

The Pastoral Care Committee is pleased to share with all the parishioners of Immanuel Anglican Parish two short reflections for the third week in Advent.

HANGING OF THE GREENS

Contributed by Jenny Williams

Our Celebration of Christmas includes traditions that have been developed over many years. All the symbols and ceremony of Christmas have a meaning and were developed to help us remember with joy the message of God's love.

Today, we're going to talk about the Christmas tree. We are told that Martin Luther was one of the first to use a tree as a Christmas symbol. One Christmas Eve, he was taking a quiet walk. Suddenly, he saw a green tree, shining in the silvery moonlight. It made a lasting picture in his mind, and when he returned home, he brought an evergreen tree into the house and decorated it with shining candles.

Our Christmas tree helps us celebrate God's entry into human life -- his birth at Bethlehem. It is an evergreen -- one of the symbols of eternity. Because it is always green, it reminds us that God is eternal, and that through Jesus we are offered eternal life.

Many traditional Christmas decorations have a spiritual meaning:

We burn lights and candles at Christmas time to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, to remember and honour Him whom the Bible calls "The Light of the World".

For centuries, bells have announced the birth of the King. The spirit of the bells ring in every heart with a message of joy and peace.

The candy canes we hang on our tree remind us of the staff the shepherds used. The shepherds were the first to hear the good news and visit the new baby.

We have stars on our tree to remind us of the star that helped the Magi to find the Christ child.

Christmas balls are round -- a circle shape to remind us of God's love that has no end.

The word angel means messenger. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with the message that she would bear God's son whose reign would never end. Angel messengers came to tell the shepherds of Jesus' birth.

There are doves on our tree, to remind us of the message of peace and love which Jesus brought. The holy dove came to Jesus in baptism, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. On our tree, they remind us of the true spirit of the holiday season, and that God comes to us silently, in ways we may not expect.

As you look at your tree, take note of the symbols of Christmas that help us remember with joy the message of God's love.

Reflections in Advent
Contributed by Bette-Lou Paragg

Our Church calendar tells us we are in Advent, the beginning of the Liturgical year of the church.

I recall musician and writer Steve Bell saying that each time we go through the church year we are different, so Biblical stories and passages take on new meaning for us. It seems that this idea is particularly applicable to 2020.

This year of pandemic has caused much anxiety, stress and uncertainty and has forced us to live very differently, derailed many of our plans and tragically for some resulted in job losses, family illness and the death of loved ones.

My prayer is that as we prepare for and hear again the story of Christ's birth, we reflect on the light of Christ coming into the world at this time and receive Christ's light and love into our hearts and homes. The gifts of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace are available to us all. Thanks be to God!