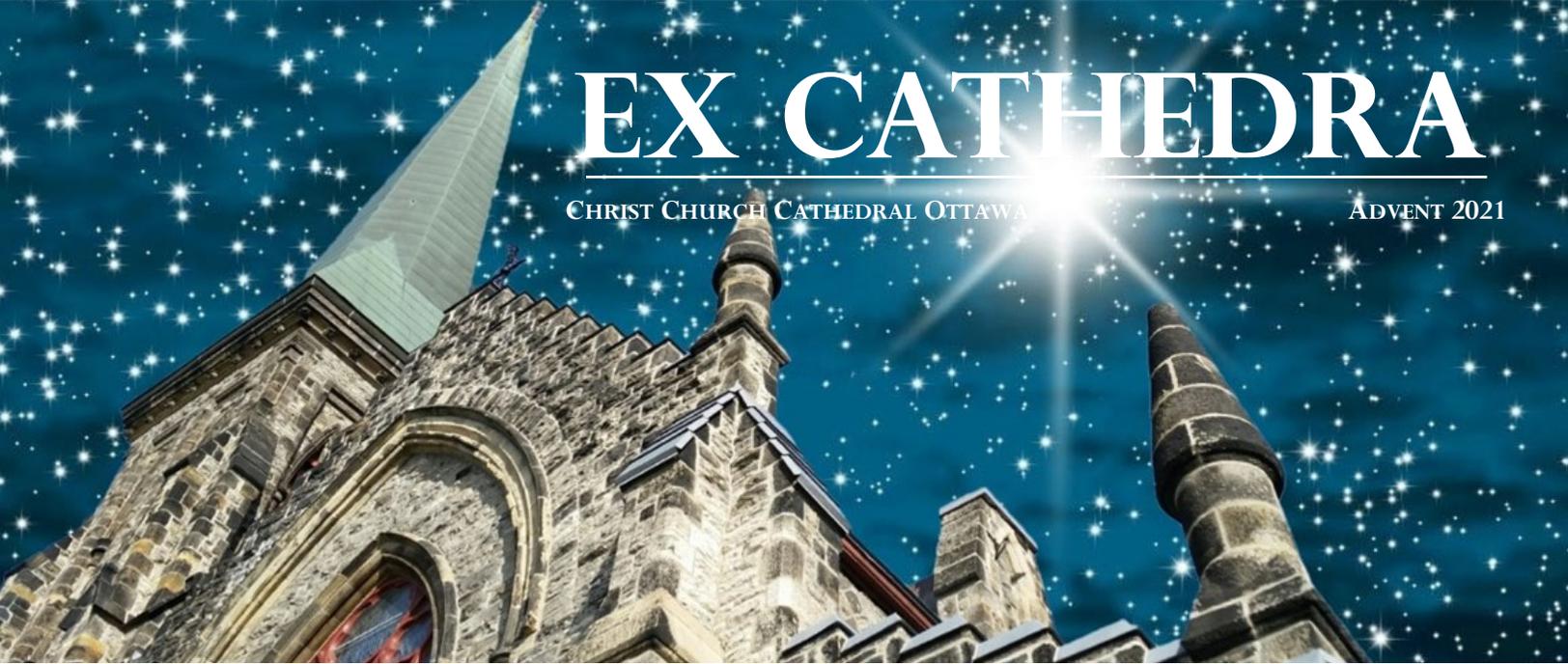


EX CATHEDRA

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL OTTAWA

ADVENT 2021



HAND OF HOPE

As her tiny, perfectly formed hand lay in mine, something stirred within me. Beneath the anguish, searing pain and deep despair, an awakening slowly began to unfurl like the fronds of a New Zealand fern. At first, I did not recognize what it was; mistaken perhaps for giddy exhaustion. As my daughter's hand warmed mine, a glimmer of hope pierced my consciousness.

I was unable to comprehend how this could be, as the baby I had longed for and been surprised by, was most likely going to die. Hannah's little hand – relaxed, trusting, vulnerable – how could it communicate hope when it belonged to an infant, born five weeks early, having undergone several major heart op-

erations and now only continuing to exist thanks to the miracle of life support?

My rational being rebelled; anger rose within me and cries of BUT IT IS NOT FAIR tried to drown out the soft yet bright tendrils, hesitantly but unremittingly growing within me. My soul had been bared; my heart wrenched; my body exhausted; my mind numbed; and my faith pushed beyond what I thought was its limit. I was not easily going to submit to anything that might simply bring more pain.

Despite my best defences, hope steadily flowed into my being to such an extent that I could no longer ignore or deny its presence. In that moment, I realized that Hannah was holding me. Her soul was gently caressing mine with grace and love as

surely as her hand touched mine. Hannah was offering me a most precious gift. There in Starship Children's Hospital, Auckland, New Zealand, in the face of my child's impending death, I faced a watershed moment – to choose despair or hope.

As the life-preserving machines chugged away, beeps from various monitors pierced the room and nurses went about their caring work, I sat by wee Hannah as though struck dumb. It had been an incredible journey of extremes thus far. Yet this tiny child with her hand in mine,



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A PRAYER

By Albert Dumont

O Great Spirit

Into a gentle breeze I softly sing
And I rise to dance in thanksgiving
That You have created human beings
I promise to continue each dawn
To heap praise on the goodness
You have placed before the Peoples

To teach us, to feed us
To nurture and sustain us

The great trees growing
Out of a narrow blanket of earth
Covering the rocky hillside

The small bird flying against ferocious
winds

The sparkles of playful fish
Under dark, ice-covered waters

The sun, the wind and waters
Which grant us joyful lives

For them

I rise to dance in thanksgiving

For I am aware

That if not for them, the drumming
Of human hearts would forever fall
silent

ADVENT: BRINGING LIGHT TO THE DARKNESS

By Canon Doug Richards

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5

I was living in Vankleek Hill in early 1998, when the ice storm set in. It began gently in the morning, with the outside world being covered slowly in a glistening coating of thin ice. But, as the day progressed, the icy drizzle continued to fall, gradually and silently coating everything with a weighty encasement of ice. Suddenly, just after lunch, the power went off. Initially, I thought that this was just going to be a minor power outage, and it would be repaired shortly. It wasn't! Eventually, I got my grandfather's small transistor radio out of a cupboard and turned it on. Only then did I become aware of how widespread the disaster was, across an enormous area. The power was going to be out for a very long time.

It was getting cold in the rectory as night was falling. A wonderful couple invited

me to their home to have supper and to spend the night. When I arrived daylight was fading, and an utter, natural darkness was beginning to descend. We were sitting in their back room with both a fire burning in the fireplace, and a single candle sitting on the table in front of us, for light and warmth.

I remember looking at that solitary candle and marvelling about how much light it gave off. Light was dispelling the surrounding darkness and things began to feel alright again.

That one candle gave hope to everyone in the room that night. There was nothing to fear. Around that little candle we ate dinner, sipped a glass of wine, had a great conversation, and it was good.

As we begin the Advent season this year, and light the first candle on the Advent Wreath, we are reminded of the hope that exists all around us. Like that darkened night, brightened



and warmed, in the beginning of the ice storm, this Advent candle will dispel the darkness around us. We are beginning to see that the pandemic will not last forever. The hopeful light at the end of the tunnel continues to flicker ever brighter.

As we journey through Advent this year, may the candles of our Advent wreath shine their lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in your hearts and your lives.

IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY—PARISH GROUPS

Pastoral Care

Since March 2020, Canon Hilary and the pastoral care team have relied largely on the telephone and mail to connect with parishioners in hospital, retirement residences, long term care or living at home alone. For Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, with help from volunteers, the team has assembled gift bags and baskets with plants, cookies, chocolates and greeting cards and delivered them to all those on our pastoral care list. At Thanksgiving this year we were able to visit with some of those to whom we were delivering parcels. With the relaxation of public health

restrictions, we have begun to welcome people on our pastoral care list back to in-person services at the Cathedral. Canon Hilary has once again been taking communion to some who are unable to attend services.

With Christmas coming up, we are planning for the delivery of poinsettias and gift bags to all those on our list. If protocols allow, we are hoping to arrange to bring those who are able to a special “back home” eucharist in the New Year. That would be a first step in returning to holding back home services at Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas and following them with a luncheon, so those who attend have a chance to reconnect with each other. We will also continue to prepare and mail monthly issues of our *Pastoral Care Messenger*, the newsletter we launched in April 2020 as another way of maintaining connections with those on our list, especially those we are unable to reach by phone.

The Cathedral Women aren't letting the pandemic get completely in the way of a good bazaar. They can't hold traditional Holly Tea but they're bringing some of its greatest hits—handcrafts, soup and sweets to the Great Hall for sale every week after church.



The Young Adults finally had a chance to get together for two “walking pilgrimages,” one in the Gatineaus and one in the city. “It has been great to actually see each other in person.”

Cathedral Men are a quiet group whose work often goes unnoticed. This month they are coordinating donations of gift bags to be distributed at Christmas parties held by the diocese's community ministries. The warm socks, mitts and hats, toiletries and treats are always appreciated.



ARE EMERGING TO MEET TOGETHER AGAIN

St. Luke's Table

Even with our return to church in recent months, COVID-19 restrictions mean the St. Luke's Table working group has been unable to host monthly coffee hours—where a blend of treats and fellowship brought the needs of our vulnerable, poorly housed or homeless neighbours to mind. Donations from coffee hour were an important portion of the \$1,250 we send to St. Luke's Table every month—and the needs of homeless and near-homeless persons in Ottawa are greater than ever because of the pandemic. In addition to a light breakfast and a cooked, nutritious lunch every day, St. Luke's Table offers its community practical and emotional support, laundry facilities, cots for rest, computer access and showers. Please plan to donate to St. Luke's as part of your Christmas gift giving: winter always increases the vulnerability of our neighbours.



The Prayer Group has been active in the virtual world throughout the pandemic. They are looking forward to coming back to the Cathedral for in-person gathering beginning in December.

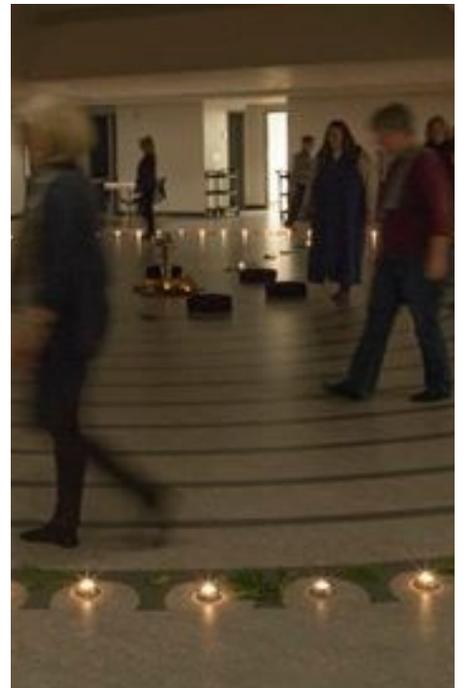
Feasting on the Word has continued to meet by Zoom reflecting on weekly bible readings and are now ready to come out to share time in-person together. Contact the cathedral office if you are interested in joining them on Wednesday evenings.



Sunday School has moved to the Great Hall and welcomed the first children back. Drop by on Sunday mornings and meet Natasha our leader and share stories and do crafts around the themes of the season.

The Cathedral Labyrinth Guild is delighted to announce that on December 22nd, we will celebrate the winter solstice, accompanied by a musician. Labyrinths in churches symbolize the soul's journey toward the divine, inviting us to walk with God. If you've never experienced meditative prayer through walking the labyrinth, there may be no better time than Christmas, when so many things can distract us from the true meaning of Christ's arrival at the darkest time of the year.

All are welcome, provided they can give proof of vaccination and photo identification. Masks will be worn.



DEAN

from page 1

held me and looked into my eyes and offered me the hope that life would prevail. Not in the way I had imagined or dreamed, and most definitely not without intense grief. But life would go on, and I had

to choose what kind of life that would be.

Hannah died in my arms a few days later. She simply could not go on any longer. I may have given birth to her, but she gave me back my life. Hannah stopped me in my tracks, embraced me in love and confronted me with

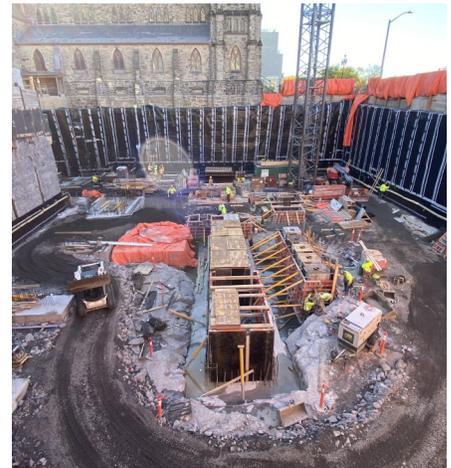
hope. Her hand in mine became a symbol of the hope that, as was once said, “sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible.” A little child can indeed lead us into the advent of new life.



FROM DOWNWARD TO UPWARD: NEW CONSTRUCTION CHANGES DIRECTION

The blasting has stopped and the neighbourhood is remarkably quiet, as work proceeds at the bottom of the

excavation which will emerge as a new retirement residence in 2024. More than 100 workers descend a very long temporary staircase



every day, working on the foundations of the 18-storey building.

Peer over the edge and an entire world of busy-ness is revealed, with clear progress visible on a weekly, if not daily basis. Work will continue through the winter—check in every Sunday and see how they’re doing!

Dean Beth, a keen photographer, goes full length to get the best angle

HARK! THE CATHEDRAL CHOIRS SING

Boys' choir member Justin Sidaros misses the snacks. Other things, too, of course—singing harmony with many voices, playing soccer and going on outings with the other boys and choir camp at the end of the summer. But there were always these great snacks. They get mentioned a few times. Truly, as the wise man said, a boys' choir marches on its stomach. (Or something like that).

"Singing without the other boys, it's just not as enjoyable," Justin, 11, said recently, after doing a haunting Pie Jesu solo at the Remembrance Day service.

"I feel like there's more pressure around me, because people want me to do more solos, and I get really anxious about that. It's not as fun to not be singing with everybody singing around me, and if I made any mistakes, it didn't matter as much."

"Also, when we all sing together, tenor, bass, soprano and alto, and we all just harmonize, it's so beautiful and that's what I like about singing in a choir."

Justin is one of just three choir boys at the Cathedral right now, a precipitous drop from pre-pandemic days when the boys' choir had 18 members. It's an unprecedented situation, brought about by the combination of limits on singing and concerns about children joining group activities. Some members dropped out because, as Justin says, it just wasn't the experience it had been.

But there is a brighter light on the horizon: with the approval of vaccinations for children from 5 to 11 years old, recruiting of new choristers can begin. That's one of the goals of a fabulous family Christmas concert, to be held in the Cathedral at 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 19th (mark your calendars!)

This is a concert that will have everything, needed for an excellent family outing: fanfares, sing-along carols, a brass quintet, soaring descants and an interactive version of that great carol, *The 12 Days of Christmas*. It's bound to put you, your

family and friends into a thoroughly festive Christmas mood.

But it's also the perfect way to introduce kids (and their mums and dads) to the fun, joy and musical opportunities of being in a choir. We'd love you to invite children you think might be prospective choristers to come see and hear our girls and boys singing their hearts out as they love to do. James Calkin, the director of music and Andrew McAnerney, associate director, are keen to connect with as many future choristers as possible.

Whether you're Dreaming of a White Christmas or wishing for a Silent Night, make sure to be at the Cathedral Sunday December 19th. People over 12 must be able to show proof of double vaccination and photo ID, and masks must be worn.



CHORAL SERVICES AND CONCERTS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Advent

November 28 4pm
December 5 4pm
December 12 4pm
December 19 4pm

Advent Lessons and Carols
The "O" Antiphons
Nine Lessons and Carols
Family Christmas Concert
with Cathedral Choirs and Brass

Christmas Eve

4pm
7 pm
10 pm

Family Service with Eucharist
Choral Eucharist with the Girls' Choir
Festal Eucharist with Choirs and Brass

Christmas Day

8:30 am Holy Eucharist (BCP)

10:30 am Choral Eucharist (BAS)
with Children's Homily at the Crèche

New Year's Day noon Choral Eucharist
celebrating our diocese's 125th Anniversary
with our Primate

IT'S NOT NAGGING, IT'S BECAUSE WE CARE

Show my driver's licence to someone I've known for 40 years? Every Sunday? The rules around pandemic safety can be annoying and in some cases apparently irrational. But we are following both provincial regulations and our diocesan pandemic plan. We want everyone to feel as safe as possible, and we want to keep infection from spreading. Doing that means constant attention to pandemic safety basics: get vaccinated, carry proof that you are, wash your hands well, wear a mask and keep your social distance. And please, be kind to each other.

Ex Cathedra

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