

Knox e-knews

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www.knoxhalifax.ca



Minister's message

Merry Christmas to you all on this glorious Christmas Day.

It was wonderful to see so many friends at the Christmas Eve service last evening. Some of you have been missed for quite some time and it was good to see you again. As always, Knox's generosity shines through and God has blessed us with abundance beyond imagination. As you know, the offering from the Christmas Eve service was designated to go to Hope Cottage, a mission serving hot meals and fellowship to the less fortunate in our fine city. Last night's offering was \$781.00 which is a huge blessing, and I want to thank God and all of you who contributed so generously to this vital ministry.

What a joy it is to bring you glad tidings on this special day. As I write this message, many of you will be sitting at table with family and friends, and indeed this is one of the wonderful traditions of Christmas – the opportunity to spend a relaxed unhurried meal with loved ones. Many of you may have been in touch with loved ones who live in other parts of the country bringing good wishes of a blessed Christmas to them as well. These are all practices and traditions that are indeed biblical. The prophet Isaiah speaks of bringing glad tidings of good news which is for all people. It is good to wish other a joyous Christmas and it is my hope that each one of you will, in your own way, share the joy of this Christmas with others.

I would also encourage you to keep in your prayers those who, for whatever reason, and there are many, this time of year is a difficult one. For many, being joyful is not something to be equated with Christmas. Maybe they have suffered a great loss in their life. Maybe they are felling quite lonely at this time of year. Maybe their world has been turned upside down and they are trying to make sense of it all. There are many reasons beyond the obvious that makes this a particularly difficult time and I encourage you to just say a prayer for them as well, asking God to touch their hearts and assure them that they are not alone, but that God is upholding them in His love.

It won't be long before we will be ringing in the New Year and the opportunities God has planned for us as a community of faith, His church in the North-End of Halifax. I encourage you to continue discerning God's plan for Knox through prayer and meditation. We have an awesome group of faithful folks at Knox and I do not believe God is finished His work here; rather I believe 2012 is going to be an exciting and astounding year. I believe God will work in marvelous ways that will leave us standing in awe. I believe God is preparing to burst through into our midst with possibilities that are beyond our imagination, for the cracks have already begun to be revealed and His glory has begun to shine through already.

Without hope, we have nothing. And on this glorious Christmas Day when God startled all of creation by delivering unto us a Saviour who is Christ the LORD, not in a palace but in a stable, not a rich king, but a humble servant-King, I believe God will startle us again with His grace and love for us gathered at Knox.

Once again I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and may God richly bless you with peace, joy and love in abundance this day and all the days of your lives.

In Christ's service,
Rev. Brian

News from the flock:

This feature will require some help from all of you. As many of you know, the minister is always the last to know. However, if you are aware of some news that is permitted to be shared, please let me know. Your contributions to this newsletter would be welcomed at any time.

- ✚ As I mentioned earlier, the Out of the Cold shelter is now running for the winter months. We will be collecting items each week which I will deliver on Wednesday evening when I work my shift. If you would like to contribute, a list of needed items is on our website in the News section, on the Out of the Cold's website, <http://outofthecoldhalifax.org/> click on the Volunteers tab, or check the list on the bulletin board in the church lobby. Any and all support for this vital ministry will be greatly appreciated.

- ✚ The response to the request from Hope Cottage for sandwiches has not garnered enough support for us to commit to this program; however, the need still exists at many of the shelters like Out of the Cold, Metro turning Point, Souls Harbour Rescue Mission and Hope Cottage. So, instead of committing to the year, I am suggesting maybe we can plan to meet occasionally to make some sandwiches which can be utilized by these missions in the city. Please let Rev. Brian know if you would be willing to support such a venture.
- ✚ Subscriptions for the Atlantic Mission Society's Presbyterian Message are due. The cost is \$12. Please speak with Audrey Croft if you would like to subscribe.
- ✚ If you are interested in contributing to our church using PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) or would like to make changes to your current givings, please speak to Pam following the service.
- ✚ Mark your calendars: We will be starting a 5 week Bible study on the Book of James beginning Tuesday the 10th of January at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome to join in the discussion as we continue to grow our faith on our journey with the LORD our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Dates to Remember

Musings and other Stuff

I am leaving this on again this week as it seems appropriate to sing Hallelujah on Christmas Day. Some of you may be familiar with the term "Flash Mob". I would like to share with you one that took place in St. Catherine's Ontario last year in a food court in the local mall. It is an offering from a local choir and I offer it to you as you prepare for Christmas. Enjoy. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>

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Food for thought:

8 Essential Characteristics Your Church Needs

If you want your church to have the impact of the early church, the book of Acts shows us 8 essential characteristics we need in our congregations --

Supernatural power (Acts 2:3-4) -- We don't just talk about God; we experience Him. This is what makes the Church different from every other organization on the planet. We have the Holy Spirit. Microsoft doesn't have the Holy Spirit. The United States government doesn't have the Holy Spirit. The Red Cross doesn't have the Holy Spirit. No other organization has the power of God in it. God promised His Spirit to help His Church.

Use everybody's language (Acts 2:4) -- This passage isn't about speaking in tongues. It's about the gospel being communicated in real languages. People actually heard the early Christians speak in their own languages -- whether that was Farsi, Swahili, German, Greek, or whatever. God says from the very first day of the church that the Good News is for everyone. It's not just for Jews. It's amazing grace for every race. But the power of Acts isn't just about the language of your country of origin. It's also about languages spoken only in particular subcultures -- like mothers of preschoolers or people into hip-hop or accountants or truck drivers. God says in His Church, everyone's language gets used. Are you helping your people use their "language" to reach people with the Good News?

Uses everyone's gifts (Acts 2:14, 16, 19, 21) -- In New Testament times, there weren't spectators in the Church. There were only contributors -- 100 percent participation. Not everyone is called to be a pastor, but everyone is called to serve God. If you want your church to have the impact of the early Church, get everyone involved in the ministry of your church. Make it clear to everyone in the church that passivity isn't an option. If they want to just sit around and soak up the service of others, let them find another church.

Offer life-changing truth (Acts 2:22-40) -- The early Church didn't offer pop psychology, polite moralisms, or nice-sounding inspiration. We must always offer the truth of the Gospel. God's Word has the power to change lives. No other message changes lives like the Good News. No other message changes a guy from a wife-beater to being a loving, responsible husband. It's when the truth of God's Word gets into us that we change. In Acts 2, Peter gives the very first Christian sermon, quoting the Old Testament book of Joel. Peter shares the Gospel in this message. Acts 2 says that the early Church devoted itself to the "apostles' teaching" -- the Bible. God's Word gave the early Church power (For more about helping your church dig into God's Word, check out 40 Days in the Word).

Provide loving support (Acts 2:42) -- The first Church loved and cared for one another. The Bible says in Acts 2:42, "They took part in the fellowship, sharing in the fellowship meals and in praying together." One translation says, "They were like family to each other." The Church isn't a business. It's not an organization. It's not a social club. It's a family. For our churches to experience the power of the early Church, we've got to become the family that they were.

Enjoy joyful worship (Acts 2:46) -- When the early Church gathered, they celebrated, "praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people." We must understand and teach that worship is a celebration. It's a festival, not a funeral. It's the party for the kingdom of God. When worship is joyful, people want to be there because people are looking for joy. Do you think if our churches were full of glad hearts, joyful words, and hopeful lives, we'd attract other unbelievers? Sure they would.

Make generous sacrifices (Acts 2:44-45) -- The Bible teaches us to make generous sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. The Christians during the Roman Empire were the most generous people in the empire. In fact, they were famous for their generosity. They literally shared everything -- with one another and the poor. The Bible says the early Church "shared everything they had" That's a church worth dying for -- which is exactly what first-century Christians did. They'd rather die with gladiators and lions in the Coliseum than renounce their faith and their brothers and sisters in God's family.

Create exponential growth (Acts 2:47) -- When our churches demonstrate the first seven characteristics of the early Church, growth is automatic. People may have looked at the first Christians as weird, but they liked what they were doing. They saw their love for one another, the miracles that took place in their midst, and the joy that was in their lives, and they wanted what the Christians had.

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FIRST CORINTHIANS 13 Paraphrased Christmas version:

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows,
strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls,
but do not show love to my family,
I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen,
baking dozens of Christmas cookies,
preparing gourmet meals
and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime:
but do not show love to my family,
I'm just another cook.

If I work at a soup kitchen
sing carol in the nursing home,
and give all that I have to charity;
but do not show love to my family,
it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels
and crocheted snowflakes,

attend a myriad of holiday parties
and sing in the choir's cantata
but do not focus on Christ,
I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug their child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss their spouse.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love does not envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love does not yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love does not give only to those who are able to give in return; but rejoices in giving to those who cannot.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust;
but giving the gift of love will endure.