



The United Church of Canada at Elgin and Portland

Our Churches United

Winter & ADVENT News, Views and Notes



November (Advent) 2017

Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge

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Wed.: 9 am-1 pm
Thurs.: 9 am-3 pm

Sunday Services:

Portland – 9:15am
Elgin – 11:00 am

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*Unto Us
a Child is Born*



Rev. Takouhi's Reflection

Dear Elgin-Portland Family,

Have you ever had a compass and you needed to calibrate it? In the 21st Century, the compasses that guide us to our destination are called GPS's, and they too need calibrations from time to time, it is called, software update.

I remember when, in 2008, Gary purchased our very first GPS and how I was against it. The very first time we used it, it kept on saying "recalculating" when we were stuck in traffic under the shadow of the high rises of downtown Toronto. I was ready to throw the GPS out the window.

Guess what?

Now, nine years later, I cannot go anywhere without my trusty GPS. We are heading for a much-needed vacation and we are taking our GPS with us, so that it can guide us on the highways and the byways of California. It finds the way by connecting to satellites and guides us.

This year, while I was contemplating and thinking about Advent, it came to me on a quiet and a long drive from Portland to Kingston General Hospital. The soft voice whispered, "The Season of Advent is our GPS/Compass" The more I thought about it, the more it became clear. ***"Advent: The GPS/The Compass that leads us to Hope, Peace, Joy, Love and Ultimately to a TRANSFORMED World"***

I am writing this note on this eve of Remembrance Day and I am thinking, didn't our veterans fight for **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**? That is the same foundation of the very First Christmas, NOT SHOPPING! This little infant brought Hope to those in darkness; Peace to those in war; Joy to those who were oppressed; and most of all Love to All.

Beloved, I pray that this year as we prepare our hearts for Christmas, may we also prepare ourselves to do the work of the Prince of Peace. Calibrate our hearts to guide us to what God has called us to do. Let us NOT be carried away by shopping and forget the

essence of the True Christmas. Let us use this season of Advent and calibrate our compass, and update our GPS software with the Source of Life, to live according to the standards of the Prince of Peace.

I grew up in a war-torn country, Lebanon, I know what it means to have Hope in despair, Peace in war, Joy in difficulties; and most of all Love in a pool of hate. I think all the veterans and other saints who have gone before us, will agree with us that these four pillars, **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love are the four foundational pillars** to carry us through life.

May we remember all those who have gone before us, with their Commitment for a better world, alongside the baby that brought us the very First Christmas.

May we never forget that Grace is free but not cheap, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer has said; just like our FREEdom has come to us freely but a high price has been paid by many.

Blessings of Peace to ALL as you experience and work with **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love** and ultimately transform this world to a better place.

This year, once again, I would like to share with you one of my Christmas poems, found in my first published book of poetry, photography and prayers and invite you to be open to accept, embrace and share the True Gift of Christmas in its season and ALWAYS.

Hope, Peace, Joy, Love

As Christmas approaches
People begin to rush
Seeking to find the gift
That will never die.

In the chaos of night
Looking for HOPE
In baskets of sales
They sink and despoil.

The search continues,
This time it is PEACE.
This Peace found within is sought in the wind.

Forgetting to connect
to the Prince of Peace
In the chaos of life
they reject and flee.

Greed of nations
Instant pleasures
Become the Reasons
to claim the Season.

Peace is not found
Deafening music thrives,
JOY is expected
but not apparent.

What is left then,
But to Be Loved.
This will fulfill all life's desires.
Even for one-night pleasures rewarded,
Feeling contentment is transient.

People search in vain
rushing through the days
Forgetting to Breathe, to Slow Down, and
Care...

Care for the Self, the Other, the Stranger.
Surrendering to the ONE who is Love
Eternal.

"You are Beloved
Made in My Image
My Love,
My Breath,
the one I Moulded.

"My Child,
My Life,
Remember this always.

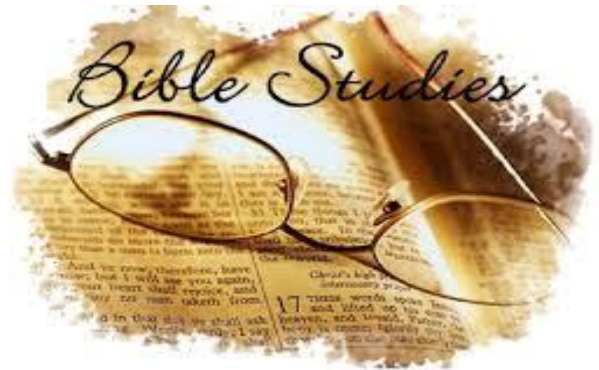
"The Courage you have,
is My Hope within.
The Justice you speak,
is My Peace on Earth.
The Gifts that you share,
is My Joy indeed.
The Selfless Love You show,
is My Love Made Clear.

"Live fearlessly with Hope,
Peace, Joy, and Love
Knowing in your heart
We are never apart."

Blessing

May the First Christmas Story be the Source
of Love You depend on; and the New Year
ahead be established on
TRUE HOPE, PEACE, JOY and
LOVE¹. **Amen.**

¹ Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro. "The True Gift
Lives On..." page 24 - 2016



Venturing in Biblical Exploration

VIBE – A Personal View:

Linda Hamon

V. I. B. E. is a place to participate in discussion/debate in a safe non-judgmental environment. I can learn about differing thoughts and ideas that make me think about my own and sometimes re-evaluate them. I can confidently express thoughts that when younger I would have been afraid to voice because I feared they were too different to be accepted by others. I enjoy the continuing "Biblical Exploration".

**musings of a muddled mind.....
The View...****Clinton Halladay**

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their friends, where they had been on vacation and even of religion and politics.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the hour describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where rather than the stark confines of the hospital room, his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

As the man by the window described the view in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene: a park with a lovely lake; ducks and swans playing on the water while children sailed their model boats; young lovers walking arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline in the distance.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man could not hear the band – he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the

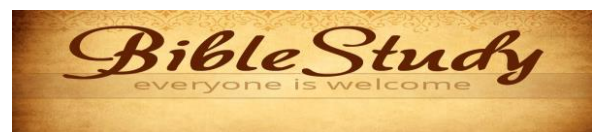
switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall!

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate to have described with such passion and in such detail the many wonderful things outside this window.

Pensively the nurse recounted, "your friend was blind, he could not even see the wall."

Dear reader, take from this what you will.....

**V.I.B.E. – another perspective****Larry Cochran**

VIBE, Ventures in Biblical Education, is an "adult" bible study that helps us regain the wide-eyed wonder of childhood at a time when we need it most. We often speak of life as a journey, not a destination. But living should be life with gusto; much more than just getting by. Living is about developing healthy relationships; being a part of a "vibrant community", a contributing member of the wider family. The most popular TV series this year is the National Geographic "The story of Us" in which Morgan Freeman travels the globe in search of an answer to one fundamental question for humanity: *what are the common forces that bind us together?* It shows on Wednesday nights. Forman's pleasant inquiring approach is very much like our approach at VIBE; open, honest, sensitive and inspiring discussions. We don't travel the world on TV like Freeman, but we do through the experiences we share at VIBE. Whether you are "walking through the darkness" or "walking on water", VIBE is a good place to tune up your mojo. Come join us!



DECEMBER

SUNDAYS:

- ✚ Worship:
 - Portland: 9:15 am
 - Elgin: 11:00 am

THURSDAYS:

- ✚ Choir Practices:
 - Elgin: 7:30 pm
 - Portland: 7:30 pm
- ✚ Bell Practice: Portland: 5:45 pm
- ✚ Chit-Chat-Cafe: Portland UC 10:30 am

FRIDAYS

- ✚ Chit-Chat-Cafe: Elgin Community Hall: 9:30 am

DECEMBER 3:

- ✚ Sharing the Light of Christ:
 - See side bar:

DECEMBER 8:

- ✚ Christmas Goodies: Elgin: 12:30 pm
 - Sixth Graders prepare baskets

DECEMBER 24:

- ✚ Christmas Eve Day:
 - Joint Service – Portland: 10:00 am
- ✚ Christmas Eve Service:
 - Portland: 4:00 pm
 - Elgin: 7:30 pm

DECEMBER 29:

- ✚ Portland Community Luncheon
 - 12:00 PM noon

DECEMBER 31:

- ✚ Joint Worship Celebration:
 - Elgin: 10:00 am

See our web site: www.eppc-ucc.com



Sharing the Light of Christ

***Sunday, December 3, 2017
6:30 pm***

**ELGIN & AREA RESIDENTS ARE
INVITED TO AN EVENING OF**

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

***Christmas Carols
And the telling of the Christmas Story***

Bring your bells and luminaries!
We begin at 6:30 pm and walk or ride from
one location to the next.

**St. Columbanus Church
Bethel Tabernacle
Elgin United Church
Red Brick School
Elgin Municipal Complex**

***Hot Chocolate & Cookies Will Be Served
Everyone Welcome***

Please bring your own flashlight
Transportation will be available via school bus
or folks are welcome to walk

Non-perishable items or cash donations for
the food bank would be most appreciated and
can be dropped off at **Bethel Tabernacle**
during the evening.

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**Portland Community  
Luncheon**

**FRIDAY, December 29**  
Portland United Church  
at noon

Menu: Soup, tortière, salad,  
dessert and beverage.  
Everyone welcome  
Pay by donation as you are able.

**Portland Sunday School News**

As Advent approaches, the Sunday School is excited to celebrate with the congregation in a variety of ways. We will be collecting money for the Food Bank throughout the month of December, and the congregation is encouraged to take an Advent Giving Jar from the Friendship Room to collect coins. These jars can be brought back at any point throughout December, and placed under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary.

On December 10th, we will celebrate White Gift Sunday, bringing non-perishable food items for the Food Bank. We will also share a Christmas presentation called "The Symbols of Christmas" during the service on December 10th, followed by a soup and sandwich luncheon after the service. The Sunday School will provide the soup, and we invite the congregation to bring sandwiches or desserts as you are able. There is always plenty of food to share, so please plan to stay regardless, and enjoy a time of fellowship.

We wish you the warmth of God's love and blessings as we anticipate and celebrate the birth of Christ together!

**V.I.B.E.**

Come in, come in and sit down because we are family. This title describes our weekly VIBE gatherings.

Takouhi has facilitated presentations and discussions that add to the depth of the exchange of our conversations. Our discussions relate to the bible and worldly events that help us live life with hopes of love and peace. VIBE reinforce our thinking that it only takes a spark to get the Spirit moving. Come in, come in, and sit down we are family.

Mary Lynne Alderdice

**PORTLAND UNITED CHURCH CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE AND LUNCHEON**  
**Saturday, December 9**



From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Choose from a wide selection of buns, breads, cookies, cakes and squares.

A limited number of tortières will be available for \$15.

To pre-order tortières phone Sheila: 613-272-3531



From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. come downstairs and enjoy a delicious lunch for \$7.

Choose from a selection of soups and sandwiches topped off with a dessert and beverage as well.

**United Church Women – Portland**

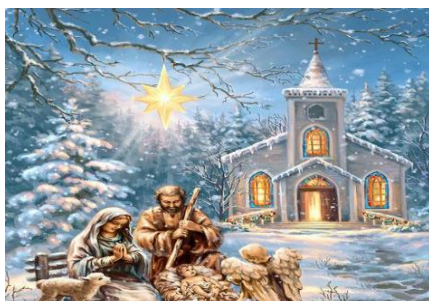
**Connie Cochran**

First of all, let me thank everyone that helped us over the past year with donations of food, their time and efforts and financial support. We couldn't do all that we do without you! There are several people that help us that aren't members of our church, just people that want to do something worthwhile in the community. It's always fun and a time of great fellowship.

Our Fall pie sale was successful again and allowed us to transfer funds to the general operating fund to help keep our church healthy. We made good use of the new stove and hood fan that we installed over the summer. From time to time we give money to local charities, schools and those in need in the community – perhaps things that you weren't aware of. Thankfully we are a community that likes to eat and food-related fund raising efforts are well received. That's something that we are particularly good at! We continue to provide luncheons for celebrations of life, when asked, and give out books to children when they are christened.

Two new members joined us this year and we are always looking for more. We only meet once a month and it is a great time of worship and fellowship. Come and join us!

We have a Luncheon and Bake Sale planned for December 9 from 10:00 to 2:00. The UCW are selling the baking and the Portland Pealers are organizing the luncheon. We hope to see you there!



*May you enjoy  
a  
Blessed and Merry Christmas*

# The Back Page

## My Crystal Ball

**Ted Brett**



We have had some Official Board Chairs in the past quite eloquent in expressing themselves in these newsletters. I am not one of them as I'm more comfortable with numbers than letters, one of the reasons I was appointed, rather than voted, into A/Chair.

Starting in September next year Rev. Takouhi will be away for a total of four and a half months starting with vacation, sabbatical, and finishing with study leave. The original plan was to have a part time retired minister for this time frame. Because of a financial short fall that money is not available.

We will have full time ministry for the month of December. The rest of the time will be filled with Lay Worship Leaders, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, Retired Ministers, and just congregants or others that have an idea for a service.

Don't just say oh no. This will be exciting. Every Sunday you come to church will be a new, different and exciting experience. These people will be leading the service because they want to, not because it's their job, and will be putting their best foot forward to give you the best experience they can.

The rest of us will have to step up to the plate and take on some of the pastoral care duties but other than that we will be just fine. It has been arranged for neighbouring ministers to do emergency care during this time.

In January 2019 when Rev. Takouhi comes back you will be glad to see her but you will also miss what you experienced while she was away.

Yours in Service

**Ted, A/Chair EPPC Official Board.**