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nine people, that there is an outside cook hut, an out-house, a few chickens and a goat. The Priest answers, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man in unconvinced, but the Priest insists. "Do as I say and come back in a week."

A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he tells the Priest. "The goat is filthy." The Priest then tells him, "Go home and let the goat out. And come back in a week." A radiant man returns to the Priest a week later, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat — only the nine of us."

thought was unbearable is now bearable because our perspective has changed. We've all had difficult times and we often discover that it could be worse. Often when I visit people it usually those in the most desperate circumstances, I hear say that there is someone worse off than them. I don't know what the psychology is behind this, but I think what we are thinking when we say this is that when we share our misery with others we find out that there they have similar or worse experiences. That is the advantage of community, of journeying together. It is also the advantage of faith; that God has shared in our pain and suffering in Christ and continues to do so. It is in that sharing that we gain solace and strength and that is a message to be shared.

At the end of the reading we hear that "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them." (Luke 2:20). The only way that the story is passed on is by telling it; telling it here and telling it through how we live our lives. God chose to be "Emmanuel" - which means God with us.

Here's an illustration that I think exemplifies the power of that message very well. An ancient land was once ruled by a wise and beloved King who cared greatly for his people and desired only what was best for them. He was very generous and would often bestow gifts upon his subjects from time to time without notice and seemingly without earning them. One day he disguised himself as a poor man and went to visit the public baths. The water for the baths was heated by a furnace in the cellar, so the King made his way to the dark place to sit with the man who tended the fire. The two men shared the coarse food the worker had to eat, and the King befriended him in his loneliness.

Day after day the ruler went to visit the man, dressed as a poor man. The worker became attached to this stranger because he "came where he was". One day the King revealed his true identity, and he expected the man to ask him for a gift. Instead, he looked long into his leader's face and with love and wonder in his voice said, "You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to eat my coarse food, and to care about what happens to me. On others you may bestow rich gifts, but to me you have given yourself!"

I recently heard Handel's Messiah and in it at one point

the soprano sings, "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Romans 8:31)

This phrase, as with most pieces in Messiah, is repeated time and again, almost as if the writer wanted to make sure that we heard it, understood it and lived it. The birth of Jesus says that "God be for us".

When we leave whichever shelter house of prayer we go to, as the church is called in our Celtic Service at St. Mark's, may we all go out giving thanks with that phrase in our hearts and minds and share it in all that we do and say.

Merry Christmas and God's Blessings to you and yours this season.

The Venerable Peter Scott, St. Mark's Anglican Church, Orangeville

—o—
"I Still Believe"

In our household, each December as we begin to unpack the Christmas decorations one of the first items to be unpacked is the box of Christmas videos and puzzles. In this box are Christmas classics such as "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," "Miracle on 34th Street" (in black and white, of course), and Alastair Sims as Scrooge in Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" (only in black and white). Recently, to our box of classic films, we added "The Polar Express". This is an animated film released in 2004 starring Tom Hanks in no less than six roles. It has become a family favourite.

It is an incredible film. Besides the technically amazing animation, the script and the story are truly wonderful. The characters are mysteriously familiar and oh so wise and loveable. But what I love most about this film is its invitation to ponder about what we believe and why it is that

we believe.

Intentional or not, there are echoes of John's version of the story of Jesus running throughout the film. Not so much parallels in the narrative of the stories but more in the quest for truth, for understanding, for belief. There is the sense of being drawn forward, trusting, hoping and waiting for 'the truth' to be revealed and understood. There is companionship on the journey, both guides and fellow travellers on the way. The whole film becomes a kind of parable of belief.

For me, this is something quite different than the faith we hear about in "Miracle on 34th Street" where faith is 'believing in something when your brain tells you not to.' It is the kind of belief that engages deeper in the heart than logic or proof. Some say 'seeing is believing.' In my experience, it is my faith that has enabled me to see, and so for me 'believing is seeing.'

There are some who think that believing in God or Jesus is just as foolish as believing in Santa Claus. They will cite historical fact and evidence against it. There are some who continue to attend church just to be on the safe side, but don't really pursue the questions in their heart. And there are those who continue to wonder, to ponder, to hope, to question, to search for faith. At this most holy and most wondrous time of the year, I pray that you continue on the journey, that you continue to ask questions, that you continue to be open to the possibilities that lay before you.

When the Conductor on the Polar Express says, "All aboard," the young boy at first chooses not to board the train, he suddenly changes his mind and runs to jump on, and the journey of a lifetime begins. As the Conductor says near the close of the film, "One thing about trains, it doesn't matter where they're going, what matters is deciding to get on."

Jesus beckons his disciples by saying, "Come and see." One of the places to explore faith is at a local church. At Christmas time there are special services, many with special intention towards visitors, newcomers, and those who continue to search for some kind of faith connection. We hope that you will feel welcome and that you will find some companions for your journey.

Christmas Eve services at St. Paul's, 312 Owen Sound Street, are at 4:30pm and at 8:30pm. The earlier service is



Contributed Photo

CHAPLAINS COMMISSIONED: Headwaters Health Care Centre's volunteer chaplain commissioning service was held at Faith Community Wesleyan Church in Orangeville. Back Row (left to right) Jane Adams, Sharon Meredith, Mary T. Rose, Trish Spaulding (behind her is Nancy Sinclair), Anita Rowland, Claudia Blackstock, Gillian Brown, Alan Brown, Rev. Ron Pincoe, Chair of Pastoral Care Committee. Front Row (left to right) Rev. Barbara Moulton, Co-ordinator of Pastoral Care, Vicki Ivany, Rosemary Lyons and Tracey Hand-Breckenridge.

intentionally child and family friendly; the later service is a more quiet and traditional candlelight service. We also gather for worship on Christmas Day at 10:30am.

The Reverend Susan D. Wilson, St. Paul's Anglican Church, Shelburne

—o—
"What is Peace?"

During the Christmas season the communication of peace and good will is seen on Christmas cards, expressed in song and words, and demonstrated at times in actions.

Jesus, the One whose birth we celebrate is referred to as the "Prince of Peace". World peace is often mentioned when people are asked what would they wish for if they could have anything they wanted. What do you picture when you think of peace? Is it a tranquil setting, or an absence of strife?

Beit Kjos thought about this and in his book, "A Wardrobe from the King" told of a man who sought the perfect

picture of peace. He wrote, "Not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece. The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere and paintings arrived from far and wide. Finally the great day of revelation arrived. The judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered.

The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled.

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May the joys of the holidays be yours throughout the year.

Merry Christmas, Staff & Management

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All our Best for a Happy Holiday Time

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Join Together at Christmastime

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Trimmed With Joyful Christmas Wishes

Here's hoping you and your family enjoy a merry, old-fashioned Christmas. May the spirit and traditions of the season fill your home with an air of peace and love during this magical time of year.

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