



The Journey to Bethlehem and Christmas

Christmas, 2011

Dear Community of Mississauga,

The eighty-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem of a common carpenter and a simple peasant girl is one of the most enduring images in the story of Christmas. Joseph and Mary travelled that dusty road upon the command of the Roman Empire to register in its census. Inside a common barn, the birth of the Christ child was of far greater significance to human history than any government decree.

I am sure that you, like me and my family, are making plans for celebrating Christmas again this year. Our journey to Christmas is filled with gift buying and giving; with plans for gathering family and friends; with decorating homes, apartments and living spaces; with singing carols that lift the spirit; with preparing festive foods and treats to enjoy. It's a wonderful time of hope and joy as we anticipate all the good things that accompany the celebration of Christmas in our day.

For Joseph and Mary, this journey was not so eagerly anticipated. Their journey was lonely as this young couple were shunned by family and acquaintances for expecting a child while unmarried. Their journey was difficult as Mary navigated the road on a donkey, each step causing pain in her abdomen as her pregnancy neared full term. Their final destination was not at all what they had hoped for - a corner of the barn surrounded by animals because there was no room in the inn.

But God had a wonderful purpose in store that would not be determined by circumstances or by the careful preparations of people caught up in the journey of life. There, in that common barn, the Son of the living God would be born and human history would never be the same. The angels would proclaim His birth by declaring, "Glory to God in the highest! And peace on earth to all people of goodwill." The shepherds would leave their flocks on the hillsides to rush into the town to see what had just happened. Wise men from far off lands would chart their course by a star in the sky that night, to come and worship the one who would be King and kings and Lord of Lords.



There, in that common barn, the Son of the living God would be born and human history would never be the same. The angels would proclaim His birth by declaring, "Glory to God in the highest! And peace on earth to all people of goodwill." The shepherds would leave their flocks on the hillsides to rush into the town to see what had just happened. Wise men from far off lands would chart their course by a star in the sky that night, to come and worship the one who would be King and kings and Lord of Lords.

In our journey to Bethlehem and Christmas, let's be careful to discover and celebrate the reason why Mary and Joseph made their journey - to fulfill the plan of God to redeem all humankind through the incredible birth of Jesus the Messiah. In our journey to Bethlehem and Christmas, we are making plans at St. Andrew's (Streetsville) Presbyterian Church to celebrate. We will buy and give gifts to people in need in our community. We will decorate the church with banners and lights. We will sing songs and carols that express our faith. We will gather family and friends for a festive dinner. We will worship God that Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I want to invite you, on behalf of the members and friends of St. Andrew's, to join us on this joyous journey to Bethlehem and Christmas. The calendar of special events outline the many opportunities and ways for you to join us. Our destination is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Messiah!

As a sojourner on the road of faith, I am

Joyfully yours,

(Rev. Dr. Douglas McQuaig, Pastor)