

**Dear Friends within our Bay of Quinte Conference:**

The word 'Advent' literally means 'coming' and within many Christian communities, it is recognized as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. Over the four weeks, we read scripture, both Old and New, like trailers to an upcoming movie or event. Advent is to pique our interest and get us thinking about this grand event which we call **CHRISTMAS**.

As the secular overtakes more and more of the sacred, preparing has become more complex. In fact, it now appears that there are two Christmases that we need to consider. The family gatherings, office parties, gift exchanges are all significant in our Christmas celebrations for that is all it is for those who do not look through the eyes of faith. However, for Christians, we are asked to view this sacred season through bi-focals.

Bi-focals allow us to see from two different perspectives. They magnify that which is right before us but they also bring into focus that which remains at a distance. These spectacular spectacles give us perspective and depth in our vision. I remember when I reached that glorious age, I asked my optometrist to make this separation invisible so only the wearer could tell where one focal plane ended and the other began! However, as Christians, perhaps it is now necessary to make that line more apparent.

Where would you draw the line in your preparations? For some, it is Christmas Eve; that evening service when Churches have standing room only and crowds gather for *Silent Night* and *Away in a Manger*. I remember wanting to say 'see you next year' to those who made their annual pilgrimage. Others draw it higher to include a Christmas pageant, a carol sing and perhaps even an Advent calendar. And then, there are those who recognize Christmas not as a day, but as a new beginning, a retelling of the old story of Emmanuel, 'God with us' and attempting to re-tell it in new ways to our time and circumstance. How do you see Advent? Where is your line set?

As a Conference staff, we reach out to you who make up our Conference wishing you the blessings and joys of this season. Within this office, there have been a number of changes over the past year with the retirement of Jackie and the hiring of Cathy to do youth ministry and the resignation of Laura as our bookkeeper; a position that will be filled early in the new year. But, though it all, we continue to do what we feel is our ministry ... to proclaim good tiding of great joy to all people; to follow the star that points to "Emmanuel". God with us.

And so, JUDY, CATHY, CAROLINE, DAVID and BILL, want to wish you all a bi-focal Christmas. Enjoy the sights and sounds of the season, the family and festivities and the joy they bring. And then look through the tops of those specs to see the Magi and the Shepherds and join them at the side of the manger. For unto you is born this day a Saviour ...

**Merry Christmas Everyone**

O' Holy Night

Bill  
Judy Amshaw  
Caroline Giedroyc  
Cathy