

## **Give Peace & Love a Chance**

Devotion for January 2015

Hymn: VU 105 Dust and Ashes.....

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31

Reflection:

Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Boxing day, all finally behind us. I just think of people buying stuff they don't need with money they don't have. The new electronic gadget is probably on the fritz, the shiny made in China toys broken, the chocolates and wine all consumed and now they face the new year with the CR CD demands arriving. The Christmas child, the spirit of love for everyone, the goodwill, all retreat and life gets back to normal. For whatever reason the world of love and peace is probably further away for the world than it has ever been. Perhaps 2015 will fare better: people may actually listen, learn and as the Beatles wrote, "All you need is Love" and John Lennon wrote "Give Peace a Chance".

Discussion: Did Jesus really just waste his time?

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Hymn....Imagine by John Lennon....Not in any kind of hymnal but I think very appropriate to start off a new year. So, someone bring in a CD and whatever equipment needed and just listen to the words and let it sink in.

Prayer: Well God we are starting again, a new year, new promises and new beginnings for many things. All we ask is your guidance, your help to help us make the world a better place. Let there finally be peace. amen

## “Flowers and Chocolates”

Devotion for February 2015

Hymn: VU 534 I Cannot Dance, O Love

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:8

Reflection:

We all know the experts categorize love in four parts, love from God., love for our families, our neighbours and finally romantic love. February is noted for the 14th, and a guy by the name of St. Valentine is the responsible party. St. Valentine, a Roman Bishop in the second century was put to death for his views, and actions about Christian marriage. I suspect he never imagined Valentine’s Day as we know and celebrate it. Being resourceful and always with money in the forefront, over the years enterprising individuals in the retail industry have really capitalized on St. Valentine’s Day. Well, we just experienced Christmas with Jesus touting love for all and now we are hit with Valentine’s Day where romantic love has taken over. Somehow I don't think Jesus nor St. Valentine envisioned flowers and chocolates as symbols of love. I don't think anyone though, is against love for one’s spouse, nor upset about chocolates and roses, but presumably love to Jesus and St. Valentine was something much bigger and far more encompassing.

Discussion: Would either approve of St. Valentine’s Day?

Scripture: John 13:34-35

Hymn. VU 419 May the grace of Christ

Prayer: May the love of God permeate our souls, our minds and our thoughts so that we may truly love as Jesus taught. amen

## **“Dissecting St. Patrick”**

Devotion for March 2015

Hymn: VU 705 For All the Saints vs 1-4 & 5

Scripture: Acts 9: 32: 35

Reflection:

Last month we dissected St. Valentine and sure enough we have another equally famous saint for March. I thought only the Catholic church had saints, but no, just about every major religion has saints, although each one recognizes who their saints are using a different criteria. Well, St. Patrick as you may know, was born in Scotland to Roman parents, and became famous in Ireland making the whole world green every March 17. Since my ancestors came from Ireland close to 200 years ago I don't want to dredge up any bad news about St. Patrick even if he was not really Irish. About those snakes though, the research says Ireland never had any. There are some theories as to the connection with snakes and St. Patrick, but the clover is easier to understand. Apparently Ireland is full of that three leaf green plant and he used it to explain the Trinity. How he explained the odd four leaf one that popped up is never mentioned. I did know the dates he was there but can't help but wonder if Guinness was around then? One thing we all know though, recent saints, the last few hundred years anyway, are man-made and some get that distinction on dubious merit. In my opinion the only real saint I knew was my mother and I am betting lots of you can think of some modern day people whom you consider saints. Forget the Catholic church definition and check out what the bible says and you will find AOTS has been, and is full of them.

Discussion:

Do you have saints in your club?

Scripture: Philipians 4: 19-23

Hymn. VU 707

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for those who have gone before, those saints who are still with us, and ask you give us the courage, the strength and faith to be saints today. amen.

## **“Easter Message”**

Devotion for April 2015

Hymn: VU 155 Jesus Christ is Risen today

Scripture: Mark 16: 1-8

Reflection:

Unlike the Christmas story, all four gospels relate the crucifixion and resurrection, and even parts are found in Acts. The details vary quite a bit, but the underlying message, dying on the cross, buried and risen is the same. If you read religious books, or otherwise, about this part of Jesus life you will get any number of variations. Almost all world religions from Judaism to Islam have their own take on Jesus, who he was, or not, and the effect he has had for over a couple thousand years. No Jesus as the son of God and therefore no United Church, so you know where our faith stands. The more we learn about whom we are, where we supposedly came from, our differing beliefs around the world, questions keep arising. Definite answers are fleeting and hence we have faith. Was Jesus really who our church teaches he was? Was he really crucified, and more importantly, did he escape the tomb and rise into heaven? Like the rest of the rest of world we each have our own individual thoughts. One thing is clear though, just a good story or the real thing, Jesus set an example for the world and we can do worse than believe the Easter message and follow the teachings of Jesus.

Discussion:

Where does the Easter message fit into your faith system?

Scripture: Acts 1: 4-8

Hymn: "Because He lives" Not in VU but you can get the music and lyrics easily on the internet.

Prayer:

For the gift of Jesus Christ we are truly thankful. Help us Lord to remember the Easter message throughout the whole year. amen

## The Renewing of the Earth

Devotion for May 2015

Hymn: VU 291 All Things Bright and Beautiful

Scripture: Psalm 85:11

Reflection:

May is a special Month, snow is gone, in most of Canada anyway, grass is showing a bit of green and the odd Crocus or Skilla is poking through. In Canada the 24th of May is the traditional opening of spring and we all get a holiday, supposedly because of the Queen's birthday, but May 1st has a much deeper meaning in many cultures, religions and countries. May first is celebrated as International Workers Day, sort of a freedom celebration. In the Catholic Church May is devoted to the Virgin Mary. Within Canada some cities and even provinces celebrate May first or the whole month for various reasons, some outlined above. All in all May is a happy month around the world. Above all May heralds God's joyous gift of spring, the renewing of the earth and the awakening of our faith.

Discussion: Just another month along the road or is May special for you?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:13

Hymn. Great is Thy Faithfulness

Prayer: Lord we rejoice at this season, a season of resurrection, a season of new life, a season of renewed faith. We are thankful for the awakening earth and its promise of newness once again. In the name of the risen one, amen.

## Help Us to Love

Devotion for June 2015

Hymn: VU 608 Dear God who loves all Humankind

Scripture: Galatians 3:28

Reflection:

This afternoon I met Gerry for coffee. We do so often, when he is in town. We served together on a government board a few years ago and became friends. Gerry is Catholic, a practising Catholic. We share much the same political views so that makes a good connection. We talk family, work, cottage, but the interesting thing is we can also talk religion. You all know, that is a difficult subject even within the same faith circle. Was Jesus real, did he actually die for us, what is the future of the Catholic Church and is the Pope doing a really good job? What is happening to the UC? The list is endless but we don't condemn the other view, we don't pull out guns, and we wonder together why the world can't do the same? We think of Jesus at the well and then his directive to spread the word to everyone. Too bad not all have read the story or accept that directive.

Discussion: Religion has been the spark for many, if not all, the world wars since the Jews became Jews and Jesus included everyone. Is there anything, any project, any advertising campaign, social media blitz that AOTS could come up with and work on to stop the world wide carnage and spread the word that , to God "We are One"!

Scripture: Roamns 12: 15-18

Hymn: Psalm 14

Prayer: Lord, one who created us all, different, diverse, black, brown, white, yellow and bronze, help us see each as only different on the outside. Make us see we share the same blood, the same capacity for love as well as hate, and see each one as our brother or sister, and not as an adversary or one to destroy. Help us instil love and not hate, in the name of the creator, amen.

## Month of Travel

Devotion for July 2015

Hymn: VU 639 One More Step Along The Road I Go.

Scripture: Mak: 16:15 Luke 9:3

Reflection: For many folks July is the month of travel. For my wife and me, we are probably somewhere in Alaska or the Yukon. I am doing this now, in May before we leave as the Blackberry is a bit small for me to work on. I was reflecting on Jesus edic to the disciples, to take nothing and depend on the good will of those they visited. I wonder how that worked as they did have Inns for people to stay and to eat, but the disciples were to ask for freebies. Time changes as the Best Western does not seem to accept that philosophy. As for packing lite and take nothing for the road I venture to say that my wife has never read that passage. I wonder if perhaps part of the renewal of the UC could be present day disciples following that edic, to knock on doors and spread the word. Not this far from home but in our respective neighbourhoods, telling people who we are, why we exist and ask them to pop around and discuss Jesus message. Not a sermon but a two way dialogue. Or, are we afraid of what we believe?

Discussion: What do you think, was Luke 9:3 meant for us as well, and if not, should we do it anyway.

Scripture: Mathew 24:14

Hymn: VU 606 In Christ There Is No East Or West

Prayer: God, we need your help. We are thankful for all your gifts and we now ask for your continued gift of grace and faith that we may continue the Apostles journey of spreading your message of love. amen

## Harvest time!

Devotion for August 2015

Hymn: VU 291 All things Bright and beautiful

Scripture: Proverbs 32:8-9 Isaiah 16:10

Message; Harvest time! The bible has many passages about sowing and reaping and harvesting. One thing it did not have though was Monsanto. Some of you may think they are great. I think they are a monster. Wonder how Genesis 8:22 would read if they existed then, or what Jesus would have thought of the company. Don't accept my thinking but talk to people who know, do some research and you may find that Monsanto has done more harm to agriculture and our food supply than any other entity on earth. So, we don't have those merchants to turf out of the temple but should we rail against companies like Monsanto and do whatever we can to stop those playing god with nature? What Monsanto and others have done and are doing to our food supply is as ruinous and damaging to our grandkids as any environmental concern.

Discussion: Do we have the right to change what God has created? As UC people, as AOTS members, should we get involved in any issue other than church, should we be protesting, writing letters etc., or should we just stick to spreading the word to "Love One Another", or is there really a difference?

Scripture: Mathew 1:38 Revelations 14:15

Hymn: VU 300 God Whose farm is All Creation

Prayer: God, who created all nature, our fields, streams, our crops and who created us, we thank you for all the earths goodness. May we take care of it, nourish it and never create harm to the bounty and beauty you have entrusted us with. amen

## Breathtaking

Devotion for Sept 2015

Hymn: VU #291 All things Bright and Beautiful

Scripture: 1 Isaiah 2:2 and Psalm 12:11

### Reflection:

The scenery is awesome, even breathtaking, but only if you can take your eyes off the road to see it. If you want to hit the Arctic Circle by road in Canada, the Dempster highway in the Yukon is your only choice. On its way to the Arctic Circle it snakes through and around and up and down some truly breathtaking scenery while at the same time it is narrow, rough, loose gravel and has no concept that most roads actually have signage, a shoulder and even guard rails in places. Did I not have my sweaty palms glued to the wheel and my focus simply to stay on the road I probably would have enjoyed the scenery as well as my wife did. Seeing the tops of trees rising on one side of the road and nothing but distant peaks on the other did not phase her. I wished I had her confidence in my driving. You know the bible has a lot to say about mountains. Moses received the Ten Commandments on a mountain and in Mathew alone there are at least three mentions of events taking place on mountain tops. All told, I read that mountains get over 500 mentions in the bible. Supposedly mountains are a product of the heaving and roving rocks of the ice age, however someone or something was behind all that upheaval. Christians tend to think it was our God who pushed the button to get things moving and then left nature to rumble on and finish the job. Wow, what a job she did. It is really difficult to describe the unbelievable beauty and colour as one travels throughout our wonderful country.

### Discussion:

Familiar with the Franke Lane hit, "Lord you gave me a mountain this time", intimating that a mountain is not just something to overcome but a huge obstacle in one's life? We all know they do take something to climb whether walking or driving, and that effort sometime ends in tragedy. Biblical history was born in a mountainous region and since they believed God lived up in heaven then being on a mountain top brought one closer to God. So, are our daily trials sometimes like climbing a mountain and could we reach the top without His help?

Hymn.. VU # 43 Go tell it on a Mountain

Prayer: Lord, we encounter mountains sometime in our daily lives and sometimes we even create them. We simply ask your assistance to help us reach the peak, climb to the summit and by overcoming our mountain we will be nearer to you. amen