

A prayer for those who find Christmas difficult - from Reverend Allan

For those who experience Christmas as a difficult time: I invite you to get a candle, light it, and sit with it for a bit. In the silence, focus on the light. Please pray whichever words speak to your heart (I am praying these words for you as I write them,) If it is helpful for you, please get a shawl to wrap around yourself while you pray. Let it represent the Spirit's presence.

Dear God of Love and Compassion
Hear my prayer
May your spirit of love come to me
And hold me
And bring me comfort
(pause to sit with these words and allow the Spirit to touch you with God's love)

Dear God who knows pain and suffering
Hear my prayer
May your spirit of compassion come to me
I am hurting so much
Please hold me
And bring me comfort
(pause and allow the Spirit to touch you with God's love)

Dear God of those who are lonely
Hear my prayer
May your spirit of warmth and comfort come to me
I am so lonely
There is such a deep hole inside me
Please hold me
And bring me comfort
(pause and allow the Spirit to touch you with God's love)

Dear God of those who struggle with depression
Hear my prayer
There is such a cloud of despair over me
I cannot break free
I am afraid and exhausted
There seems to be no way forward
When I cannot pray, please get someone else to pray for me
I have no words to tell you what I need
I don't know what to pray for
Please hold me
Please bring me comfort
(pause to allow the Spirit to touch you with God's love)

These are my prayers oh God
These are my prayers
Amen

Christmas 2022

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas Greenwood family and friends! It's such a season of good news and rebirth from both our church and community perspective. I remember, when teaching at Fleming College, the delight of international students who were experiencing Canadian winter. It was lovely to share in their delight as they witnessed snow for the first occasion! For many, it was also the first time away from family.

These young women and men were a tremendous gift to me in so many ways. They enabled me to look again, with fresh eyes, the blessing of living here in the Peterborough area. They would often come to visit me in my office to talk about their family back home, what it's like to be in a different country and all the family and community customs. There were occasions of laughter as they met new friends and made new discoveries together. At the same time, there were moments of loneliness, loss and disappointment as they couldn't be with family almost half a world away.

I would encourage you to find ways to reflect upon all that is joy-filled and familiar and at the same time, looking with fresh eyes at how blessed we are at Greenwood. May we also find ways to reach out to those around us who may be having challenges during this season of Christ's birth. How can we be God's words of gentleness, compassion and encouragement to those who may be struggling and a sign of welcome, love and care to those who find this a difficult season. Love 'n blessings to all! Happy Advent 'n Merry Christmas.

Bill 'n Darla Peacock

From the Official Board Meeting, November 15, 2022

Outreach Committee: Charities selected are Nijikiwendidaa Anishiaabekwewag Services, One City, Camp Kawartha for Environmental concerns, One Roof Diner, and Peterborough Refugee Sponsorship. The goal is to have these agencies share their programs with us and for members to have the opportunity of becoming involved with the agencies. Committee members will be visiting each agency to give them their cheque of \$2000 this week. Each agency has expressed joy and thanksgiving for our generosity.

Session: Sunday School resumed October 2 under the guidance of Anne Wilson and Sue Gleason.

A new group, looking at reconciliation, has been approved. Thanks to the choir and our music director for our Christmas Contata, **Comfort and Joy**

Treasurer: Ruth Benson distributed the financial report. Ruth emphasized that the wealth of our church community must be recognized in its people. The legacy of Greenwood includes the rich history of the people of three congregations who have joined to create Greenwood United. This needs to be celebrated.

Stewards: Decisions will be made whether to continue to offer worship via zoom after December 31. We are awaiting the materials to upgrade the windows in the church.

Ministry and Personnel (M&P): Work has begun on the worship schedule for 2023. The creation of a new job description for the Church Administrative Assistant position is ready to be advertised on the web.

Trustees: The focus of this report was the proposal for dispersal of funds to the agencies selected by the Outreach Committee. How much can Greenwood give to support outreach? A decision was made to present to the Board three options for funding outreach. \$40,000, or \$5,000 or some amount in between.

Member Anne Wilson expressed her concerns. The Outreach Committee has chosen deserving agencies. However, we are an aging congregation and we want the church to be financially healthy.

Motion: *That the Official Board approves the release of \$10,000 from Greenwood's investment funds for the purposes of Outreach allocations, as recommended by the Outreach committee.*

Bedford House: Each year Bedford House approaches the National Church for funding. Funds have been received from both the Region and the National Church.

Christmas Eve service: December 24th at 5:00pm. Followed by caroling in the church neighbourhood.

Christmas morning, December 25th - Session members will hold a 10:30 am gathering of sharing, singing carols, and prayer and Coffee and cake

No service on Sunday, January 1st

- The Secret of Christmas (a favorite Christmas song of Marion Griffin)

It's not the glow you feel when snow appears.

It's not the Christmas card you've sent for years,

But the joyful sound when sleighbells ring,

Or the merry songs children sing.

The little gift you send on Christmas day

Will not bring back the friend you've turned away.

So, may I suggest, the secret of Christmas

Is not the things you do at Christmas time,

But the Christmas things you do all year through!

Our Christmas Cantata, **Comfort and Joy**, was a delight for all. The music, the choir, the scenery, the narration by Bill and Darla Peacock, and our music director once again gave us **comfort and joy**. The joy was being able to give \$687.75 to One City. The comfort was in being able to be together in our church again. **Thank you Marion for your wonderful support and leadership.**

Dear friends,

Our Advent Communion services are a heart-warming experience. The sanctuary is decorated for the season. The raised dais is now fully occupied by a socially-distanced choir stretched from side to side. The communion table and a lectern are now on level with the pews and two cameras capture the scene for our zoom guests. On December 5 after the five small children helped Reverend Bill and Darla light our Advent candles, we welcomed three new women into the Greenwood journey. All three are choir members. The sanctuary is still resonating with last week's choir cantata led so ably by Marion Griffin.

If "change is the only constant" as some wise person has said, then we take comfort in the ancient stories that tell us "We are not alone". Our own stories remind us how we have been accompanied through all the changing years by the eternal Spirit of compassion, joy, hope, and love embodied in the life of the helpless babe born in lowly circumstance.

May this season be warmed with your own memories of the peace of Christ shared with good friends, through troubling and joyous times, along the way.

Yours in hope, peace, joy and love,

Reverend Allan Smith-Reeve