

LAKESHORE LINES

December, 2012

Free – and worth every cent!

Christ's Birth: Fact or Fable?

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan are well educated and popular theologians of our times today. They have offered many rich reflections on a lot of religious topics including thoughts on the last week of Christ's life, interpretations and foundations of secular law within the canon law structure and within society. Most importantly though, they challenge us to evolve our faith; to outgrow the faith we were taught as children and step into what can be a daunting faith expression and understanding in today's context, and what has been seen through history. I share with you excerpts from their book "The First Christmas".

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Did you know? The books of Matthew and Luke were most likely written in the last two decades of the first century, in the 80's or 90's CE? They are not the earliest Christian writings. That honour belongs to the genuine letters of Paul, written in the decade of the 50's, and to the gospel of Mark, written around the year 70. In Mark and Paul, there is no mention of an extraordinary birth of Jesus. Mark begins his gospel with Jesus as an adult; his birth is not mentioned at all.

From the scholarly research about the dating of Matthew and Luke in



relation to earlier Christian writings flows an obvious inference: stories of Jesus's birth were not of major importance to earliest Christianity. Mark wrote a gospel without referring to Jesus's birth, as John later did. Though the end of Jesus' s life – his crucifixion and resurrection – are utterly central to Paul, he says nothing about how his life began.

From this inference flows a second highly probable inference: the reason that references to a special birth do not appear in the earliest Christian writings is either because the stories did not yet exist or because they were still in the process of formation. In either case, these

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### Vision Statement

Deer Lake United Church welcomes you into a Christian community for all ages that explores and expresses spirituality through:

- worship and music
- fun and fellowship
- caring and outreach
- involvement and growth

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stories are relatively late, not part of the earliest Christian tradition about Jesus.

We now turn to crucial questions for hearing and interpreting the stories from the first Christmas. What kind of stories are these? What is their purpose? What did their authors intend them to be?

A recent television special on the birth of Jesus posed the question this way: are these stories fact or fable? For many people, Christians and non-Christians alike, these are the two choices. Either these stories report events that happened, or they are no better than fables. For most people today, fables do not matter much. They might be entertaining for children, but need not be taken seriously.

Thus it is important to realize that there is a third option that moves beyond the choices of fact or fable. This book is based on the third option. We see the nativity stories as neither fact nor fable, but as parables and overtures.

The issue of factuality of the birth stories is recent, the product of the last few hundred years. In earlier centuries, their factuality wasn't a concern for Christians. Rather, the truth of these stories was taken for granted. Their truth, and the truth of the Bible as whole, was part of conventional wisdom in Christian areas of the world. It was part of "what everybody knew". Believing them to be true was effortless. Nobody worried about whether they were factually true. All of the interpretive focus was on their meaning.

The same was true of the early chapters of Genesis with the stories of creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, Noah and the great flood, and the tower of Babel. Pre-modern Christians saw them as stories of the way things happened. There was no reason for them to think otherwise. It didn't take faith to believe in them, just as it didn't take faith to believe in the factuality of the nativity stories.

Many of us have a childhood memory of hearing the birth stories this way. Most of us who grew up Christian took their factuality for granted when we were young children, just as people in the pre-modern Christian world did.

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So what do the stories say to you this Christmas? Where do you find meaning? What is your fact? Your fable? Do you cling to the faith of your childhood? Or do you grow to deeper reflection and ponderings? What is your reason for the season? If you'd like to read more, feel free to borrow my copy.

— *Rev Tracy Fairfield*



Christmas Symbols



The Christmas Tree originated in Germany in the 16th century. It was common for the Germanic people to decorate fir trees, both inside and out, with roses, apples, and colored paper. It is believed that Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, was the first to light a Christmas tree with candles. While coming home one dark winter's night near Christmas, he was struck with the beauty of the starlight shining through the branches of a small fir tree outside his home. He duplicated the starlight by using candles attached to the branches of his indoor Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was not widely used in Britain until the 19th century. It was brought to America by the Pennsylvania Germans in the 1820's.



Poinsettias are native to Mexico. They were named after America's first ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett. He brought the plants to America in 1828. The Mexicans in the eighteenth century thought the plants were symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem. Thus the Poinsettia became associated with the Christmas season. The actual flower of the poinsettia is small and yellow. But surrounding the flower are large, bright red leaves, often mistaken for petals.

Minister's Musings – Advent and Christmas

The Christian season of Advent has as its central theme the coming of the Christ child into the world; the coming of light into a world of darkness; or of the Christ-Star into the world.

It's a time to remember how God's Beloved came to restore harmony to a fractured world, to dispel whatever keeps love from shining through all beings. The Christ-Star, this Irresistible Love in us, this Radiant Goodness, is at the core of our souls. Advent reminds us that each of us has the light of this Shining Star within us. This special season assures us that we can radiate love and goodness to others.

Could there be any better time than Advent to focus on and remember that God dwells in our midst? We find it particularly helpful – in fact necessary – to be aware of God's nearness when we are zooming through December, busy about too many things.

We draw inspiration and encouragement when we recognize that the one whose birth we are preparing to celebrate dwells in the midst of all our activities and relationships. This is yet another time, a particularly important time, for us to witness and experience the holy in the ordinary. It is a time for us to recognize and appreciate the presence of God in the love, joy, care, concern, honesty, humility and peace of those around us.

Busyness can dull our awareness of Emmanuel. Excessive attention to material things can lessen our bond with God. Mixed priorities can hinder our appreciation of the Holy Spirit. Does this sound familiar to any of you? If so, take time this Advent season, to slow down long enough to look and see, and to remember that God is with you and within you. Take time, yet again, to experience the holy in the ordinary, or perhaps not-so ordinary!

Blessed be!

Rev. Tracy Fairfield

Unsung Heroes

This is to the unsung heroes
Who do our church repairs,
Who power wash and paint and rake,
And seal the concrete stairs.

This is to the unsung heroes
Who work behind the scenes
To keep our building ship-shape
And costs within our means.

This is to the unsung heroes.
I wonder, do you know
Those men who fix our toilets
And clear the steps of snow?

This is to the unsung heroes.
No medals do they wear,
But I for one am very glad
Our church is in their care.

We must not take for granted
The work these heroes do.
So give them with your word and smile
A heart-felt, warm THANK YOU!



Rick and Arnie, two of our unsung heroes, rake leaves in the parking lot

Darkness and Light: A creed for Advent

By: Cally Booker

We believe in God,
robed in splendour,
veiled in mystery,
ruler alike of darkness and light.

We encounter God
in Jesus Christ,
who was tortured and put to death,
but whose radiance could not be quenched;
whose touch brings a blaze of colour
to a dull, drab world:
reviving the weary,
healing the wounded,
dazzling the satisfied.

We walk with God,
guided by the light of God's loving spirit,
who enters the shadowed places of our hearts
and leads us into truth and life.

We wait for God,
and the fulfillment of God's promises,
for the time when the darkness will hold no fear
and the light will no longer blind,
but creation will be made whole once more
and God's peace will reign forever.

Amen.

Outreach Committee Events

Naked Tree

Continuing the Christmas tradition begun by the late Bill Hilliard, there will be a "Naked Tree" in the Narthex again this year. Please help decorate this tree with donations of new socks, gloves, toques and personal grooming products (soap, shampoo, tooth paste & brushes, etc.) These will be donated to Burnaby's homeless in early January.



Last year's tree, after decoration with the many generously donated items

you know of any low income seniors or families who would benefit from a hamper, a copy of the Burnaby Christmas Bureau's application form is posted on the bulletin board.

Lunch on the Run

The **Lunch on the Run** held on **Sunday, Oct. 14** raised over \$250 for The **Youth Hub**, formerly known as Edmonds Youth Centre. Thank-you to all who participated in this fundraising activity. DLUC will be providing a **Christmas Lunch at the Youth Hub on Friday, Dec. 21**. Anyone wishing to contribute or participate can contact Andrew Hull, or sign up on the sheet in the hall.

The Outreach Committee would like to thank all at DLUC who provide their support for this work.



Last year's **Hope for families Christmas hampers**, just before their delivery by the hosts.

Hope for Families

We will be supporting three families and two seniors again this year through the Burnaby Christmas Bureau. Sign-up sheets will be posted in the hall for contributions. Donations through the envelopes, by marking Christmas families in the "other" category are also welcome. Please contact **Phyllis S** if you would like more information. Food and gift donations should be brought to church on **Sunday, Dec. 16**. The hampers will then be prepared for the hosts to deliver later that day.

The **Hope for Families** program, formerly known as **Christmas Families**, is an annual outreach initiative of DLUC to assist families in need. Your generous donations to this fund make a big difference to many families and children, both at Christmas and throughout the year. If

Joint Needs Assessment

By Garry F

Rev. Tracy Fairfield joined Deer Lake United Church as our temporary minister at the beginning of September. She stepped into the position with a minimum of fuss and has treated us to a series of engaging and thought-provoking services. After three months of experience with Tracy, I think we owe the Search Committee who found her a vote of appreciation for a job well done.

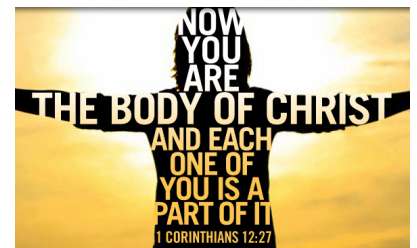
However, Tracy's contract with us is only until the end of June, 2013 and we must get on with the job of finding a permanent minister. The first step in doing so, is to form a Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) to determine our needs and desires in a minister.

To that end, on Tuesday November 20th the Board approved the appointment of Bob C, Elizabeth C, Barb D, Garry F, Cathy M and Trish S to the JNAC. In addition, the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee has assigned Rev. Leenane Shiels of Golden Ears United Church and Roger N of Shiloh - 6th Avenue United Church to the committee.

The JNAC will meet for the first time on Friday December 7th. You can expect to hear regular updates on its progress over the ensuing months. Most importantly you will be asked to provide your input to the committee.

The JNAC will analyze your input and present it in the form of a report and recommendations to the Board for approval and then to the congregation for final approval. At that point, Presbytery will authorize Deer Lake to form a Search Committee to look for a permanent minister to start as early as July, 2013. Rev. Tracy will be eligible to apply for the permanent position along with any other interested candidates.

If you have any questions or concerns about the process, please don't hesitate to speak with one of the members of the JNAC.



It Should Bring Joy - A Christmas Meditation

By: Stacy Popejoy

The *celebration* of Christmas has for many of us become somewhat incidental to the *preparation* for Christmas. With all the shopping, concerts, plays, parties, family gatherings, cooking, decorating, corresponding, and wrapping – in addition to the normal routines of each day – time and energy have been stretched to all human limits. That which God had intended to be a joyous and uplifting event has become a season of tiring and burdensome activity that most people can't wait to put behind them. People's attempts to create joy often result in overwhelming anxiety and emptiness. There is little time, and much worse, little desire to celebrate. This cannot be the way God intended for us to acknowledge the anniversary of the birth of His Son and His gift to us.

"I bring you good news of great joy..." These were the words of the angel to the shepherds on that quiet night. This message was intended to bring joy, and it did. God had presented the world with a wonderful gift. A Saviour. A Shepherd. A King. All that the people had needed and prayed for and waited for had finally come to them. For these people, peace, light, hope, and life were now freely available. What good news that was. This gift of love – God's only Son – was right there with them, in the flesh. Emmanuel. Jesus. The very definition of great joy! Thus, the first Christmas celebration began!

The shepherds made no plans for an elaborate party. No special notices of their pilgrimage were sent out. They didn't bother with fancy clothes or to prepare a royal feast. They just went. They hurried off to see the things that were told to them. They went to give honour to the one who was born to bring joy back to their empty hearts. They went to offer those empty hearts to Him, the Son of God, their Saviour, as an act of worship and celebration.

As well, wise men from the East, travelled to see him who was born to bring joy to the world. These men, though rich, happy, and fulfilled by the world's standards, came to honour and wor-

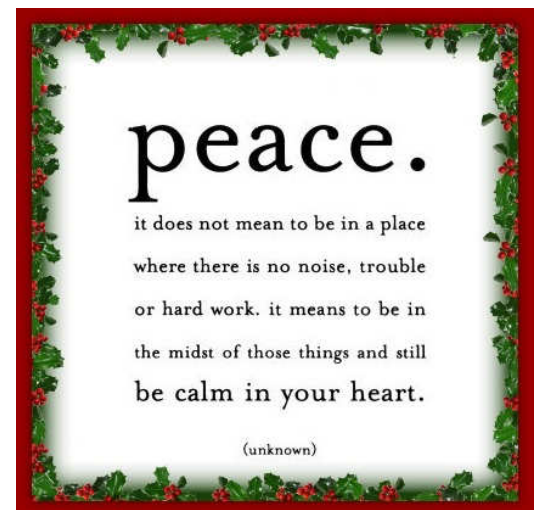
ship Jesus because they believed that the true king, the true fulfillment, and true source of joy was given by God in the gift of that little baby. Though they came bearing costly gifts to *give*, they came knowing they would truly *receive* that which is priceless. Oh, what great joy!

Each year at Christmas, people send themselves into financial, emotional, and physical depression, trying to bring into their lives, and the lives of others, the feeling of joy that Christmas promises. But the joy of Christmas is not a feeling. It cannot be purchased, created, decorated, or wrapped. There is no program or accomplishment that will activate it in a person's heart. The joy of Christmas is embodied in the child himself. *Jesus Christ*, God's free gift to people, is the great joy promised by the angel. Only by seeking Jesus, and sharing him with others, will each man, woman and child find the true joy of Christmas.

So beginning this Christmas, let us stop focusing so much time and energy on preparations that will only leave us void of the joy we desire, and let us return our energies to seeking and celebrating the child who has guaranteed joy – our greatest joy – Jesus Christ!



Attendees of the Ladies' Breakfast hosted by Audrey on October 20th



Sign up to Write for Rights

By Mary L

December 10th, 2012 is the 64th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, which was signed at the UN on Dec. 10th, 1948.

I am inviting members and friends of Deer Lake to join me, for the third year in a row, to write Christmas Cards to those chosen by Amnesty Canada for their annual Christmas Card Campaign. There are no political letters, just words of hope and encouragement for those who may have lost family members, or be in prison, or be working for Human Rights in their countries. Plain cards with symbols such as candles, doves, signifying peace and well being are used, that can respect the sensitivities of folks of a variety of different religious and cultural groups.

Amnesty provides the stories, and how to address the cards, including the appropriate salutations. It is at its best an act of loving and prayerful solidarity with brothers and sisters around the world. And it takes very little time to say, "I am holding you in my thoughts and prayers".

I have been doing this for 23 years now, a tradition which started in my home church at the time, Bowen Island United Church. It is so much easier to do this in the company of others, as the stories are huge, and it helps to be with others as you are thinking of these folks and their circumstances. In the past I have received responses from two of my cards, one from a fellow prisoner in a penitentiary in Louisiana, in support of a 15 year old boy who had been charged with a murder that Amnesty felt had not reflected due process nor the age of the boy. In response to thousands of Christmas Cards to this boy, he was given a second trial, and freed of all wrongdoing. I have also had a letter from a prisoner in Guantanamo Bay, with a simple "thanks, this helped".

I encourage you to go online to www.amnesty.ca to check out some of the stories in the Christmas card campaign, or to choose another letter campaign that fits for you.

I am offering a table and chair, and possibly even coffee or tea, at my home in the Montecito area Monday, December 10th any time between 9 am and 11:30 am. You are welcome to come and go as it works for you. I am also proposing that a group meet after church, Dec. 9th at the church to write together then, if that works for you. Please let Rev. Tracy or me know if this 'grabs' you and pulls you in. We will be happy to set up a writing corner at the church as well on Sunday.

Peace to all,

We're Writing for Rights!



Congratulations, Georgie!

By Jean J



Congratulations to Georgie Cole on receiving a Seniors of Distinction Award in the Arts category, on September 28th.

In honour of the International Day of the Older Person, Harmony Court Estate on Canada Way held a tea for family and friends of the recipients from Burnaby and New Westminster. Congratulating the four award winners were local M.P's and municipal representatives.

Georgie's involvement in line dancing, both learning and teaching, as well as belonging to the Century House Golden Age Theatre group and Edmonds Entertainers musical productions earned her the honour. She has also taken a course in stand up comedy and been on the stage at Laff Lines in New Westminster.

Georgie is a wonderful example of keeping young at heart and growing older gracefully. Well done!



Blessings Through Gallstones!?!

By Pam A

After several months of dealing with the effects of gallstones and awaiting removal of my gallbladder sometime in the New Year, I was now experiencing substantial pain and discomfort almost daily so I finally agreed to a friend taking me to *Emergency*. (prior to that day, knowing that the attacks eventually passed if I could just endure it, I refused to go and sit in an uncomfortable room full of “sick” people only to be sent home to await my then undermined surgery date!)

As expected, by the time I actually saw a Doctor, the pain had subsided and I just wanted to go home and rest. He just confirmed what I already knew...”You have gallstones and they can be rather bothersome!” NO KIDDING!! Needless to say, by this time, I was not my usual pleasant and fun-loving self.

I was given a prescription and told that once he received the results of my blood work I could finally go home. An hour later, re-dressed and sitting with my coat on, the results were in...I was informed that I had acute Pancreatitis...I wasn’t going anywhere. Apparently, the gallstones were having so much fun with my gallbladder that a few of them decided to take their party to my pancreas and share the fun!

I was not a very *patient* patient and after 2 days on an IV without food or even a sip of water, my surgeon informed me that my pancreas was now ok and if I wanted, I could go home and he would schedule the surgery in a couple of weeks. WHAT? I had been IV fed with no food OR water for 50 hours and he wanted to send me home so I could eat and then go through all of this again? NO WAY! I held my ground and after some heated discussion, we decided to wait it out.

I was told that it could be another 2, maybe 3 days before I would have the surgery and that most likely, a colleague would perform the surgery instead of him. I didn’t really like this idea but I hadn’t given up hope of a quick resolution. I started phoning some of my prayer warrior friends! They generously decided to change the general direction of prayers for patience, health, healing, etc... and start praying for “specifics”.

A dear friend from Cliff Ave came by to see me the same afternoon. I told him of this latest development and what we were praying for. He agreed with the others and together we brought our specific requests before God. We prayed that God would allow MY surgeon to perform the operation; that my surgery would happen sooner rather than later; and then we acknowledged and praised God for being so much bigger than any waiting list and that we trusted Him to move me up the list quickly. AMEN to THAT!

Less than 5 *minutes* later, the nurse came in to inform me that I couldn’t have my requested shower because I was going down for surgery RIGHT NOW! WOW...GOD...WAS THIS YOU?? YOU ARE SO AWESOME! I quickly text messaged a few people to let them know what was happening and within 15 minutes, I was being wheeled to the O.R. When MY surgeon walked in, he said, “I must admit, I am very surprised to be seeing you today, when I checked a few hours ago you were 5th on the list and I honestly didn’t expect to see you before Saturday”. “I have no explanation as to why you moved up the list so quickly but here you are!” I just laughed and quickly gave testimony to the power of prayer!

As I shared this story with a few people, we all expressed our surprise in all that we had seen God do for me over the past few months but why were we really surprised? (and I know so many people were offering prayers of intercession on my behalf) Are we not praying with the expectation that God hears and answers our prayers? So, when He does, why are we so surprised by that?

It was very humbling. This experience has definitely given me a new appreciation and renewed conviction of who He is and what He is able to do. Now, I pray that when I lower my expectations or begin to second-guess His great care for me, God will help my unbelief and enable me to trust in Him more fully. He is, after all, ALMIGHTY GOD!

“He is able to do immeasurably more than all I ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within me” (Ephesians 3:20)

The United Churches in Burnaby – The Conversation Continues

On Saturday November 3rd, representatives of the United Churches in Burnaby met to continue discussions on future possibilities. Deer Lake was well represented with seven members attending. Building on the conversations from previous meetings, facilitator Brian Fraser helped the participants to flesh out ideas around three possible options for the Burnaby churches:

- Stay the way we are
- Various forms of collaboration and consolidation of resources
- One worship and mission centre with satellite sites

Further discussion explored what might be possible in the short term, mid term and long term.

While we at Deer Lake are not contemplating any substantial changes, it is important that we stay in the loop. With an aging building, and budgets that increasingly threaten to go into deficit, we are not immune to the troubles other churches are experiencing. We can undoubtedly benefit from some of the ideas that are being considered, and by being part of the conversation, we are sharing our experience with the other churches.

A follow-up half-day meeting occurred on November 24th, to consider more fully ideas around the three options mentioned earlier, joint events, shared resources, communication, and the structure and funding of ongoing conversation. It was agreed to form a working group with one member from each church.

Stay tuned. The conversation continues.

Remembering Remembrance Day

This year November 11th fell on a Sunday, forcing many to choose between attending church and going to a cenotaph. Most Deer Lakers observed Remembrance Day with an engaging and moving service put together by Rev. Tracy. Audrey Lans, meanwhile, was officiating at the North Burnaby Cenotaph. She had been called upon once again to act as the Canadian Legion Branch 148 Chaplain, a position she held for twelve years during her active years in ministry.



Support Outreach and help to reduce the deficit while enjoying the sounds of the Deer Lake United Church Choir. \$7.50 from each CD sold goes to Outreach & \$7.50 goes to Local. These CDs make great gifts for anyone who enjoys choral music. Order yours from Garry.

Mary needs **HELP!**
 She needs volunteers to greet and take the offering at the **EARLY** Christmas Eve service. If you will be attending the early service and can spare a few minutes to perform one or both of these important tasks, please contact Mary C or Tracy Fairfield. (Counting and depositing the offering is not required.)

Submissions

Lakeshore Lines will be published four times each year. Submissions may be made to one of the Communications Committee members (preferably by email):

Garry Forwood: g.forwood@yahoo.ca
 Jim Young: oldjimyoung@gmail.com

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Submission Deadline Sunday, March 3, 2013