

December 19, 2007

SJWT  
LMJS



Dear Friends,  
Christmas is upon us - touch what the season is really about.

Worship with us this Sunday, December 23, Advent 4: 8:30 Early Eucharist; 10:30 Christmas Pageant and Holy Eucharist; Sermon: Bob Shantz; Celebrant: Bob Shantz; Musician: Jaroslav Czerwinec. Refreshments following.



Getting into the season — Christmas Caroling in the Village!



### Announcements & Events

#### Great Upcoming Music

Sundays at 10:30 sharp - December 23: Jaroslav Czerwinec, accordion; December 24: 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Barry Short, organ, December 30: Allison Lynn, guitar.

#### Midweek Worship Services

Thursday December 20, 10:30 a.m. Morning Prayer, with scripture discussion followed by home baked refreshments;

#### Epiphany Potluck Lunch

Sunday, January 6, following the 10:30 am service. We will end our Christmas celebrations and welcome Gary back from his sabbatical. Sign up sheets at the action desk for main courses, salads, desserts, and other appetizers like bread and butter and cheese.

#### Leadership Team Meetings

Next meeting: Monday January 7, 7:30—9.30 p.m. All meetings at the church.

### Sixth Annual Robbie Burns Supper

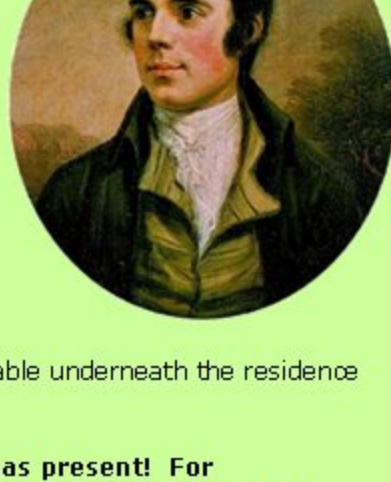
St John's hosts our 6th annual Burns Night Supper on January 26, 2008 in honour of 18th-century Scottish poet Robert Burns, a rowdy, boisterous man of the people who composed beautiful poetry and songs.

Our traditional Burns supper includes haggis enhanced with a dram of whisky, cock-a-leekie soup, roast beef, neeps (turnips), tatties (potatoes) and a whisky-laden dessert and non alcoholic desserts as well. This evening steeped in ritual, includes a tribute to the immortal memory of Burns, poetry, singing and lots of fun.

The evening starts with reception at 6:15PM, followed by the Marching in of the Haggis at 7PM.

This year the Burns Supper will be held at Grenadier Seniors' Residence, 2100 Bloor Street West at Clendennan Avenue. Indoor parking is available underneath the residence (entrance off Clendennan) at \$2.75 for the evening.

Tickets are \$30 each and make a great Christmas present! For more information and tickets call Bill Dunford or Evelyn Butler 416 604-8692.



Lynelle Gehrels working on the Christmas Wreath

#### Extra rehearsal for the Pageant:

An extra rehearsal for the Pageant is scheduled on Saturday morning December 22, at 9:00am. The singing group will meet at 10.30 am. If you would like to participate or have any questions, please contact Barry Short at 416-762-1887.



Last year's group for the Pageant

#### Thanks:

Photographs: Thanks to Tom Gehrels for his pictures from the Christmas Caroling in Bloor West Village.

### Mindfulness

We enter the season of one of our great Christian stories aware that we live increasingly surrounded by a great diversity of religious language and concepts. Many of us have become acquainted with the approaches of our great sister tradition of Buddhism. Many Christian writers are now saying that knowledge of other traditions deepens our commitment to Christianity as our Home Tradition. We're beyond shallow approaches about which one is right and which one is wrong. Instead we come to appreciate how great spiritual concepts are repeated in each tradition. Investigating another tradition prompts us to recover some of our own riches.



Buddhism offers a wonderful approach known as Mindfulness. The seventh factor in Buddhism's Noble Eightfold Path is described as 'the direct path to the attainment of purity, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the end of pain and grief...' Mindfulness is a combination of 'bare attention' and 'clear comprehension'. Through the contemplation of the body, feelings, the mind, and physical objects, the purpose is to see things as they really are, unswayed by aversion and attraction.

This approach is expressed in many ways in our Home Tradition. It is in the Prayer of Silence, or meditation, where we empty our minds of thought to be present to the divine. It is in the Prayer for Healing as we have learned it at St. John's, where we struggle with 'asking'. Mindfulness is especially part of our understanding of Sacraments. The old definition: 'A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inner and hidden grace.' The bread in communion is bread. In our community prayer, this bread becomes a vehicle or presence of the divine. Through our attentive presence or mindfulness as we receive the bread, we increasingly take into ourselves transformation. By extension, all matter is, in Christian theology, a vehicle of grace. God entered and lived human life (Christmas). With cultivated awareness we are moved by the divine presence in people, places and things. At our local Anglican convent, the Sisters regard mealtime as a place for mindfulness. (Eating is eating, not reading.) What we have thought of as a Buddhist approach crops up in interesting places. It is important not to equate or oversimplify our great religious traditions. To be prompted by another tradition to deepen in our own is about respect.

The Christmas season offers so many practices: pageants, the tree, poinsettias, carols, gifts, and, of course, the stories. There is much to talk about the story being overwhelmed by all the 'extra bits.' The real risk is that we will be overwhelmed, consigned by sheer volume to a shallow experience of Christmas. This is where the prompt from Buddhism can really help us. To bring mindfulness to each activity is to experience God's grace.

Peace in all activity. Amen.

Gary van der Meer

For meditation and reflection in the coming week, consider the scriptures for next Sunday, December 24, 2007: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 97, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-14.

P.S. I hope you find it helpful to get an update like this from St. John's Church, West Toronto. If you would like something listed in the announcements, or if you know someone who would appreciate receiving this, please contact me. If you would prefer not to receive news from St. John's in this way, please also let me know.

Best wishes, Gary+

Check our website. [www.sjwt.ca](http://www.sjwt.ca)

And remember this!

### We are not a Building!

We are an accessible, accepting, diverse community. We are young and old, able-bodied, and disabled, employed and unemployed. We are married, single, divorced, straight and gay. We are from all over the world, yet we could live next door. You will find open minds and open hearts at St. John's.

The mission of St. John's Church is to build a community of caring believers committed to Christ, to work for justice and service to all in need. We gather to praise God, and to give and receive support to meet the challenge of our daily ministries. We call on all who will to come and join us.

