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In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people (Luke 2.8-11, NRSV)

Christmas/Epiphany 2021

Beloveds;

It's been another challenging year. We have had the joy of re-opening our beloved buildings. We have attended far too many funerals, the joy of a baptism, and a couple of weddings as well. To say we have been kept on our toes would be an understatement.

We have experienced the joy of finding new worship resources, new ways of blending worship (still with a few kinks to work out), connecting to friends and colleagues online and also in person. Being able to hug my grandchildren and nephews this summer was amazing.

We have experienced loss in the deaths of parishioners, family and friends...most recently "Nature Bob" Livsey. Fernie Knox United made the bold and brave decision to research letting go of their physical building, daring to dream it may be resurrected as a beacon in the community. While the disposal of the building is sad, the memories of laughter and tears, there is also the legacy of the Congregation of Fernie Knox United that is as strong as ever; with or without a building.

Throughout all this change, one thing has remained constant: Commitment

Christ Church has made a commitment to continuing in our Shared Ministry. Fernie Knox United has made the same commitment. This decision is about the future, while holding to the past traditions and legacies. I know there is constant change in the world and in the Church. The world has been changing rapidly for the past several decades and it seems to be moving faster. Sometimes I want to yell, "Give me a minute, will ya?" Know what I mean? And yet, whether we have finished the To Do list, the baby will still be born.

One of my favourite Christmas traditions is listening to the Charlie Brown Christmas soundtrack. As a child I watched the programme on television. In grade school I was part of the production in both English and French...always a chorus person.



And the part I loved best was when Linus would drape his blanket over his head as a shepherd in the play, then recite the nativity under a single spotlight. I didn't understand why this was powerful until much later in life.

It has always fascinated me that the first people Jesus met, after his parents, were the Shepherds. We aren't told how many of them there were. They tend to get forgotten in the mash up of Christmas (birth) and the Epiphany (gifts and wise guys).

God chose Shepherds first. Before the Wise Men or the rich and powerful, The angel Gabriel appeared to the Shepherds and gave the standard greeting "Don't be scared". You know something is happening when the angel says "Be Not Afraid". And yet those shepherds overcame their fears, they believed the angel and when the star appeared, they made their way to see the baby Jesus, in a stable, swaddled in clean rags, lying in a food trough. God chose them because they were ordinary folks. Not the smartest, not the wealthiest. The most caring. They had a commitment to their flocks, to each other, and to God. Thus, Gabriel delivered one of the greatest messages the world would ever receive.

We have formed deep relationships with one another and especially with God. Whether we worship together in the same space, in person, or online, we gather together, as often as we can, to celebrate the seasons of the Church together. A commitment made to God and each other.

I am pursuing a dream of learning American Sign Language or ASL and have set myself a goal of signing the Christmas Gospel. It is a lofty goal, yet I am committed to making it a reality.

We will have many blessed and exciting moments to come in 2022. We will have many fabulous opportunities to join together as a Parish and as a parish family. The path to God isn't always straight, well illuminated or flat. Yet, when we commit to walking on that path we, inevitably, find ourselves drawn closer to God, to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. If being a follower of Jesus was easy, everyone would do it. What we know, as those who are committed to following the Christ, is that alone we cannot do much; yet together, with God, we can do almost anything.

Please join us online at any of our Christmas Eve Services, at 4:00, 7:00 and 9:00 pm. Or you can join us in person at Fernie Knox United Church at 7:00 pm, or Christ Church Anglican at 9:00 pm. Christmas Day we will gather again at Christ Church at 10:00 am for a Christmas Communion Service. In Person services have limited seating capacity and registration is required.

From my home to yours, I wish you a very Merry Christmas, a safe New Year and a Blessed Epiphany. I make this commitment to walking alongside you, as we figure out this incredible gift we have - the gifts of commitment, hope, faith and love. All brought together in the birth of a baby boy we know as Emmanuel.

Your servant in Christ,

Andrea+