

# *Knox e-knews*

*January 1, 2012*  
[www.knoxhalifax.ca](http://www.knoxhalifax.ca)



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## *Minister's message*

Happy New Year to you all on this glorious New Year's Day – the first day of 2012.

It is marvelous to stand at the portal of a New Year; the slate wiped clean and ready for all the possibilities one can imagine to fill in the space. What happened in 2011 is now behind us and we look forward with anticipation of what we will encounter in 2012 as we continue to serve God and His Kingdom and discern His will for us as a community of faith. On this day the canvas is but a blank white space, waiting for God reveal His plan for us and to lead us to move forward not tentatively, but boldly, proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

I love the New Year because we begin it with no regrets; by the time spring rolls around, much may have transpired in our lives that will leave us conflicted, but on this day, we can be joyful because we get to start anew; and the God of immeasurable possibilities is here to guide us on our way. I believe 2012 is going to be an awesome year for Knox and all who gather here. I believe the Holy Spirit is already moving to reveal God's plan for us and I believe through the Holy Spirit, wonderful things are going to happen.

With the New Year, we have the opportunity to embrace doing things differently or attempting new ways of being “the church”. To that end, I am excited to announce today, we have begun a journey and anyone is welcome to join us on this journey. We will be reading through the Bible this year. We begin with Genesis chapters 1 & 2 today and we will (in true Presbyterian fashion) in an orderly fashion (our God is a God of order not chaos) work our way through the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament and then through the New Testament, finishing with Revelation in late December. I am including below the readings for January in a format that you can check off each day once you have read the passage. I encourage you to get a notebook and if you come across anything that surprises or startles you, confuses or confounds you, make a note of it as we will be gathering twice a month at 9:45 on Sunday morning to discuss the passages we've read so far. This will be an ideal time to bring up

anything you have made notes on. Finally, what translation to read: read whatever is comfortable for you, be it King James or Good News, NRSV or The Message. The purpose here is not textual criticism but to learn from God's Word the message He has for us in 2012. The idea is to live out God's teaching in real ways so pick something that you will stick with and join us on the journey. I am excited to begin this journey of discovery and I hope you too will find the joy of learning from God's Word as we journey together.

As I mentioned last week, we will be starting a 5 week Bible Study on the Book of James; actually, more accurately, the Letter of James. Each week we will delve into one chapter and discuss how it speaks to us in our context today. We will begin on Tuesday January 10 at 7:00 p.m. in the Parlour and of course, everyone is welcome to join in the discussion. I will be posting the resource materials each week on the website for anyone who is interested.

We continue to meet at 10:15 on Sunday mornings in the Parlour for prayer, and as always, everyone is welcome to join us as we continue to pray for our church and those who gather here. There is remarkable power in prayer, and many of us have seen the evidence of the power of prayer over the past couple of months.

Friends, it is no secret that we will face some challenges this year as a community of faith, however, if we all engage in prayerfully discerning God's will for us, the possibilities are immeasurable as God uses our gifts which have come from His hand to do the ministry He has planned for us. Trust in the LORD our God; get on your knees and pray for His guidance, His wisdom, His grace; that we may know His presence in our lives, and that we will be witness to the movement of the Holy Spirit among us as we glorify the God who loves us and startles us with His majesty, love and grace. I hope and pray that God will richly bless you all in 2012.

The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up His countenance upon you,  
and give you peace in 2012 and always.

Happy New Year one and all!

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.
- ✚ In response to the request for sandwiches, we will be picking a date in January when we can gather to make a batch of sandwiches for one of the shelters. Please stay tuned for the proposed date.
- ✚ 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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*

January 10<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 p.m. – Our Bible Study of James begins in the Parlour. Everyone is welcome to join in the discussion.

## *Musings and other Stuff*

### **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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~ **THAT'S GOD** ~

Have you ever been just sitting there and all of a sudden you feel like doing something nice for someone you care for?

THAT'S GOD! He speaks to you through the Holy Spirit

Have you ever been down and out and nobody seems to be around for you to talk to?

THAT'S GOD! He wants you to speak to Him.

Have you ever been thinking about somebody that you haven't seen in a long time and then next thing you know you see them or receive a phone call from them?

THAT'S GOD! There's no such thing as coincidence.

Have you ever received something wonderful that you didn't even ask for, like money in the mail, a debt that had mysteriously been cleared, or a coupon to a department store where you had just seen something you wanted, but couldn't afford.

THAT'S GOD! He knows the desires of your heart.

Have you ever been in a situation and you had no clue how it was going to get better, but now you look back on it?

THAT'S GOD! He passes us through tribulation to see a brighter day.

God will never bring to something that He is not prepared to bring you through.

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### Let's Read through the Bible Together in One Year

As we welcome 2012 I would like you to join me on a spiritual journey this year. I am inviting you to join me in reading through the Bible in 2012. We will begin with Genesis and work our way through to Revelation by year's end. We will meet twice a month on Sunday mornings from 9:45 to 10:15 to discuss the passages we have read. I hope and pray that you will join me on this journey of discovery as we read and learn from God's Word this year.

January 1: Genesis chapters 1 & 2

January 2: Genesis chapters 3 – 5

January 3: Genesis chapters 6 – 9

January 4: Genesis chapters 10 – 11

January 5: Genesis chapters 12 – 15  
January 6: Genesis chapters 16 – 19  
January 7: Genesis chapters 20 – 22  
January 8: Genesis chapters 23 – 26  
January 9: Genesis chapters 27 – 29  
January 10: Genesis chapters 30 – 32  
January 11: Genesis chapters 33 – 36  
January 12: Genesis chapters 37 – 39  
January 13: Genesis chapters 40 – 42  
January 14: Genesis chapters 43 – 46  
January 15: Genesis chapters 47 – 50  
January 16: Exodus chapters 1 – 4  
January 17: Exodus chapters 5 – 7  
January 18: Exodus chapters 8 – 10  
January 19: Exodus chapters 11 – 13  
January 20: Exodus chapters 14 – 17  
January 21: Exodus chapters 18 – 20  
January 22: Exodus chapters 21 – 24  
January 23: Exodus chapters 25 – 27  
January 24: Exodus chapters 28 – 31  
January 25: Exodus chapters 32 – 34  
January 26: Exodus chapters 35 – 37  
January 27: Exodus chapters 38 – 40  
January 28: Leviticus chapters 1 – 4  
January 29: Leviticus chapters 5 – 7  
January 30: Leviticus chapters 8 – 10  
January 31: Leviticus chapters 11 – 13