



"Behold, I bring you good news of great joy..."

Christmas Eve - December 24, 2014

I don't often get to sit with my family in church. In fact, over the past 30 years I think I can count on the fingers of one hand the times that Kathy and me and our children sat together in worship. I have usually been leading a service in some way and that unfortunately hasn't encouraged family togetherness in worship for us. We just accept it as a concession to the ministry that we share.

That's why it was so good to be with my family on Sunday morning past at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Mount Pearl. It was the Christmas Pageant for children and their families and I was not scheduled to be anywhere else so I decided to attend and just sit in the pew. We arrived with one of our sons, Adam, just home from university in England and unexpectedly met my 92-year-old father who drove himself that day. And so, three generations of the Peddle Family sat together in church. It was a joyful service with a full church and more children than I could count. In her welcoming words at the beginning the Rector, Archdeacon Charlene Taylor, said to just enjoy the service and allow ourselves to be ministered to by the children. It was a wonderful welcome.

During the pageant I found myself remembering times growing up when I attended church with my family, often sitting with (or between) Mom and Dad, and feeling safe and somehow "right" in being there. I had that feeling again on Sunday. Through all of the changes of life my earthly family and my church family have always been there, although not always in the same way through the years. I am grateful for that awareness this Christmas. Even as I celebrate the gift of Jesus, I also celebrate the gift of family. Archdeacon Charlene's e-mail to me afterwards captured the memory perfectly:

Thank you for choosing to be with us this morning. I was glad you had the opportunity to come and sit with your family. I hope in some small way you felt ministered to by our children and young people - even if it was a bit hectic - perhaps not as hectic as Bethlehem!

I know that there are many people away from family this Christmas (our family will not all be together) but let's make sure we reach out to each other and especially to those who might not have the gift of an earthly family this year or who are dealing with a difficult

change or the loss of a loved one. Let us find in the story of the Holy Family in Bethlehem the assurance that we always belong to God's Family wherever we are. And may the message of the angel on that very first Christmas be shared again and again this Christmas: *"Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."*

With every blessing from my family to you and yours on this Christmas,

+Geoff