

Union and Sutherland's River Presbyterian Churches

Thorburn and Sutherland's River, NS

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*Modelling faith in our communities one
conversation at a time*



Sutherland's River



Thorburn

What Then Should We Do?

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The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called "Joy" Sunday. In many churches, the penitential purple of the season is put aside in favor of a lighter, happier rose and the lectionary readings call for more exuberant celebration and worship.

"Shout aloud and sing for joy," says the prophet Isaiah. "Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously." These are beautiful exhortations, and I wish I didn't find them so jarring. But "rejoice" and "exult" are churchy words — words that don't jibe easily with my 21st century mindset. Even on my best days, I resent commands — especially the sort that tell me what to feel. Rejoice? Sing praises? Shout? "No!" my inner two-year-old screams, stomping his foot and crossing his arms. "I don't want to."

But the fact is that these harsh, austere words that belong to Advent are both remarkable and refreshing. "You brood of vipers!" says John. "Repent. Bear fruit. Wake up!"

Of course, we then want to ask, "What should we do?" That's not necessarily a question people ask when things are going well. It's more like the kind of question we ask when we've come to the ends of ourselves... when the received wisdom has failed, and our cherished defenses are down, and our lives are splitting at the seams. Only then do we ask, "What should we do?"

John's answer to this question helps us with this...Dressed in camel's hair and fueled by locusts, his very appearance bespeaks the margins. Given John's demeanor, the crowds might very well expect such radicalism. But the answer he gives them is even more radical than they have language to comprehend — so radical we stand in danger of missing it: What should you do?

Answer: You should go home. (cont'd page 2)

What Then Should We Do? (cont'd)

Go home. Stop fleeing. Stop insisting that God is far away from the nitty-gritty dailiness of your particular life. Share now. Be merciful now. Do justice now. Why? Because the holy ground that matters most is the ground beneath your feet.

What John dared to suggest to his listeners on the banks of the Jordan as they awaited baptism is that holiness was not the ethereal and mysterious thing we tend to make it. If we're willing to look closely, if we're willing to believe that nothing in our lives is too mundane or secular for God, then we'll understand that all the possibilities for salvation we need are embedded in the lives God has already given us. There is no "outside." We don't have to look "out there." The kingdom of heaven is here, within and among us. What does this mean? It means we have work to do — work so ordinary, it will almost definitely disappoint us.

Here's an ironic little fact: John the Baptist is the patron saint of spiritual joy. He was still a fetus when he first leapt at the presence of Mary and Jesus. He rejoiced at the sound of his "bridegroom's" voice. What if John is saying that the Messiah who is coming really sees us? What if God knows us at our very core? What if it is our turn, like John to decrease so that Jesus could increase, and we could experience joy...? Friends, the thing is, odd and crusty as John was, he understood something hard and flinty about joy. Joy is not sentiment. Joy is not happiness. Joy is not cheap. "Bear fruits worthy of repentance," John told the crowds who flocked to him in the Judean. Your life is a golden field ripe for the harvest; ripe for sacred fire. Yes, the fire hurts, but the One who wields the flame is trustworthy. He knows you. He sees you. He loves you. And he will gather you with joy. AMEN

Rev. Greg Dickson

Interim Moderator

As I Remember (by Evelyn McKay)

I remember the dedication of the stained-glass windows: "The Lord's Supper" window was donated by Mrs. Anderson because of her happy memories when she was a little girl in Sunday School in Union Church. She also donated other pieces of Sunday School equipment; such as a video projector and an overhead projector and screen and other things.

The first stained glass window on the side wall was instigated by Ethel Fraser and donated by the Choir in memory of departed Choir members. Ethel was president of the choir, as well as church secretary. When the choir was collecting donations for the two windows, Ethel sent out thank you notes with news of church life, along with a church bulletin, to all donors from outside our own church.

Descriptions of each window and the dates each was installed appears in the write-up beside each window. These framed write-ups were done by Donna Robertson and me.

(to be continued next issue)

Household Hints

- Shake salt in the fat when frying fish. Fish will retain its shape and not break up. When frying fish add a piece of celery to cut down on odors.
 - To prevent cracking in icing, add one teaspoon vinegar.
 - When beating egg whites, add one teaspoon cold water for each egg white before beating. This will double quantity.
 - To darken gravy without affecting flavour, add one teaspoon of instant coffee.
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Sunday School Update



Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the Sunday School Christmas program and refreshments afterwards. All your support was greatly appreciated! Sunday School classes resume on January 6th, 2019 at 11:00 am. The students and teachers would like to wish you good health and many blessings in 2019!

Year-end Review

We, as a congregation, survived our first year without a full-time minister. However, we were fortunate to have John Reeves lead our services throughout the year and we are very grateful to him for his capable leadership. A Sunday School was re-started and is proving to be very successful, this being under the direction of Darlene Reeves and her helpers. The Sunday School students presented a small Christmas program this year and was enjoyed by everyone.

The Cradle Roll continues to be a busy group under the direction of Sheryl Tree and her helpers. Our church continues to be very active; the Board of Managers provide a wonderful supper once a month, which is always a sell-out. As well, members of the congregation provided food for several funeral receptions and provided dinner for members of the Pictou Presbytery when they meet in the church. In the spring we enjoyed a musical evening presented by "Hannah and the Boys" and they returned for a repeat performance in November. For our 142nd Anniversary Service in October, special music was provided by the "Pictou County Old Time Fiddlers". Christmas Bags were packed (with goodies provided by the congregation) and were delivered to a number of shut-ins. The congregation also assists with the monthly Soup Luncheons. At present, a new roof is being installed on the church.

Thank-you to everyone for your continued support as we move forward into a new year.

Submitted by Gail Jordan

January 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	14	15	16	17	18	19 5:00 p.m. Board of Managers Supper
20 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	28	29	30 10:00: Cradle Roll	31 11:30: Community Soup Lunch	The Devil has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all.	

February 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn No Sunday School	18 <u>Heritage Day</u> Honouring Maude Lewis	19	20	21	22	23
24 Services: 9:30: Sutherland's River 11:00: Thorburn 11:00: Thorburn Sunday School	25	26	27 10:00: Cradle Roll	28 11:30: Community Soup Lunch	"Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord." 2 Peter 3:18	