



Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

November 26th, 2006

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who is preparing to be born in our hearts again this year. May this time of preparation and eventual presentation of joyous news of the new born babe's birth be an especially sacred time for you and those you love. Most of all, in the midst of the 'business' of this season, I trust that you will be able to find some moments for personal reflection on a year gone by and begin to ponder the year ahead.

As a community of God's people we have experienced some profound ups and downs lately. We began September on a tremendous high. All the planning that had gone into The Bible Trail (St. Andrew's own plan for reading and preaching through the whole Bible over the next 2 ½ years) was finally coming together and being unveiled to you. I felt like a new father again as I was able to show off my newest pride and joy to each of you. You have responded so well and it has been incredibly encouraging. I can tell that you are reading your Bibles as your questions to me reveal your surprise and wonder at perhaps reading for the first time, or discovering anew, the rich and challenging words contained in our Holy Scriptures. With the advent of the Trail Parties (remember these are parties so expect to have fun when you attend) and the Summit Meetings, more people are involved in talking about the Bible than ever before. I sense that The Bible Trail is drawing us closer together and giving us something to get excited about in our common life together. Thank you so much for your enthusiasm. Keep on trekking.

On a sad note, we said goodbye this month to our friend, colleague and co-minister, Rev. Jan Hazlett. I'm sure that I speak for everyone when I say that it has been disappointing to bid her farewell. I am poignantly aware that Jan's ministry has touched so many of you personally. She has had a significant influence on our ministry to children and youth and had attempted to deepen our spirituality through a variety of new and innovative practices and disciplines. Her passion for Christ and his people was obvious and radiated as she led us in worship and preached the Word. When any good friend moves away, we acknowledge that we will miss them deeply but we are also happy for them as their move will create a new and rich opportunity for their future growth and life. May this be so with our friend, Jan.

Change so often creates new opportunities. It is too early to tell what shape many of those new opportunities might take but I'm feeling that 2007 will mark a new beginning for us and my ministry among you. I am considering the theme of "Cheerful Living", a play on 2 Corinthians 9:7 as way of moving boldly into the new year. I believe that God loves a cheerful 'liver' and in as much as we are living cheerfully we will become cheerful givers of our time, talent, and treasures. It seems to me that there is no other response to God than when we approach the life that God has given us with joy and thanksgiving: living fully as Christ desires. So get ready. I'm ready to kick up my heels and see how it feels (not that I wear heels much). Let's spend our time together celebrating the richness of our community. Let's break bread together around a table with potential new friends and sometimes strangers and get to know one another better. Let's shake the image of the dour, staid and frozen Presbyterian. Let us live fully into the life that God is calling us to live. Let us be known for cheerful living and let us invite others to join us as we do so.

I hope you will join me in spreading this theme of 'Cheerful Living' around our community. When opportunities arise to be a part of embodying this kind of living I hope to see you in the midst of it. I believe that we can enrich our community of faith by becoming more fully alive to Christ and His calling in our lives. It is my prayer that you will 'come into the party' and rejoice in the discovery of something that may have been lost and now is found.

Enclosed with this letter you will find details of our upcoming Advent and Christmas services and programs. Perhaps you can take the opportunity to come home again for Christmas and join us in celebrating a truly life changing birth. If you have been here for a while, or if you haven't been here in a long time, why not make this year the year that you reconnect with something that may have become lost in your life? We'll be waiting to welcome you. And the good news is that God will be waiting too. I hope to see you in worship when next we meet. Won't you join me in cheerfully living into 2007? I'm excited about the opportunities that await us. Praise be to God for the new things that God will do in our midst.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Borthwick', written in a cursive style.

The Rev. John Borthwick
Your Minister