**The Fish Net**

**Boston Presbyterian Church**

**Christmas 2013 Rev. Shawn Croll**

Dear Friends,

 There are many things that make the Christmas season special, not the least of which being our yearly traditions. Whether we are talking about traditions of our families or our church family, many of us derive comfort and pleasure from the routine of doing the same thing every year; indeed sometimes we are so used to these traditions that we take them for granted and lose sight of their meaning.

 One popular tradition at Boston, as in the church at large, is the lighting of the advent candles on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. I have been known to joke that the lighting of the candles is the “countdown to Christmas” but of course the advent wreath tradition means so much more than that.

 To begin with the wreath itself, whether real or artificial, is usually green in colour. The colour green symbolizes life while the circular shape of the wreath represents God, the eternal one with no beginning or end. The candles within the wreath are full of symbolism too. In our tradition for example, the four candles located just within the wreath represent hope, peace, joy and love. Each candle though not only represents the theme of the Sunday on which it is lit, but, to take it one step further, each candle also represents the themes of the weeks leading up to Christmas itself. In so far as it is possible, our lives during this special time of year should be characterized by hope, peace, joy and love. It is these qualities that make up what so many people call “The Christmas Spirit”. It should be noted however that these four candles surround the most important candle of all; the Christ Candle which is lit either on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to symbolize the birth of Jesus. The Christ Candle is quite deliberately placed in the centre of the wreath as a visual reminder that Christ is at the heart of Christmas; that Jesus is, in the words of the well-worn cliché, “the reason for the season”. A person once asked me though, “We never light candles during a service at any other time of the year, so why now?”

 Once again the answer lies in the symbolism. The lit candles and especially the Christ Candle are meant to remind us of who and what the babe lying in the manger is; the Light of the World. In the wonderful words of St. John which are a part of the traditional Christmas Eve gospel lesson:

 “In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The

 light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not

 overcome it.”

 Wishing you a most blessed Christmas full of hope, joy, peace and love,

***Calendar of Events***

 We will be celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper on

 December the 1st which is also the first Sunday in Advent. As is the custom at the December communion service, there will be a food drive

in support of the local food bank run by the Salvation Army. If you prefer, instead of bringing non-perishable food items, you may make a financial donation to the food bank which enables the Salvation Army to purchase needed food items that have not been donated. Financial donations to the food bank may be included in your regular offering envelope, writing “Food Bank” in the space for “other”.

The Ladies Fellowship Group will be holding a Christmas Bazaar on Saturday, December the 7th from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Featured items for sale will include home baking, preserves, sewing, crafts and knitted items as well as nearly-new items in the “Country Store”. There will also be a silent auction and a 50/50 draw. A hot lunch will be available for $8 which includes your choice of soup or chili, a tea biscuit, a plate of dessert squares and cookies, and a beverage. The Group would appreciate donations from the congregation of items for the various sales tables, of good quality items for the silent auction, or of offers to help during the bazaar itself. If you can help out, please contact Brenda Wilson (905-878-6440). This is the Fellowship Group’s major fundraiser of the year and many worthwhile charities are supported through their funds.

The congregational Christmas Party and Pot-Luck Dinner will be held at the church on Friday, December the 13th, beginning at 6:30 p.m.

On Sunday, December the 15th during the service of worship, the Choir will be presenting “Joseph the Carpenter – A Christmas Musical”. Following the service, refreshments will be served downstairs by the choir members.

Those participating in the Prayer Partners this year will have their Christmas gift exchange following the service on December the 22nd.

The traditional Christmas Eve “Carols and Lessons Service” will be held at 7:00 p.m. The service will culminate with the singing of “Silent Night” followed by the lighting of everyone’s candles in the darkened sanctuary, symbolizing the meaning of Christmas; the birth of the One who is the Light of the World.

The Bible Study Group will resume meeting in the new year on Wednesday, January the 15th at 10:00 a.m. at the manse (373 Wilson Drive). We meet every second Wednesday and everyone is welcome to attend. The next session will focus on the “Joseph Cycle”; Genesis chapters 37 to 50.

The Annual Meeting will be held at the church on Wednesday, February the 5th at 7:00 p.m. Those responsible for reports for the annual report are asked to please complete them as early as possible in the new year.

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper will be celebrated on Sunday, March the 2nd, 2014.

 ***Flowers in the Sanctuary***

The poinsettias in the church this Christmas season have been given by Audrey Peddie in loving memory of her husband Jim, her grandson Jack and her parents Cliff and Mary Brown.

***Missions***

As of Sunday, November the 17th, we have raised $7456 of the $8000 we committed ourselves to giving to Presbyterians Sharing. As of this time last year we had raised $6169 of the $7500 we had promised.

Once again, we are collecting needed items for Evangel Hall, a Presbyterian Mission in the inner city of Toronto. Requested items include: new men and women’s underwear, gently used long underwear, jackets, coats, T-shirts, boots, blue jeans, hats, gloves, sweaters, sleeping bags and blankets. There is also a need for disposable razors, deodorants, body lotions, lip balms, feminine products, toothbrushes, small tubes of toothpaste and small packages of Q-tips. A reminder too that donations of Canadian Tire money and gift cards are also gratefully accepted. If you are donating toiletries, please place them in a separate bag from the clothing, as occasionally they’ve leaked or broken, soiling the clothing. Please bring in all donations by Sunday, December the 22nd.

 ***Websites***

Just a reminder that we do have a church website; [www.bostonpresbyterianchurch.ca](http://www.bostonpresbyterianchurch.ca) which, among other things, includes information on what is happening at the church and the minister’s messages from previous issues of the “Fish Net”. Appreciation is expressed to Rebecca Civiero for looking after the website and regularly updating it.

Also, by going to [www.presbycan.ca/subscriptions](http://www.presbycan.ca/subscriptions) you can subscribe to receive daily devotionals from the Presbyterian Church delivered free by e-mail to your inbox. All through the month of December, the PresbyCan *Daily*  Devotional features wonderful Christmas devotionals. Join over 6,000 subscribers around the world who receive these devotionals each day.

 ***Food for Thought***