



PEACE RIVER NEW CHURCH CURRENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

DECEMBER 2013



INNOCENCE AND THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

By Rev. Coleman Glenn

At my parents' house in the States there is a CD of Christmas music by singing cowboy Gene Autry. The CD includes classics like "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (popularized by Autry himself) and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." But the CD also has a few more forgettable tunes, including a song called "Everyone's a Child at Christmas." It's not a particularly good song, to be honest, but its title captures something very true about Christmastime. Although it's hard to define just what it is that we call "the Christmas spirit," it's pretty clear that it is closely attached to a feeling of childlike wonder. Think of some of the classic Christmas stories, and how much they feature little children, and adults experiencing something childlike. The book *A Christmas Carol* (and its many film adaptations) is about an old miser who regains a sense of childlike joy and kindness, inspired in large part by the innocent child Tiny Tim. The movie *It's a Wonderful Life* ends with a happy George Bailey surrounded by his family and holding his young daughter in his arms. The poem "The Night Before Christmas" shows the children "nestled all snug in their beds," and describes a visit from St. Nicholas – the patron saint, not of Christmas or of gifts, but of children.

Now, all those things on their own fall far short of capturing everything that Christmas is about. The central and most important thing of Christmas is, of course, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour. But still, those stories do all capture something of that true spirit of Christmas. They capture that spirit of Christmas to the extent that they provide us pictures of innocence, because innocence is at the heart of the true Christmas story; the Lord chose to come as a child and have His infancy recorded to provide us with a picture of true innocence. *Arcana Coelestia* 430 says, "The Lord Himself is called a 'little one' or 'child' (Isa. 9:6), because He is innocence itself and love itself, and in the same passage He is spoken of as 'Wonderful, Counselor, God, Hero, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.'"

The image of the Lord Jesus Christ lying in the manger is an image of true innocence. What do we mean by innocence? It's difficult to describe. To be innocent is to be free from any malice, any intention to harm. It involves a complete dependence and trust that we will be provided for. It involves a willingness to follow wherever we are led; and in the case of the Lord, it involved a complete willingness to be led by the Divine love at His soul. We can use words to describe what innocence is, but I think it is easier to see it when we are shown images of it. There's a prophecy of the Lord's coming in Isaiah 11 that provides a picture of the innocence in His kingdom:

"And the wolf shall walk with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall pasture; together shall their young ones lie down; and the lion shall eat straw like the cattle. And the nursing infant shall play upon the hole of the adder; and upon the den of the viper shall the weaned child thrust his hand."

The picture of those young animals, and those young children, are pictures of the kind of peace and innocence that the Lord seeks to establish for us; and the image of

the “little child” who shall lead them is recalled in Revelation in the birth of the Boy who will “shepherd all nations with a rod of iron” (Revelation 12:5).

Children provide for us this picture of innocence, because they *are* innocent, especially as infants. They rely completely on their parents to provide what is needed for them. They are free from any malice. Even when they act selfishly, at least in the earliest years, their innocence makes them lovable; and so our hearts are warmed when a child expresses joy at opening a new gift, even though in itself the love of “getting” is not a particularly wonderful thing. What is wonderful is the innocent delight and joy and gratitude we see in the child.

But although children provide us good pictures of innocence, and in their own way are innocent, the innocence of childhood is an innocence of ignorance. And as such, it actually pales in comparison with the innocence that we can experience in old age, the innocence that comes with wisdom. The apostle Paul recognized this. He wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, “Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature” (14:20). And the Lord himself commanded his disciples, “Be prudent as serpents, and simple as doves” (Matthew 10:16) – the word translated “simple” meaning harmless, un-deceitful and innocent. And this is what the Lord is calling us to – an innocence that we choose, an innocence not of ignorance, but of wisdom. What does that innocence look like? It means completely trusting the Lord to provide what we need, just as an infant trusts her parents to provide what she needs. It means fighting against any thoughts of malice or hatred. It means finding joy and delight in the small everyday blessings we are given. It means giving up pride in our own intelligence, and trusting the Lord’s Word instead. It means following the Lord wherever He might lead us, trusting that He knows better than we do.

The truth is, we should be seeking this at all times. The Lord said to his disciples, “Let the little children come to Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Amen I say to you, Whoever shall not accept the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter into it.” (Luke 18:16-17) Every day of our lives, we seek to have this attitude toward the Lord, of a trusting child toward our Father. But at Christmas time in particular, we can be inspired by atmosphere of innocence that pervades our stories and our songs, our homes and our hearts. And we can be inspired above all by our Lord, Jesus Christ, who willingly came as a tiny infant – completely free from malice, completely trusting the Divini-

ty at His soul, and in every single moment of His life, willingly following the promptings of pure love.

PASTORAL MOVE

Rev. Coleman S. Glenn

It’s with a great deal of sadness that I announce that I will be leaving the Peace Country at the end of this coming June. I have accepted a call to serve as an associate pastor at the New Church Westville in Westville, South Africa. Anne and I have loved serving here in Dawson Creek, and are grateful for all the hospitality we have been shown. We trust that the Lord will watch over His church, and we are looking forward to serving the church in South Africa, but it is still very hard to leave this place that has become our home.

So, what does that mean for Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie going forward? Unfortunately, there are not enough ministers to provide a resident pastor for 2014-2015. At a society meeting on November 23rd, regional pastor Jim Cooper laid out some of the options: services once a month or twice a month; services offered by one or two primary ministers (with occasional assistance from other ministers), or a more varied group of visiting ministers; perhaps asking a particular minister to make several consecutive visits so that he could offer sermon series. **If you have any thoughts on any of these options, or want to give input about specific visiting ministers who you think would be a good fit, please contact Rev. Jim Cooper at pastor@olivetnewchurch.org.**

Again, I know that even if there are consistent visiting ministers who can spend significant time up here, it is not the same as having a resident pastor. The clergy in Canada is committed to looking for a possible resident pastor in the future; while we cannot promise anything, it will be a top priority. We know how much it means to Dawson Creek and the church in the west as a whole to have someone who lives here and interacts with the people here on day-to-day basis.

If you’re receiving this newsletter by email or post, you’ve also received two letters, one from bishop Brian Keith and one from me, Rev. Coleman Glenn, which give further details on the reasons behind this move, as well as some of our hopes for our last few months here.

BIRTH AND BAPTISM

Anne and I are thrilled to announce the birth of our son, Samuel Robert Glenn, on November 13th, 2013. We are so grateful for all the love and support we’ve been

given! We particularly want to thank Rev. Brad Heinrichs, who baptized Samuel on November 17, and Jillian Crandall, who organized a wonderful baby shower that same day. Thank you all!

CHRISTMAS TABLEAUX

Cindy Eggleston has volunteered to organize the Christmas tableaux this year – thank you Cindy! The tableaux will take place at **5:00 p.m.** on **Sunday, December 22nd**, and will be followed by a **potluck supper**. There will be activities and treats for children as well. **Important note:** There will be **no morning service** that Sunday!

Cindy is looking for children up to twelve years old who would like to be in the tableaux. They can sign up on the sign-up sheet at the church, or by contacting Cindy (or Jillian Crandall, or Rev. Coleman Glenn). There will only be one rehearsal, the afternoon of the tableaux themselves; children can be dropped off at the church at **2:00 p.m.** that afternoon. Treats and activities will be provided!

GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH

It is our tradition to bring gifts for the church to the Christmas tableaux service, and we welcome you to continue the tradition this year. Last year we were asked to provide a list of specific needs for the church; feel free to bring other gifts as well, but if you're looking for ideas, the church could use the following things:

- Dish brushes or sponges
- Tissues (boxes or small packets)
- Serving dishes
- Good scissors
- Tea (of different varieties)
- Drinking glasses
- Ice cube trays

PAVEMENT COMPLETED!

As you may have noticed if you've visited the church recently, the parking lot has been paved! A huge thank you goes out to Tracy Bouchard and her family for taking the lead on this project, and Wade from Peters Bros construction, who worked patiently with us all summer and organized the paving itself. The next step is to put down pre-cast concrete steps at the front door; that will probably have to wait till spring, but we have the most important (and most time-consuming) part of the job finished. Thanks to everyone who has contributed time, energy, and money to the project!

DAILY CHRISTMAS READINGS

Our friends at the Glenview New Church in Glenview, Illinois, have put together a new collection of daily readings for the month of December leading up to Christmas. Physical copies are available at the church in Dawson Creek; if you would also like an electronic copy, please send an email to Rev. Coleman Glenn (pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: JANUARY 18th

A little advance notice: the Annual General Meeting for the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 18th.

There will be several important things to discuss at that meeting. First, at that meeting we hope to put together a statement to be sent to the General Church administration on what we're looking for from visiting ministers over the next year. Secondly, we have a few board members stepping down, and they will need to be replaced. **One of those board members who is stepping down is Tracy Bouchard, who has served as treasurer for the last 25 years. She deserves a huge amount of gratitude for filling that role. Thank you, Tracy!** That means that we will need to find someone to take her place. If you have any suggestions or wish to volunteer, please speak to chairman of the board Bert Friesen, or to any board member (Tracy Bouchard, Dorothy Friesen, Travis Crandall, or Helene Friesen).

THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSAEM

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Worship: Sundays at 11 a.m.

If you have news or other information for this publication, or if you have any pastoral concerns, please call the pastor, Coleman Glenn, at (250) 782-0710 or (cell) (250) 467-2313, or e-mail pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca.

CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2013

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 11:00 a.m. Family Service 4:30 p.m. Worship & Class (Grande Prairie)	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 11:00 a.m. Traditional Service	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 11:00 a.m. Traditional Service 4:30 p.m. Christmas Festival Service (DeBolt)	16	17	18	19	20 7:00 p.m. Holy Supper Service	21
22 NO MORNING SERVICE 5:00 p.m. Christmas Tableaux 6:00 p.m. Potluck Supper	23	24	25 11:00 a.m. Christmas Festival Service	26	27	28
29 11:00 a.m. Traditional Service	30	31	Sermon Topics December 1: Unto Us a Child is Born December 8: The Birth of John the Baptist December 15: The Angel Appears to Joseph December 22: Christmas Tableaux December 25: The Birth of the Lord December 29: The Flight into Egypt <i>January 5: New Beginnings</i>			

Note: All events take place at the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem unless noted otherwise.