



Dear friends in Christ,

We have begun a new year in our church calendar with the Season of Advent. Advent, a season of waiting and preparation as we look forward to welcoming the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ on December 25th. It's a season in which the Bible readings explore themes like waiting and judgement and anticipating the day when Jesus will return to the earth.

I like to think of the season of Advent as an adventure with God. It's a time when we reflect on what it looks like or means to place Jesus at the centre of our lives. We look at the birth of Jesus and the significance it makes to know him personally. There will be liturgical opportunities to think about these things in church services over the month of December.

There will be practical opportunities too. We can always find time to pray for those who are finding this season difficult. There are many families within our church family who have experienced the pain of bereavement over this past year and so the season of Christmas will be difficult as the memories of other times when people were all able to be together come flooding in.

The church is conscious that there are many distractions this time of year that compete for our attention. There are lots of parties and celebrations with family and friends. This is also a very challenging time as the cost-of-living crisis as a result of war in Ukraine and various issues impacting our economy have impacted us all. Energy costs for oil and gas have risen astronomically and it's hard for so many people to afford the cost of heating their homes as well as the rising costs of groceries which have risen sharply in recent years. The churches have responded with donations to the food banks and the Pictou County fuel fund to support families in need. These are important things to do if we are in a position to do so, many are not.

The darker evenings are now upon us and the longest night approaches fast. As we face not just the physical darkness of winter, may we too know something of the light of Christ that comes into our world. May we have a fruitful Advent, and come, at Christmas Day, to echo the words of this familiar carol in our hearts

“O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray, cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!”

After not having a Christmas Eve service let us all join together for a joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour on Christmas Eve. The schedule is: 4pm at St. James in Pictou, 6pm at St, Bees in Westville, and 8pm in Christ Church Stellarton.

With very best wishes for Advent and Christmas,
Yours sincerely, Rev. Darlene

