

A COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR OF PEC - EWI PROVINCE



The Information

"I must turn aside and look at this great sight..." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses" And he said, "Here I am." Exodus 3 vs 3-4 (NRSV)

Looking Back as We Look Ahead



Rev. Algernon Lewis
Chairman of PEC

The seasons of Advent and Christmas are the favourite times of the year of many people. For some it is about the carols, hymns, and other songs we sing. For others, it is the feeling of fellowship, family, and friends. Others delight in the food, festivities, and sparkling decorations. At the same time, this time of year can be difficult for some. It reminds them of loved ones who are no longer present and painful circumstances they would rather forget. Whatever your view of these seasons, they provide an opportunity to look back (reflect) and to look ahead (forecast).

As we look back, we must take care to remember that this season is about the action of God on our behalf. The central message of this season is the unfolding story of God and God's redemptive action for humanity. If that message is obscured, we may find ourselves chasing after an illusion to make Christmas feel special. When we remind ourselves what our celebration is to be about, what God has done, and is doing, the focus will change from chasing after experiences to resting in the peace of God.

As I reflect on the story of the nativity, over 2000 years ago, I am awed by the way God chose to make Jesus known to the world. To begin with, Mary was not an influencer or a person of high estate. Yet God chose her to birth hope into this world in less-than-ideal circumstances. Then, Jesus' birthplace was nothing to report – an active animal pen. According to Luke 2:8, the announcement of Jesus' birth was made to shepherds out in the field and to wise men from the East. And, Shepherds were considered religious outcasts because they were never home to worship and the wise men from the East were even worse, they were not even Jewish – from a completely different faith. What was God doing here? Did the wires get crossed and the wrong people got invited to the party? Looks that way! However, since God does not make mistakes, we must interpret this to mean that God went to the least likely to announce to them that God has come for them in Jesus. The people who were among the first to hear and celebrate the nativity of our Lord were not at the center of activity but needed to be drawn closer to God.

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Vision Statement

A Church - Transformed,
United,
Victorious in Christ

Mission Statement

By the grace of God, we seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ; without distinction, we use all that we possess to call all peoples to the truth of the Gospel through worship, Evangelist discipleship and service.

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For the Christ-follower, Christmas is not just an event, it is a reminder that God comes to where we are daily. There is no other religion where the god pursues the fallen and sacrifices to save them. In other religions, devotees move toward their god. In the Christian faith, God moves towards us and invites us to do the same. If we do not look back, we might miss that the word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood (John 1:14 MSG translation).

Looking back this Christmas might help us see the people God wants us to encourage. Most of the people we are buying gifts for this Christmas are not in need. Most of the people who will eat at our tables do not have food insecurities. They may need other things from us like genuine care and love. This is a different type of cost. Can we look beyond our usual spaces to see people who are waiting for an announcement that Jesus has come through the actions of those who have heard about the deeper meaning of Christmas?

Looking back on 2022, I perceive that God is calling the church to go deeper. Much of the Provincial year was consumed by the 33rd Provincial Synod which was delivered virtually for the first time. This proved the faithfulness of God if we launch deeper as a people of faith. Looking back in 2022 also showed us some of the challenges that we need to overcome if the church is to take full flight as we move ahead.

Look back grounds us and looking ahead inspires us to go further. As we vision forward, we must ask ourselves if we are oriented to people in the margin as God is. Recall the message of Jesus' birth (Christmas) went to others first. Are we open to people who are considered irreligious and outside the corridors of the Christian faith? I recently watched a news item on television where a retired soldier was planning to kill some Muslims while they were worshiping. The plan was to detonate a bomb and take out everyone. He went to visit the site to better plan the attack. When he got there, the Imam greeted him warmly with an embrace. The others were equally warm and kind. By the time he left worship he was confused because his feeling changed completely after one encounter. I believe they reached out to him after, and he kept coming to the mosque until he converted to Islam. Before his conversion, he told them of his plans, but they kept loving him. Whatever our feelings about the Islamic faith, we must agree that those Muslims were oriented towards loving a stranger until he became one of them. He is now married into the faith. Are we spiritually mature enough to love people who want to do us harm or

care nothing for us?

Looking ahead, we must become a people who touch the people Jesus touched. We must look beyond the normal crowd to see those who are left alone or seem outside the corridors of the Christian faith and help them to know that they are seen by us and by God. The shepherds were surprised that they got a visitation from angels. They felt seen and appreciated. Looking ahead, we need to ask God how we can help others to feel seen and appreciated.

The wise men or the Magi remain a challenge for us. Why did God reach outside of Jerusalem to bring people from a different culture and religion to worship Jesus. Let us be clear that they came well after Jesus' birth about, two years, and it was not told how many kings were present. What we know is that these wise men presented three gifts. It is unlikely that they were alone. They would have travelled with a full entourage to facilitate their trip.

God casts a wider tent to include people unlike those in Jerusalem to let us know that there are other sheep that are not of this fold who we must also love and care for. We live in plural societies, meaning, there are varieties and faiths and beliefs. In looking ahead, we must commit to be conduits of the grace of God to everyone we meet. It is not easy, but it is necessary. Christmas reminds us that Jesus is not just concerned for me and mine but for the whole world.

As we are still in the Advent season which is the time of preparation, let us orient ourselves or SHIFT so that we can reach out to care for and love others who are considered the outsiders. Let us commit to being conduits of grace to people who believe differently than we do. May this Advent and Christmas season be transforming for you.

Joyous Noel!



Joyeux
Noël

**A Message
from the Bishops in the
Eastern West Indies Province
of the Moravian Church
*The Symbols of Christmas***

There are many symbols of Christmas. Some of them are cultural. For example, some people in the Caribbean associate Christmas with snow, and that is preposterous given the place and context of the biblical account of the nativity, never mind it is not part of our indigenous life experience. Others associate Christmas, first of all with certain foods or drinks, such as ham and sorrel. Such things are incidental rather than essential to our celebration of Christmas.

Instead, we invite you to look at some of the enduring symbols of Christmas generated by the biblical narrative surrounding the birth of the Saviour of the world. Three of those symbols are a song, a star and a stable.

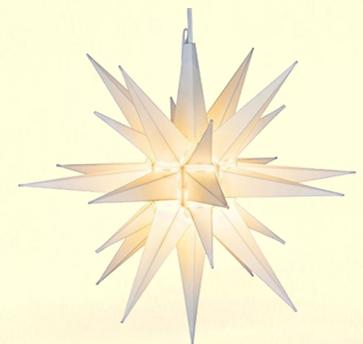
Christianity is a religion of song. The shepherds on the Judean hills must have been quite stunned “when suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men’,” in that hard old Roman world. It took the Christ child to teach the world to sing of peace and good will toward humankind.

A dark night had indeed fallen upon the faith of the world in those ancient times. The world had stumbled into skepticism and materialism, and then the star came. It was the Star of Hope. Time and again the nations of the world have groped in darkness. Today there is much skepticism and materialism abroad in our world. Today the world is anguished by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the cruelty, selfishness and bigotry, which have brought chaos and disaster, not only to many in those two countries, but to many countries and economies the world over. Even as the Star of Bethlehem led many to the Christ child and Prince of Peace over two thousand years ago, it is our prayer at this Christmas time that the world will be led to acknowledge his reign in their lives and in the world.

The song may have been stunning and the Star of hope may have seemed strange to some but no more so than a stable with cattle as the birth place of the Messiah. “Is it a symbol of the unity of nature, or is it a compassionate picture of the extremity of life?” Christ surely must have had more elaborately adorned sleeping accommodation in his lifetime, but never one more human, more appealing, or more amazing. We may revel in the luxury and contentment of modern civilization, but the Lord of our faith was born in a stable. But think of it. A stall is not such a bad place in which to be born, if there is love to watch over you. But also think of it, that in spite of the wealth of our world there are many who will be born this Christmas time in worse conditions; there are many who will be unable to keep themselves warm this winter because oil has been shut off. Think of those for whom this Christmas will be a season devoid of love and of the bare necessities of life; one in which the message will not be one of glory to God nor peace on earth nor good will toward humankind; one in which the star of hope has not risen; one in which for many people there will be no resting place because of the biting poverty of their situation. Let us be intentional in sharing our resources with those in need, not just for Christmas but as a lifetime habit.

This Christmas let us forget the singers and remember the song, forsake the wise men and follow the star, surrender the stable and worship its Lord.

- Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Lewis Ep. Fr.
Rt. Rev. Dr. Conrad Spencer Ep. Fr.





**Birthday Celebrants
December 15– 25**

Bro. Hilton Joseph	18
Bro. Vankys Isaac	18
Sis. Cecile Rossington	22
Sis. Maureen Lewis	23
Bro. Frank Barker	25
Bro. Matthew Crooks	25

Birthday Celebrants January 01—15th

Bro. David Ince	02
Sis. Jovanca Smith	05
Sis. Sonia Spencer	11
Bro. Moise Jean	12

**Anniversary Celebrants December 15 —
January 05**

Bro. Erwin Warner & Sis. Onita Samuel-Warner	19
Bro. Algernon Lewis & Sis. Denise Smith-Lewis	20
Bro. Errol Connor & Sis. Joycelyn Connor	22
Bro. Patmore Smith & Sis. Jovanca Smith	27
Bro. Hilton Joseph & Sis. Sharon McCardy Joseph	29

Bro. Nevin Lewis & Sis. Billie Sterling-Lewis 05

**Let's
Pray!**

**SUNDAY
JANUARY 1ST
2023**

*Provincial
Day of
Prayer*

As we begin 2023,
Provincial Days of Prayer continue.
Pastors and Congregations are invited to take
moments of January 1, 2023 for deliberate
times of prayer.
In your prayers please remember to pray for
the Province, the ministries of our
congregations, for spiritual and numeric growth.
Pray for hurting people and others struggling to
find meaning in life, and pray that God will lead
and guide us through 2023.

**Have a Blessed, Peaceful, Healthy
and Spirit-filled Christmas**

**May the Love of God
enfold you.
We encourage you to bless somebody
as God blesses you.**

from the Entire Provincial Staff

THE NATIVITY STORY

Advance the Kingdom ~ S.H.I.F.T

ALL the words listed below are in this Christmas puzzle - left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and click its first letter then its last letter to highlight it. After you have found all the words, click the leftover letters to form the **Mystery Answer**.

Advent, Angels, Beauty, Birth, Cards, Carols, Census, Children, Christ, Church, Creche, December, Family, Feast, Festival, Garland, Giving,	Goodwill, Herod, Holiday, Holly, Holy, Icicles, Jesus, Joseph, Joy, Lights, Love, Magi, Manger, Mary, Merry, Music, Nativity,	Noel, Pageants, Peace, Prayer, Santa, Season, Shepherd, Sleigh, Snow, Star, Stocking, Trees, Yule
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S S T N A E G A P C I S U M Y
T M S E A S O N R E Y A R P L
O A U R Y L O H C N M N O E L
C R S D E Y D E R S W O N S O
K Y E L L D W E E U B I R T H
I T J I A N I H C S T A R H P
N U M H D A L Y H E L U Y G E
G A D C V L L A E L M O D I S
F E O R E R G D V C J B R L O
L B R U N A T I V I T Y E A J
T M E H T G B L V C T G H R C
R A H C H E V O L I N S P E A
E G T S A E F H M A N G E R R
E I Y R R E S L E I G H F D
S A T N A S P T C H R I S T S



- What was the name of the angel that God sent to Mary to tell her she would conceive and give birth to a son?
 - Uriel
 - Gabriel
 - Michael
 - Sophia
- According to the Bible, why were Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem when Jesus was born?
 - They were registering for the census
 - Mary wanted to be closer to her Family
 - They were on vacation
 - They lived there
- Which prophet in the Bible foretold that a virgin would give birth to a son called Immanuel?
 - Jeremiah
 - Ezekiel
 - Elisha
 - Isaiah
- What does Immanuel mean?
 - He has come
 - God with us
 - Jesus is Lord
 - God's gift
- According to the Bible, what were the shepherds doing when an angel of the Lord appeared to them and brought them the good news a saviour had been born?
 - Keeping watch over their flock by night
 - Sleeping
 - Fighting off Lions attacking their flock
 - Saving a lost sheep
- In the Bible, what sign did the angel tell the shepherds to look for to find the Messiah in the town of David?
 - They'd find a donkey, with her colt by her untied near an Inn.
 - They'd find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger.
 - A star would lead them to the Saviour
 - They'd find three wise men giving gifts to a new born child.
- According to the Bible, what gifts did the wise men present when they saw Jesus?
 - Gold, frankincense and myrrh
 - Gold, silver and bronze
 - Priestly garments
 - A video game console and a couple of random games
- According to the Bible, how were the wise men warned not to go back to Herod after visiting the young child Jesus?
 - An Angel
 - They were led by the Spirit
 - A dream
 - Jesus told them
- Which book in the Bible says there is "a time to dance"?
 - Genesis
 - Judges
 - Ecclesiastes
 - Ruth
- On what date does the Bible say Jesus was born?
 - The Bible doesn't say
 - On the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month
 - Early in the winter season of the first year
 - In the month of December



Moravian Multipurpose Complex

Conference Center & Apartments



Conferences

Weddings

Banquets

Meetings

Dinners

Graduations

- ◆ Only ten minutes away from the stores, shops and banks in St. John's. Our International airport is also just ten minutes away.
- ◆ Our balcony provides a refreshing view of undulating hills and valleys.
- ◆ The Conference Center has a seating capacity for 200 persons.
- ◆ We are situated on a hill over-looking the picturesque out-skirts of the city of St. John's, Antigua.
- ◆ There are EIGHT LARGE APARTMENTS which are available for rental. Each room is self contained with kitchenette. The rooms are air-conditioned with available internet cable TV. All utilities are included with the exception of telephone.

Bethlehem

Mystery Answer

the Bible) do not mention a date or time of year for the birth of Jesus.

1. Luke 1:26-27(ESV)	2. Luke 2:1-6(NASB)	3. Isaiah 7:14(KJV) 4. Matthew 1:23(NIV)
5. Luke 2:1-11(KJV)	6. Luke 2:10-12(NIV)	7. Matthew 2:11 (KJV)
9. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8(KJV)	10. It's not in the Bible!	The Gospels of Matthew and Luke (The only accounts of the nativity in