

The Good News

The newsletter of Holy Trinity Anglican Church

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December 14, 2010

From the Rector (The Rev. Dr. Christopher A. Pappas)

Age does not preclude a new call to purpose and hope. God loves us extravagantly and is with us and ahead of us with a plan for us at every stage of our lives. Growing older is filled with both opportunities and challenges. Our charge is to let go of any angst that our diminished capacities may cause us and embrace any new opportunities to enrich our lives that are presented to us.

Easier said than done? I think if we look to scripture as our guide, we will find comfort in the knowledge and certainty of our status as beloved children, who serve a purpose in God's plan at every stage of our lives in which we naturally see an ebb and flow of abilities.

In Ephesians we hear that an enormous inheritance belongs to all Christians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing...just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.

What we hear is that we have been chosen from before time by God, are loved beyond belief and have received a priceless inheritance. Author and teacher Roberta Bondi said in her book *In Ordinary Time*:

Before anything else, above all else, beyond everything else God loves us. God loves us extravagantly, ridiculously, without limit or condition. God is in love with us. God is besotted with us. God yearns for us. God does not love us "in spite of who we are" or "for whom God knows we can become." According to the wonderful fourth - and fifth- century teachers I have learned from and

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also teach myself, God loves us hopelessly as mothers love their babies...God loves us, the very people we are; and not only that, but, even against what we ourselves sometimes find plausible, God likes us.

I find great comfort in this unlimited love that God has for us. This knowledge strengthens me to endure, to continue, to live life in fullness knowing that I am the one whom God loves and will not abandon. God is our constant companion through life and leads the way through every stage of life and through death.

In all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39).

This knowledge that God is with us and leads the way is what allows us to accept and embrace the changes that each new stage of our lives brings us. No longer can the unknown terrify us, instead we can be confident because God is with us. "For surely I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord, 'plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me with all your heart.'" (Jeremiah 29:11-13). As some abilities and faculties fade with age, new opportunities and abilities come with age and wisdom. Our challenge is to release areas of worry and responsibility and welcome new ways to enrich our lives. Ours is to search and discern all of the exciting avenues that God puts before us. With each door that closes another door opens.

Chris +

Editor's Corner

I chose Aging (and not Christmas) as the theme for this issue. Aging is in the news these days. In any public debate about our health care troubles, someone is sure to raise the "problem" of seniors requiring an extraordinary slice of healthcare budgets. Economists worry about the demographics of aging, a future in which not enough young folks work to

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support the old folks. (It's huge problem in Europe already.) Others draw attention to the "sandwich generation," the folks who need to care for their children and their parents. Companies that exhibited the young with their perfect bodies and faces in their ads now use seniors. Parishes of all sorts, Anglican included, experience aging as their numbers steadily dwindle, and young folks decide not to make church part of their living. Individual seniors experience aches and pains that do not go away (I speak from experience).

On the latter, there's an interesting (and disturbing) passage in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 12:1-8). It asks the young not to worship youth and be prepared for aging. I'd ask you to read it for yourself. It is a picture of aging, when eyesight dims, eyes water, bodies stoop, hands tremble (the "guards of the house"), teeth fall out ("the sound of grinding"), ears stop working ("doors on the street"), long sleep is hard to achieve, and when the things we used to do without thinking (e.g. "climbing heights") now fill us with apprehension. The (downer) point is that death comes to us all, and life lived without reflecting on that is vanity, yea vanity of vanities. It is true: "The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly (9)."

But these downer words do not stand by themselves. This strange and disturbing book has good news to tell us as well. Good news also for old people who may have hearing aids, strong spectacles, a walker, and perpetual arthritic pain. *Go eat your bread with enjoyment and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do... Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might; (9:7-10).*

I have asked a number of parishioners to tell us what aging means to them. I invite you all to reflect on aging, each in your own circumstances.

Adrian Peetom, Editor



“The Inter-generational Church”

The Rev. Jonathan Crane

I really love the inter-generational aspect of the church. People of all ages drawn together in community, as a family beyond the two parents and 1.5 children the stats tell us about.

It's not the church really, it's Christ - the body of the risen Christ present in the world. It's God opening up generations and cultures and genders to be Christ to each other. Our salvation isn't based on bloodlines or wisdom or knowledge or social stature, it's based on Christ – given and broken for our sake. And so we gather, God giving us the capability to be One, when society (and too often ourselves) sees this family as incompatible.

A few of us gathered weeks back to begin preparations for Church In the Nursery (a new monthly initiative for young families). The passage we studied was Luke 18:15-17. It's a nice verse, friendly, and sentimental. Jesus calling the kiddies to get a head pat and those baaad disciples getting in the way. Nice and sentimental, that is, until the last verse: “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” The “niceness” fades. A line is drawn.

In our group discussion, we began considering what it meant to come as a little child. With my 11 month old in mind, I first thought of slobbering – a young boy shoving his whole fist in his mouth at mealtime. A young mom thought of the questions kids ask: “Why ma ma? Why? But WHY!?” A grandmother thinking of her own four kids reflected on how unique each child is.

My first instinct was to think – “No, it can't be any of those. Not slobbering, or asking, or being different.” Perhaps it is your first instinct too. Thank goodness our instincts aren't always correct. Instead, the Church in the Nursery planning group ended up thinking that to welcome the kingdom of God as a child must mean *all* these things and more.

Thinking this way, “receiving the kingdom of God as a little child” begins to seem a lot messier than we often think. Perhaps “receiving” has more to do with being honest before God about our limitations, about the dirt stuck to our face and about our questions. Sometimes we can hide the dirt and drool so well that it can't be cleaned up properly. As well, perhaps receiving the kingdom is existing in the world next to people with whom we don't share much in

common, and being Christ to them. There is more I'm sure, but you'll have to go sit next to your resident “little child” and find out.

The point here, with the inter-generational church formed in Christ and reflections on babies, is to highlight how much we have to learn. This is not book learning, learning for the mind, but learning with the spirit. It is asking Jesus - “What did you really mean when you said that?” And, “I don't get it. Why? Why? But WHY Abba?” It is sitting next to a child, in noise, mess, movement, and considering “unless I become like him/her...,” or asking “what am I missing out on here?” God's kingdom is here to be received and Advent is the time to start. Wait, watch, and pray – come with questions and mess, but come nevertheless.

*A woman in her 50s was driving with a friend. She went through a red light. The friend didn't say anything. But then she went through another one. The friend said, "Do you realize you just went through two red lights?"
"Oh," she said, "was I driving?"*

Reflections *(Katherine Townsend)*

I turned 40 this year. For years leading up to this momentous occasion I envisioned my fortieth birthday as being filled with friends, family, laughter and of course, champagne. After all it is said that “life begins at forty”. Forty didn't seem so bad. In fact, forty seemed almost fun. Like a milestone reached or some kind of pivotal point in my adulthood development.

The months leading up to my 40th, however, took a different turn. I started to realize my career wasn't developed as much as I had hoped, I started thinking about a pension plan that still doesn't exist and I struggled with the realization that I frequently tweeze the odd grey hair from my head. Suddenly I felt old. And it got me thinking about aging.

As a society we tend to emphasize youth. Stay young, feel young, act young. Botox, firming eye creams and Bowflex machines. You name it, there's something out there to combat aging in whatever form it may take, and we are constantly inundated with messages from the media suggesting their use if we wish to stay youthful, attractive and successful. As a group, “old people” are largely marginalized.

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We see this in everything from age discrimination on the job site to elder abuse and everything else in between.

If we turn to the Bible, we see that these societal views regarding youth are turned upside down. The Bible abounds with reference to the wisdom of the aged. Proverbs 16:31 asserts that “A grey head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness”. Suggesting that true wisdom comes only from walking lengthy days with Christ, Job 12:12 declares that “Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding”. And respect for the aged could not be any clearer than in Leviticus 19:32 where it is stated that “You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honour the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the Lord”. The Bible clearly instructs us to respect and learn from those older than ourselves. After all, it is they who have more experience in life and insight into God's teachings.

The aged play an integral role in parish life, and we should turn to them for guidance in times of crisis and difficulty. As a forty year old, I most likely appear old to the little girl who sat next to me in church last week. I know I certainly do to my boyfriend's thirteen year old. And as an pensioner, the elderly woman seated behind me last week appeared older to me. It's all relative, and no matter how far along the age spectrum we are, we can all help to guide those younger and less “mature” than ourselves in fellowship. I think of it as God's PR message to us all!

“Thankful” *(Ria Busink)*

My first reaction to aging is to be thankful that I have lived as long as I have. I have already outlived both of my parents by 10 years. That has been a 10 year gift of being able to be there for my children.

Beyond that first affirmation, the task of writing about aging seems beyond me. My thoughts on aging are one thing. The thoughts are based on what I have seen and read and heard. Some of that has been positive and some of that has been negative. My experience of aging, so far, is another thing.

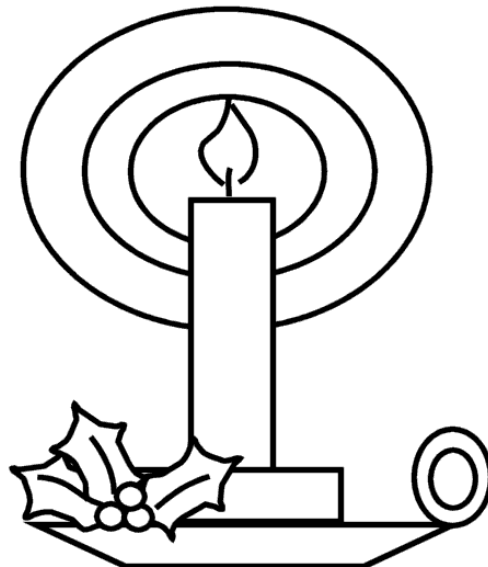
On a number of occasions I have commented to people, “Since adolescence, every decade has been better than the one before.” It is an enormous privilege honestly to be able to say that. True, at times I still cringe at some of the things I've said and done over the years. However, at another level, these things are also forgiven and forgotten. Moreover,

there has been a fall out from having made missteps, from having perpetrated small cruelties, perhaps not consciously but nevertheless motivated. Accepting my own imperfections, I also accept the imperfections of others. We all live and learn. Deeply to realize that is also a gift.

We're all probably familiar with the expression, “Age is a state of mind.” Perhaps to a considerable degree it is. But state of mind does not exist in a vacuum. If we have been able to benefit from our experiences, good and ill; if we are in good health; if those we love also love us in return; and if we have the good fortune to live in a country like Canada, perhaps a youthful state of mind is easier to maintain. That is also a gift.

At present, aging for me is still a time of opportunity. It is an opportunity to develop in areas that have been lying dormant for years. And there is opportunity to continue to make a contribution. These are gifts indeed.

In Adrian's request for a contribution on aging, he suggested a number of questions that we might well address. I've left most of them unanswered. However, for someone who felt inadequate to the task, I have managed to say some things about aging that are meaningful for me. I just want to add that aging with others within a community is yet another gift. Thanks be to God.



“Mixed Company” *(Vicki Webb)*

When Cal and I first started attending Holy Trinity, 30 years ago, we were among the youngest people in church. At first I wasn't sure if I would feel comfortable in a church where most of the congregation was what I considered to be quite old. In retrospect, probably they weren't that old, but when you're 28, even 50 seems old. What kept us coming to Holy Trinity? Besides the beauty of the church and the lovely services, I have to make special mention of one couple, Doris and Clarence Nantais. Yes, they fit into the category of what I considered to be old, but they were so welcoming, taking us downstairs to have coffee, introducing us to many other people, and even having us over to their home one evening. Did our age difference affect their welcome to us? Not one bit! Did they have an important role to play in the church? Absolutely! Cal and I stayed at Holy Trinity, not in spite of the age difference between ourselves and the majority of the congregation, but rather, because Doris and Clarence showed us that genuine Christian fellowship has no age barrier. Today, as I gazed at our newly arrived granddaughter, Molly, I prayed that she too will find as warm a welcome into a church family as Cal and I did, and will know that in Christ's eyes, we are all young.

Perks Of Being Over The Hill

*There is nothing left anymore to learn the hard way.
You no longer think of the speed limit as a challenge.
Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than the
guy on the television.*

“Aging is an industry, stupid”

Aging is the newest industry. The evidence is overwhelming. Where twenty years ago media ads only featured lithe airbrushed young bodies, these days seniors make regular ad appearances. And not only for products especially created for them, like new types of bathtubs and shower units. All kinds of ads regularly feature people well past middle age. “Wrinkles” sell clothes, cosmetics, travel, investments, condos, (“health”)- foods, over-the-counter and patented drugs,

Nowhere is the shift to aging as an industry more evident than in the history of CARP. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons was founded in a woman's kitchen as an advocacy organization, a wel-

come voice for seniors. Many seniors, especially widows and single women, live in difficult circumstances, not only economically but in a world geared to the young and independent. They need help and CARP promised to stand by their side.

However, after the retirement of the founder the organization was taken over by one of Canada's media moguls, Moses Znaimer. CARP has become an industry. For instance, it offers a variety of insurances and operates a travel department. Its (economic) flagship is Zoomer magazine. That magazine would be of no benefit to the people for whom CARP was founded, the aged ones with limited resources and needs for fellowship and community. Its 2010 winter edition consists of 138 glossy pages, most of which are filled with ads for expensive stuff.

Frankly, the whole of it is an affront to Christians who have some awareness of the Kingdom of God. The cover says it all, dominated by a photograph of Deepak Chopra, a self-styled guru millionaire whose advice in Asian English and with languid manner seems profound, until you begin to reflect on what he actually says and discover his clay feet. The cover also draws attention to body-mind-spirit. But here is the rub. For Zoom Body = weight control; Mind = stress relief; Spirit = laugh out loud. Compare that with: Body = the temple of God; Mind = the mind of Christ; Spirit = life in the Spirit. One other cover item is about “Best Winter Getaways,” but under the heading of “Escape” (from what?).

Moses Znaimer offers a “Zoomer philosophy” installment in each issue. In this one he tackles the “mind-body conundrum,” with, lo, a biblical reference: “Willing spirit, weak flesh: must it be so?” His advice: live your (flesh) life as if you are not aging (and you will have eternal life).

Why should we be surprised that aging has become an industry? Sports used to be a pleasant pastime for participants and spectators – it is now an industry. Gambling used to be a vice – it is now an industry. Prostitution used to be an affront to morality – it is now an industry. So is the drug “trade!” Let me end with the wish that Christian seniors wish to be shaped by what Scripture and Tradition reveals about the span of human life, and not by what “industry” says it is.

AP

A letter from one of our oldest members

November 29, 2010

Dear Holy Trinity Friends,

As many of you know, I have been a member of our parish since 1954. I'm sorry that I can no longer attend church on Sunday mornings. But I still feel connected to you, and so decided to write this letter to share some thoughts as I am so very thankful for such good friends who have been so good to me over the years.

I am a lifelong Anglican, having grown up with the Church in a country parish in Alberta. Naturally, there have been many changes in that time. For our parish, there have been so many good times. But we have also faced major challenges, as well. As our Church continues to change, I encourage you to remember that, as a parish, we have always been strong and able to rely on each other. For example, our women's groups of the past raised money, offered hospitality, and undertook the cleaning of the church. Although some of those roles have changed, the lasting friendships have not.

As Holy Trinity continues to change, I think it is very important that we welcome our new rector and his family. It is my personal hope that he will be very happy in this ministry. We are a heritage site, but we are also a parish that has always been interested in community and I am sure that he has noticed this. I understand from the many good reports that I get that our vestry is working together quite well and I also commend them for this. As well, I want to thank Jonathan Crane for his kindness and Thomas Brauer for his fine commitment to our parish family.

I will always be wishing you well, but thinking of you particularly as we come into this special season of Christmas. As we enter into a new year, I send my best wishes that you will remember just how special the history of Holy Trinity is and that you will continue with the best of our traditions of hospitality and welcoming.

I love you all.

Mrs. Kathleen (Kay) Redmond



Rectors of (the aging) Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Edmonton, AB

The Rev. Henry Allen Gray	1895 – 1897
The Rev. W. R. Burns	1898 – 1899
The Rev. George Henry Webb	1900 – 1904
The Rev. W. R. George	1904 – 1910
The Rev. David Jones	1910
The Rev. H. Irvin Lynds	1911
The Rev. Canon Christopher Carruthers	1912 – 1927
The Rev. Canon Graham George Reynolds	1927 – 1941
The Ven. Winston Manby Nainby	1942 – 1958
The Ven. Dr. Thomas L. Leadbeater	1959 – 1981
The Ven. Victor Leroy Kerr	1981 – 1983
The Rev. Rodney J. Adamson	1983 – 1990
The Rev. Donald Charles Aellen	1991 – 1999
The Rev. Dr. Eileen Conway	2000 – 2009
The Rev. Dr. Christopher A. Pappas	2010 –

(From Ron Fishburne, Chair, Archives Committee.)

A poem on aging

When preparing a Valedictory speech for my High School graduation in 1955 I came across this poem by Edgar Guest, and throughout the years it has become more meaningful. Thanks be to God for the gifts he bestows upon all of us, men, women and child.

-Freda Clemens

I'd like to think when life is done
That I had filled a needed post,
That here and there I'd paid my fare
With more than idle talk and boast.
That I had taken gifts divine
The breath of life and manhood fine
And tried to use them now and then,
In service for my fellow men.

(Edgar Guest)

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Self Portrait

By Margaret MacPherson

It takes courage to look, really look,
And what does the looking glass sing?
Lumpy,
the song is not smooth...

Dumpling hips and belly soft
the sagging breasts, the skin
between their separation
a saga of stretch.

Sausage legs stuffed in too tight skin
Poke out aside each knee, a brief relief.

Ankles narrow to crocodile feet
with stunted toes grown blue, blunt, broken

Up to arms that can no longer hold their own
against the shape of shoulders
and the staggering downward pull
of everyday wallowing weight.

Travel now to jaw and chins,
the masquerade of makeup
performing hollows when hollows
are not to be had.

Eyebrows seem surprised at this unsightly sight.
They semi-rise, except a few stray rest-home hairs,
course and gray, who refuse to follow suit.

Let's see the eyes, small, pale boreholes
drilled in a caustic landscape of skin.
Hair that yesterday lost its shine
denies the colour codes of chemicals
lies lankly, like unwashed curtains
forgotten on the line

Wait what's this?

The mouth tilts, lips slowly separate, curve upwards
to show a fencing row of teeth
not straight but enlivened somehow by the smile

Looking glass shatters
and happiness infused with beauty
embraces the face, the body.
God within, triumphant again.
Lovely, I breath, lovely
Lovely.

Recently I went to the doctor for my annual physical. The nurse asked me how much I weighed. I told her 135 pounds. Then she weighed me and the scale said 160. She asked me how tall I was. I said, "5 feet, 5 inches." She measured me and I was only 5 feet, 3 inches. So she took my blood pressure and told me it was high. "Of course it's high," I said. "When I came in here I was tall and slender. Now I'm short and fat!"

80? Impossible (Frances Reynolds)

My experience of aging is probably similar to many other people's. It was hard to believe that I was 70 years old and now I'm over 80! Impossible. My 80th birthday was suitably celebrated by the Sanctuary Guild with a cake marking my retirement.

I must look older as I find that people are helpful - opening doors, etc. My body is getting creaky (I haven't played tennis or badminton since last April). I'm keeping the medical profession busy with appointments and have tested the University Hospital with two lengthy stays in the last two years. I'm certainly thankful for our health care system even if it has many problems.

I have many other things for which I thank God - my family; many friends, a comfortable place to live independently and still being able to drive, including going to church. Holy Trinity has been part of my life since 1954 (not counting going to Brownies there).

I am glad I know many people in the congregation and think it is wonderful that the younger members are taking part in the activities and various "jobs" that need doing. Thanks be to God.

Younger Members Schedule

Every Sunday:

10:00-10:30 a.m. Play, Sing and Pray

10:30-11:15 a.m. Nursery

Sunday School

The (youth) Zone

Monthly:

Church in the Nursery

Youth Event

College and Career Potluck

Being with the very young

(The Rev. Jonathan Crane)

As many parishioners know, since the end of September I have been present with the youth during the first half of the 10:30 service. This decision evolved from a desire from parents and leadership to “allocate more resources” to youth ministry in the parish. The mothers who have been keeping youth activities running for the last few years deserve much thanks for their dedication and leadership. Thank you Susan, Mildred, and Margaret.

Over the last few months I have really enjoyed getting to know some of Holy Trinity's younger members better. They're a great group. We meet Sunday mornings at 10:30 to do some Bible study or similar activity together (we usually have between 2 or 7 youth), usually following the lectionary readings, and once a month we are getting together for an event outside of this. Some of the events so far have been a joint youth event with a number of Lutheran churches and this past weekend we invited the grade 6 group and made a good time of the Millwoods wavepool. Feel free to ask me any questions about this or if you feel specifically drawn to serve/learn from this group.



Cines and Portents

Autumn Spring, a Czech bittersweet comedy film by Vladimir Michalek, director.

The central character in the Czech film *Autumn Spring* is Fanda, an old man who refuses to grow up. He and his friend were longtime chorus members of an opera company, and in retirement they use their skills in pretending to be who they are not. We meet them both as Fanda plays the “emeritus maestro of the Metropolitan Opera” and his friend, Ed Fanda’s business manager. Together they visit a grand mansion as prospective

buyers. The real estate agent bows and scrapes and buys them an expensive lunch. But things go wrong when the agent tracks Fanda down and charges him considerable expenses. That debt brings Fanda into conflict with his wife of longstanding. She carefully manages Fanda’s limited pension income, scraping current expenses to save for their forthcoming funeral and especially a grave in the local cemetery. In this she is supported by their son Jara.

But Fanda and Ed play one prank after another, often an expensive one. He even has Ed telephone the wife to tell her that Fanda has suddenly died in his Ed’s home. Son and wife hastily organize ambulance and coffin, only to discover the ghastly “joke.” This incident breaks the camel’s back, and the wife sues Fanda for divorce. In the nick of time Fanda promises to behave himself, for he loves his wife, and she loves him. Indeed, he lives up to his promise. But then his wife notices how her husband has lost all vitality. At one point he complains that “our paths don’t lead us to anything anymore,” (an observation that might well be on the lips of many seniors). His loving wife cannot bear to see her husband breathing-but-dying, and in an act of (perhaps foolish?) love she empties her containers of cash for this and for that, and gives it to him to do with what he needs to. The two of them rent a limousine and make an appointment to see yet another mansion.

Woven throughout the story is the figure of son Jara, a professionally successful man whose marital and family life is a horrendous mess. At times the son appears to want his Dad out of the way of his own life, but the portrayal is ambivalent. This character does make the director’s point that responsibility as a complex issue.

Autumn Spring is a fine piece of work on aging. I heartily recommend it to you, and suggest you ponder the questions it raises. I’m sure the better video stores carry it, and I found a copy in the Sherwood Park library. And if you appreciate this sort of film, here are two others, with similar themes: “Is Anybody There?” and “La Derniere Fugue” (The Last Escape).

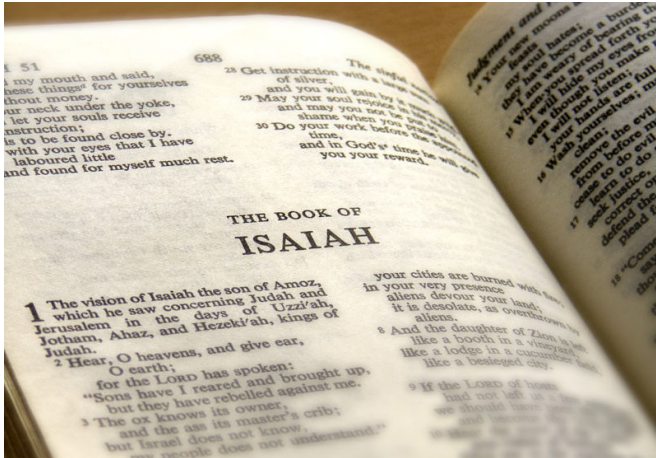
AP



A heartfelt “Thank You.”

I thank all those who contributed to this issue. Aging is a touchy subject. I’m sure some authors didn’t find writing on this topic all that easy. I thank Jacqui Chesterton for her fine job of formatting, and Johanna Peetoom for the utterly necessary job of copy editing.

AP



Shoot and branch

(I couldn’t resist executing at least one bow to Advent. It’s a meditation on Isaiah 10: 27-11:5, and you might want to read that before you read the following. And if you have a map of northern Alberta handy, so much the better.)

A portion of Isaiah 11 was part of the recent “Lessons and Carols” readings, and Chris preached on it on December 5. It begins with: “A shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse?” How familiar. How comforting.

Yet, whenever I hear this verse at the beginning of a reading, I feel uneasy. Many years ago a commentator drew my attention to the fact that the preceding verses (especially Isaiah 10: 28-34) lead up to 11:1. Awareness of these makes that “stump” verse shine a much brighter light on God’s grace in history and for his people. The problem is that by themselves the chapter 10 verses are a bit obscure.

The picture is that of the army of the Assyrians (10:24) marching its destructive way down from the north all the way south to Jerusalem, conquering the towns in their way (Rimmon, Aiath, etc.) The thing is that in Hebrew verses 28-32 are puns using those place names. As puns, they are bittersweet humour, how-

ever, for they point to their destruction.

So let’s imagine that an army is marching on Edmonton from the north down highway 35 (see the map). Here is (sort of), what verses 28-32 would read like in our context.

“Meander River will be wrenched straight, High Level will be flattened, no males will live in Manning, Grimshaw will live up to its name, Grand Prairie will become a stony hamlet, Valleyview will be filled with bones, and skulls will lie in the streets of Barrhead.” Puns like that make the army’s advance a cruel and intimidating picture, one to ensure that the inhabitants of Edmonton will tremble in fear.

Now verses 33-4 seem to be all about trees, but “tree” and Lebanon” are codes. They represent the impressive buildings, the palaces, and even the temple, of Jerusalem, which were built with the cedars of Lebanon (as described especially in Chronicles). In other words, the Assyrians will come to also raze Jerusalem (and in the end they did).

That chapter 10 passage spells the utter destruction of Israel and Judea, of God’s people in their promised land. But with all that in mind “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse” becomes a mighty message of grace. With destruction still uppermost in our mind, only stumps left, we hear the grace of that one stump in particular, which will have new life arising from it. Out of the stump of Jesse (father of David), will come a new bearer of “the spirit of the Lord.” Commentators are not too sure who would have been that descendant of David in the short term, but the Church has always read into those verses the presence of Jesus. Which is why this passage often gets read at Advent time. I wish, however, that in some way lectors could include those chapter 10 verses. After all, when Isaiah wrote his work, there were no chapters and verses, and I think he meant to convey that longer message that commentator drew my attention to.

AP