

Dear people of St. Paul's

It is meet and right that once a year, as a nation, Canadians give thanks for all the good things of this land. We live in one of the most fortunate countries of the world, where we enjoy abundant harvests for all to share, where we enjoy "peace, order and good government," as the British North America Act of 1867 promised. The citizens of many nations in this world are presently protesting for no more and no less than what we enjoy all the time. We have much reason for thanksgiving.

Happy
Thanksgiving



An attitude of thanksgiving is something we as spiritual people seek to develop and foster every day of the year. Many sources encourage us so to do: the narrator of Margaret Atwood's challenging novel *Surfacing* (1972) comes to realize that the problem of all humanity is that "we refuse to worship . . . [we] consume but do not give thanks." Paul's letter to the Philippians implores us to "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice." And the God of the Old Testament tells his people: "I have set before you life and death; therefore, choose life that you and your children may live long in the land."

Someone recently spoke to me of trials sent by God to test him and his faith; he didn't understand what was happening to him and hoped some day he would. I don't see God testing people, as if they were Job. In our time, we know the source of diseases and that accidents happen, that random chance does affect our lives and world events. Natural disasters like hurricanes and floods are not sent by God as punishment for sins or tests of faith. What we do know is that God is with us in our human suffering, every moment of our lives. God gives strength to bear our sorrow, to mend our grief, to renew our life. The Holy Spirit fosters our courage to be fully human, to love completely and to be all that we can be. For this too, we worship not with penitence but with thanksgiving.

Finally, the people of St. Paul's and St. John's at this time in their journey have great cause for thanksgiving, for they are in it together. The two congregations enjoy pastoral care and stability as they share in worship and mission. The joint venture begun in November 2011 is a cause for great thanksgiving, and is indeed a model for other churches to follow.

On a personal note, as I have come into your midst again to serve as interim priest, I thank you for your warm welcome to Eleanor and me. It was a privilege to serve you in the past, and I enter this new appointment with the people of St. Paul's and St. John's with joy and excitement.

Now, my friends, there is world enough and time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So, be swift to love and make haste to be kind. And the blessings of God—Creator, Child and Spirit—be with you and those you love, this day and always.

Shalom,

Rev. Dr. Wayne Fraser
Interim Priest