandy over the cakes and cover with lids.

MUSICAL NOTES

Submitted By June Botwright

I love Christmas carols, so when asked to share my 'favourite' piece of Christmas music, it was impossible to choose only one. Please bear with me as I outline just a few of the many I am fond of. One of the more recent songs I really like is entitled 'While You Were Sleeping' by Casting Crowns. I would like to share some of the words I find particularly meaningful.

Oh Bethlehem, what you have missed while you were sleeping
For God became a man and stepped into your world today
Oh Bethlehem, you will go down in history as a city with no room for its King
While you were sleeping

United States of America, looks like another silent night
As we're sung to sleep by philosophies that save the trees and kill the children
And while we're lying in the dark there's a shout heard 'cross the eastern sky
For the Bridegroom has returned and has carried His bride away in the night

America, will we go down in history as a nation with no room for its King
Will we be sleeping?

Another less traditional Christmas favourite of mine is 'Mary, Did You Know?' It has a beautiful melody and powerful words.

Mary, did you know
That your baby boy has come to make you new
This child that you delivered will soon deliver you
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby you kissed the face of God

Mary, did you know
That your baby boy is Lord of all creation
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know
That your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb
The sleeping child you're holding is The Great I Am

Of the more traditional carols, I really enjoy singing 'Joy to the World'. This is a very rousing, joyful carol and one to sing with gusto. Actually, I used to have it as my 'ringtone' on my previous cell phone and it made me feel joyful every time the phone rang.

My final carol choice has to be the old classic, 'Silent Night'. Over the years I have sung many different versions of this carol, but the original rendition is still very special to me. When we have Christmas gatherings at our house and Andrew plays guitar for carols, he likes to play a "rocked up" version (which is his bent), but I prefer when it is sung reverently. However, hearing it played on guitar does remind me of the song's origins when a simple poem written by Josef Mohr and hastily set to music by Franz Gruber was played on guitar one Christmas Eve almost 200 years ago. Wouldn't it have been wonderful to be there in the Church of St. Nicholas in Austria that night when the song made its debut? Who could have known that it would be played and sung every Christmas season thereafter?

These are just a few of my favourite pieces of music. Whatever you like to sing at Christmastime, I hope you will sing with great joy, just as the angels did on that very first Christmas.

FAITH BEGINS AT HOME

HELPING KIDS DEVELOP CHRIST-MINDEDNESS

"True faith can't be taught - it must be caught." - Reverend Mark Holmen

We want our children to share our faith. We want them to know what we believe to be true: that the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and the peace and joy that passes understanding is ours if we follow Christ; and yet, unfortunately, most of the beautiful children we see up at the front of the church on a Sunday morning will spurn these beliefs. They will struggle to find the true meaning in life; they will wander aimlessly without any spiritual conviction; or they will be drawn into whatever belief system presents itself (especially during their vulnerable teen years) as the most colourful and engaging.

Why is it that, so often, children end up distancing themselves from the beliefs held by their parents? The answer, it seems, is that kids who haven't witnessed their parents living out their faith believe them to be hypocrites.

When kids haven't been able to observe their parents' ***relationship*** with God – if they haven't witnessed their parents talk to Him through prayer or listen to Him through His Word – then a declaration of faith in God by their parents can seem to merely be lip-service.

Children who have been dragged to church to participate in worship because their parents think that Christianity is something you 'do' at church may similarly end up disenchanted with the faith.

How are parents to equip those whom they love and cherish, to prepare them for life? **Deuteronomy 6: 5-7** tells us to: repeat God's commands, ***talk about Him*** when we are at home and when we are on a journey, when we are lying down and when we are getting up. This is not to say that we should be *preaching* to our children! Jesus shows us how to lead the way for our kids by the way He 'chats' constantly to His disciples; by telling them stories, teaching them, sharing with them both His sorrows and His joys as well as His assurance of a new world with the Father. Jesus's lessons were times of observing and of sharing, at every opportunity, both joyful and sorrowful moments.

We parents cannot delegate the responsibility of our children's faith development to anyone else – not to the church; not to a Christian school; not to any other organization. These communities are merely there to reinforce that which we have begun at home. **It is *our task* to equip our children**!

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Deuteronomy 6: 5-7

DEVELOPING YOUR CHILD'S HEART FOR GOD

a) **Bible reading.** Make a plan; instead of just flipping the Good Book open to a random page, choose a theme and make a point. Regular Bible-reading will only happen if you're intentional about sharing 'God' time. Make it a priority. This means finding the time that suits you both, whether it's at breakfast, after school, or just before bath time (5 or 10 minutes) – but it's a good idea to keep some time aside for the child's own choice of story at bedtime.

b) **Pray together**. If prayer time hasn't been a custom in your family, start by making it a habit to give thanks before a meal. Make it simple but sincere. Expand this prayer sometimes to include other things for which you are thankful or to express a real need or concern on behalf of someone else. Ask each child if they can suggest something for which they can be thankful or something about which they're concerned. When this habit is fully entrenched, they could be encouraged to lead the devotion. This then can become the template for family prayers after the meal or at bedtime – you might consider using the acronym ACTS to lead you through the prayer time: Adoration, Confession, Thanks, Supplication.

c) **Serve together**. Teach your children to serve one another before serving themselves. Show them ways in which they can help an elderly neighbour by bringing in his garbage cans or raking her leaves in the fall. Let them accompany you with a meal or gift for someone who has difficulty leaving their home. Let your children help you choose items for the food bank. Visit the Harvest Project and talk to your kids about the needs of others; talk about the difficulties for many on our own doorstep who might also be helped through collections and demonstrations of kindness and generosity. Participate together in World Vision programs. Prepare Samaritan boxes with your children. Search the web for meaningful ways in which to connect and help the needy.

If we put greater value on our children's spiritual lives than that of academic achievement and excellence in sport, we will do everything we can to share that which we hold dear above all else.

So íf you want your children to be people of faith, share your experiences; let them see you pray for help, for guidance, and for strength. Let them hear you ask for forgiveness and show them that in all things you give thanks. Let them understand that God is part of your every moment, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the moon. Be a witness for God, and let your kids witness your faith in action!

IN MEMORIAM

It is with regret we record the death of Jean Cameron (November 25, 1930 – April 5, 2015), who passed in to glory on April 5th, 2015. A memorial service was held on Saturday, April 11th, in our Sanctuary.

Frederick William Rannard (June 6, 1923 - September 9, 2015), in his 93rd year, passed into our Lord's loving arms on September 9th. A memorial service was held held in the Sanctuary on September 26th.

CRAFT CORNER - NATURE ORNAMENTS

Materials:

glass baubles
ribbons
sprigs of holly, bayberry, and evergreen, etc., collected previously

Instructions:

1. Collect greenery and set it out to get rid of excess moisture.

2. Remove the cap from a glass ornament and carefully place a small piece of trimmed greenery inside.

3. To prevent condensation from forming, leave the cap off for 24 hours before replacing it.

4. Thread ribbon through the top loop, knot, and hang from the tree.

Taken from: http://www.marthastewart.com/274467/christmas-ornament-projects/@center/307034/christmas-workshop

KID'S PAGES

Christmas
Word Scramble
lelbs 1-_____
isentpiota 2-_____
cleand 3-_____
gigabrndeer 4-_____
tewhar 5-_____
scralo 6-_____
edinerer 7-_____
gostinck 8-_____
esokoci 9-_____
gngego 10-_____
gliseh 11-_____
leves 12-_____
tenessrp 13-_____
dranlag 14-_____
sottlemie 15-_____
fitg 16-_____
yalohid 17-_____
legan 18-_____
leno 19-_____
stranemon 20-_____
credembe 21-_____
womanns 22-_____
dancy enca 23-_____
sliten 24-_____
eylu 25-_____
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