



THE Transcript

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF THE TRANSFIGURATION



Advent & Christmas 2021

Advent Traditions



When you are little, the build up to Christmas during Advent is the best time of the year. Advent is a season of waiting and longing. We prepare ourselves to welcome Jesus, light of the World during this season of darkness. In my family, there were time-honoured ways that we entered into the Advent spirit.

Although not Biblically based, the first tradition was the Gingerbread House, which when finished, my sister would protect with great vigilance. **The deal with the Ginger Bread house was that once it was made, we had to wait until after Christmas before we could taste its goodness. It captures the spirit of Advent: we know the sweetness of the Saviour is coming, we just have wait a little bit.** In January my dad would usually pick away at the half-eaten house, the jujube roof shingles or the candy cane picket fence disappearing gradually as he walked past.



We learn in the Bible that at Jesus' birth there was a great heavenly chorus of angels that burst into song before the shepherds. The seasons of Advent and Christmas have some of my favourite church music and my childhood was full of festive music. I both sang in the school choir and played in the school orchestra, which meant that I would dash from the risers in the gymnasium to the stage and pick up my violin. In my family it was tradition to go to Handel's Messiah and attend my godmother's Christmas concert with the Orpheus choir. How we have missed singing during Covid. **In the week before Advent, after waiting 21 months or over 640 days, the Diocese announced that parishes can sing again! I am so glad that our first Advent together will resound with *O Come all ye faithful, Once in Royal David's City, and See amid the winter's snow.***

But I think my favourite family tradition was decorating our Christmas tree. Again, there are not many pine trees where shepherds pasture their flocks, but the ornaments would help us to tell the Christmas story. In my family, there was a clear geographic division to the ornaments: the angels go at the top of the tree as they reside in heaven, the drummer boys, toy soldiers, and nutcrackers go below. **Series of ornaments that tell the scenes of Jesus' birth had to go in order.** The Magi, the three kings, were on the East side of the tree. There were also traditions around who put them: my sister and I knew which ornaments were ours. Some of the Christmas ornaments were relics from childhood crafting: the walnut Reindeer with pipe cleaner antlers; the candy cane that had managed to keep its googly eyes after all these years, and the pretzel face that has a ruby red nose. I don't know how they fit in alongside the ox, the donkey, and the sheep at the manger, but they somehow do.

Now Yvonne and I have started our own Christmas tree traditions. We have a modest collection of Christmas ornaments and we add one or two new ones each year. A few years ago my parents sent along my family's Christmas ornaments, since they decided to stop having a tree (although my dad still helps my sister get hers). **I think my favourites are the red apples.** I don't know if the apples have any connection to the story of creation in Genesis ... but they are decorations that have existed since the beginning of my Christmas memories, and so remind me of the biblical story of faith stretching back to its beginning.

In some ways the seasons of Advent and Christmas are always a new beginning and a return to the past. The Church calendar starts over, but the seasons are patterned by long-held traditions. **In particular, this Advent season has that sense of a new beginning with the recovery of our old traditions after a time of pandemic pause.**

Have a blessed journey during the seasons of Advent and Christmas. **Enjoy the treats, the music, and the decorating these seasons bring, the traditions and rhythms we use to remember and live into the good news of Jesus' birth.**

Yours in Christ,
Michael+



Michael and Yvonne at
Trick or Treating



Emmy, Deb, Siobhan, Kat, and Teo arrive for
Trick or Treating at Transfig



Audrey lights candles in
memory of loved ones at The
Feast of All Souls



Remembrance Sunday &
The Feast of All Souls



Marcia leads the
Scouts in
procession



Guest piper Conrad
joined us



Deb preached

An Autumn Day



a reflection from Deb, Parish Missioner

Joni Mitchell has been telling us for decades that “you don’t know what you got till it’s gone”. This is how I feel about everything we haven’t been able to do during the pandemic. Our first and only Harvest on the Hill happened back in 2019 and we were so keen to repeat it, but couldn’t until this past October. Despite all the restrictions, the event seemed all the more sweet because it had been a while since we’d been able to enjoy such a gorgeous, sunny Sunday afternoon together as a parish.

With the tell-tale crispness in the air and the seasonal colours decorating every street and avenue, people are always ready to mark autumn’s arrival. And with summer gone, and everyone back into the swing of things, there was no shortage of support from parishioners who were excited to pitch in. Jo-Anne Futter brought a literal car-FULL of pumpkins from the countryside for our pumpkin decorating activities; at one table they were covered in creative cut outs and fall ruffage with modge-podge, and some classic carving happened over at another. Not far from them, more creativity showed up in the form of candle-dipping and delightful caricature drawing (thank you Susan Welland!).

And there was more to enjoy on the hill: we had a fire going, and a few hay bales positioned under our most colourful tree so people could take photos. The surprise event of the afternoon, if you ask me, was the badminton game, which rendered some fierce competition, but resulted in a few newly-forged friendships.

The whole afternoon came to peak when everyone was invited to participate in a series of races involving a batch of tiny gourds and a pile of potato sacks. People even got to see that their new priest Michael is a very good sport; he was goaded into carrying one of those tiny gourds, on his head, across the field, racing against no one but the clock - all while wearing his cassock!

These bits and pieces all added up to a very successful event, but it was so much greater than the mere sum of its parts. It was healing to be together in such an enjoyable and simple way after so much cautious time apart. In genuine gratitude and joy we were able to welcome the droves of neighbours; parents, kids, partners, niblings (i.e. nieces and nephews), friends, even dogs, who all showed such deep appreciation for our efforts. You know you’ve hit the mark when people stick around after to help tidy up. I arrived home positively giddy; I couldn’t stop thinking about how well it all went, so I wrote my thank you to all our volunteers before the afternoon was through. But let me say it again: the event would not have happened without the participation of the parish.

Lastly, I want to point out that despite the lack of formal, liturgical moments that afternoon, the presence of God was undeniably there that day. Because when we come together like this, bringing our time, energy, willingness and experience with us, and finding joy in just being together, we also add up to something much greater than the sum of our parts and, to me, there is no better demonstration of God’s Kingdom.

Harvest on the Hill festivities 



Christmas in Uganda

Meet Ivan and Prossy

Ivan and Prossy come from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. They've been in Toronto for several months now, and have been coming to Transfig. We sat down with them the other day to ask what differences or similarities they've noticed between the Anglican church they attended in Uganda and the Church of the Transfiguration. Here're a few insights!

At the Anglican church in Uganda:

- services are offered in both English and the local language of Luganda
- lay leaders play a large role in the service
- people dress more formally (if you wear a t-shirt you will be looked at!)
- you bring your own Bible and hymn book every week
- kneeling for prayers is more common
- to take communion, you must first have done Confirmation classes (so seeing little children take communion at Transfiguration is surprising!)
- services often go longer than two hours
- sermons can be very political

Ivan and Prossy's
local church



Three Martyrs' Church in Kamanya

Since we're approaching December, we also asked Ivan and Prossy how Christmas is celebrated in Uganda:

- it is a time for family gathering
- it is a time for lots of eating
- people often go out for entertainment, to theatres or bars
- churches are full; if people are going to go to church once a year, it'll be on Christmas
- Christmas trees are very popular; in rural areas, they are often decorated with what's at hand, such as pieces of cotton and toilet paper as a garland; other trees will be decorated with lights and sweets; balloons are a very popular decoration!
- Christmas trees are often burned on New Year's Eve to say goodbye to the old and to welcome in the new

Example of a Ugandan
Christmas tree



A snowy Christmas



I might be out there, but I am so hoping that it snows this Christmas! Last Christmas Eve, you might remember, we got 30 centimetres! After the midnight Mass at St. Peter and St. Simon's, I came home well at 1 in the morning to find Yvonne strapping on her cross country skis. She asked me, "are you coming?" and was kind enough to let me sleep instead (I had to preside at the 10:30 am service on Christmas Day!). But in hindsight, I missed out on a lot of fun.

Up and down the lanes of Cabbagetown, with not a soul in sight, she laid down fresh tracks in the deep snow. It was one of those magical winter nights, a perfect Christmas Eve.

In recent years, Yvonne and I have discovered cross-country skiing. My sister introduced it to us, but part of its attraction was that we could stay local to enjoy winter. The GTA is not renowned for its ski slopes, but it has ample cross-county trails at its doorstep.

You just have to wait for the right conditions, which is why I love it when winter is at its wintry best.

During our long Covid journey, as we were all asked to stay local, last winter offered up a the surprising joys of city skiing. We skied the Leslie Spit, the Don Valley Trail, Sixteen Mile Creek in Oakville and the Rouge National Park in Markham: adventure was never far away. But perhaps the highlight for me was taking the Ferry to Toronto Islands, to ski the canals.

With the city skyline as the backdrop and the quiet crunch of the snow under our skis as our soundtrack, we wound our way from Ward Island to Centre Island, with skates in tow, so that when we were done on the canals we could venture out on the ice between the Island and the mainland. The experience reminded me of the Canticle *Benedicite, omnia opera domini* which says, "O ye Frost and Cold bless ye the Lord ... O ye Ice and Snow bless ye the Lord."



As we come to terms with the increasingly rare snowy winters in Toronto due to climate change, I cannot help but appreciate God's gift of a truly cold winter. I know this might not be a popular opinion, but I think winter is best enjoyed intensely, with the mercury plunging and the snow piling up, with those sharp, arctic, and blizzardy spells of weather. It means extra effort to keep our sidewalks safe, and the challenging conditions encourage us to check in with our vulnerable neighbours more frequently, but it also means the opportunity to have fun! This winter, I hope and pray that the snow will be back. This marvellous corner of God's creation called Toronto is a playground that in Christmas I like intensely cold and snowy. I am looking forward to tobogganing on our hill.

Michael+



Last winter, skating on the Toronto Waterfront and skiing on 16 Mile Creek in Oakville

"Deck the Halls" *with* the Chancel Guild

You might ask yourself: *what does the Chancel Guild do?*

- decorate the Christmas tree (and decorate the sanctuary for other special services like Easter and Thanksgiving)
- put up the creche (and make sure baby Jesus doesn't arrive before Christmas nor the wise men before Epiphany!)
- purchase and arrange poinsettias
- put greenery on the church doors
- ensure we have a hearty supply of candles
- keep an eye on the supply of wafers and wine for Communion
- polish the brass (you'd be surprised how much brass is in the church)
- arrange for any flowers to be given away after the service
- change the hangings on the altar (e.g. in Advent everything is blue)
- prepare the Communion vessels (chalice and paten) and set up the altar each week
- wash the vessels after each service
- wash and iron the altar linens

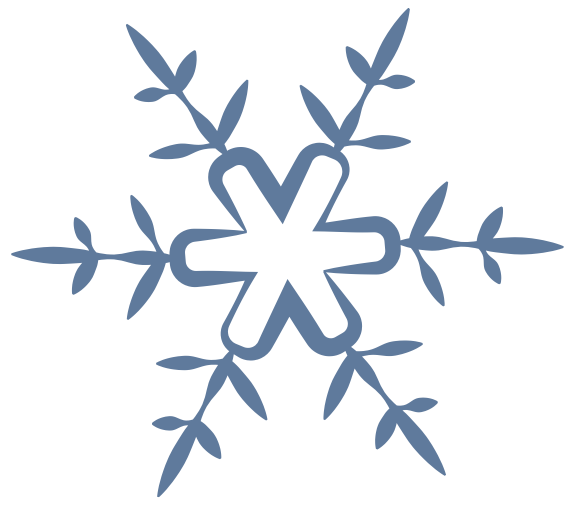
Clockwise from top: Janice Long, Gillian Palmer, Olive Bensley, Laura Wilson (with husband, David); Frances Hogg



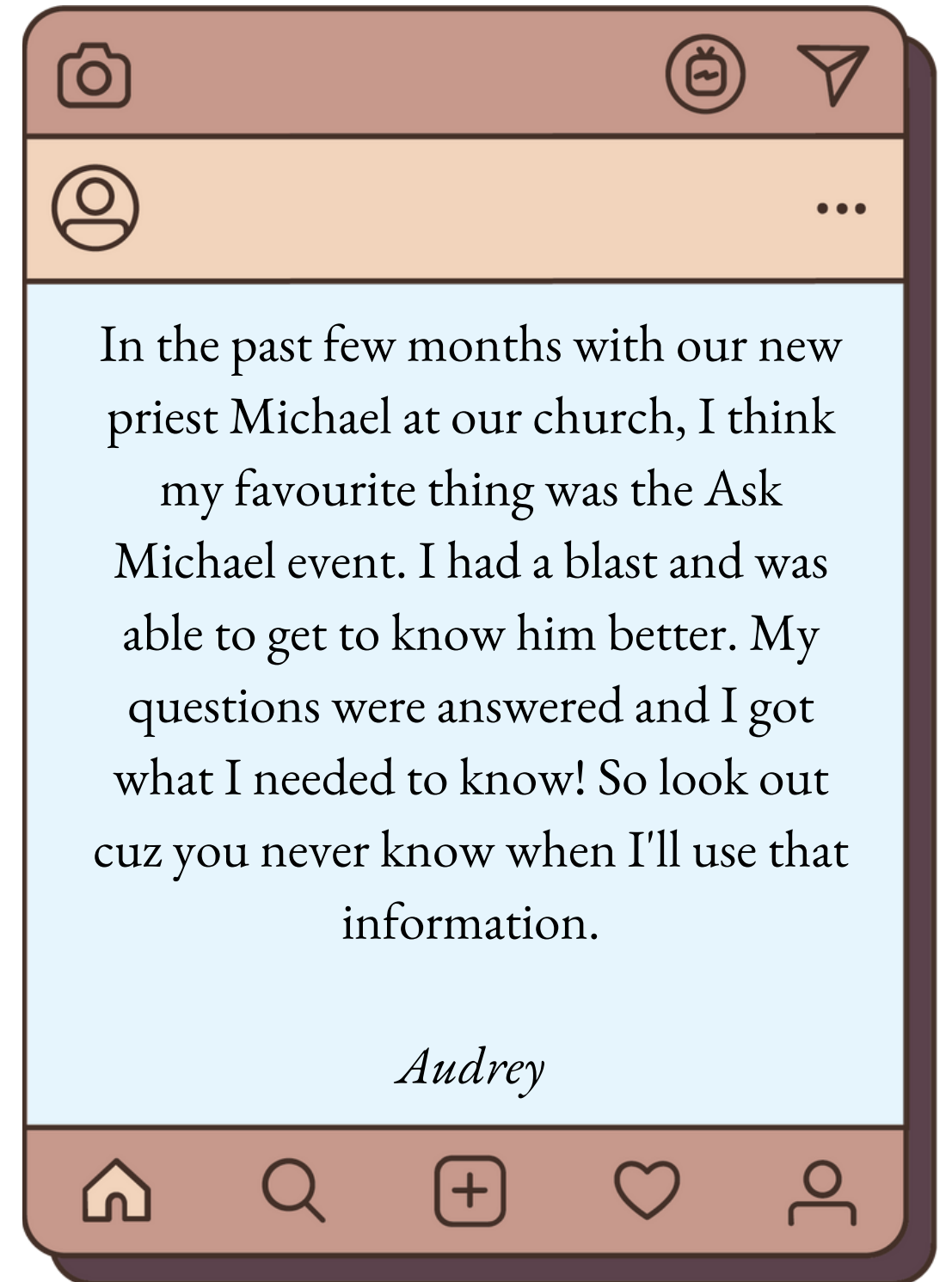
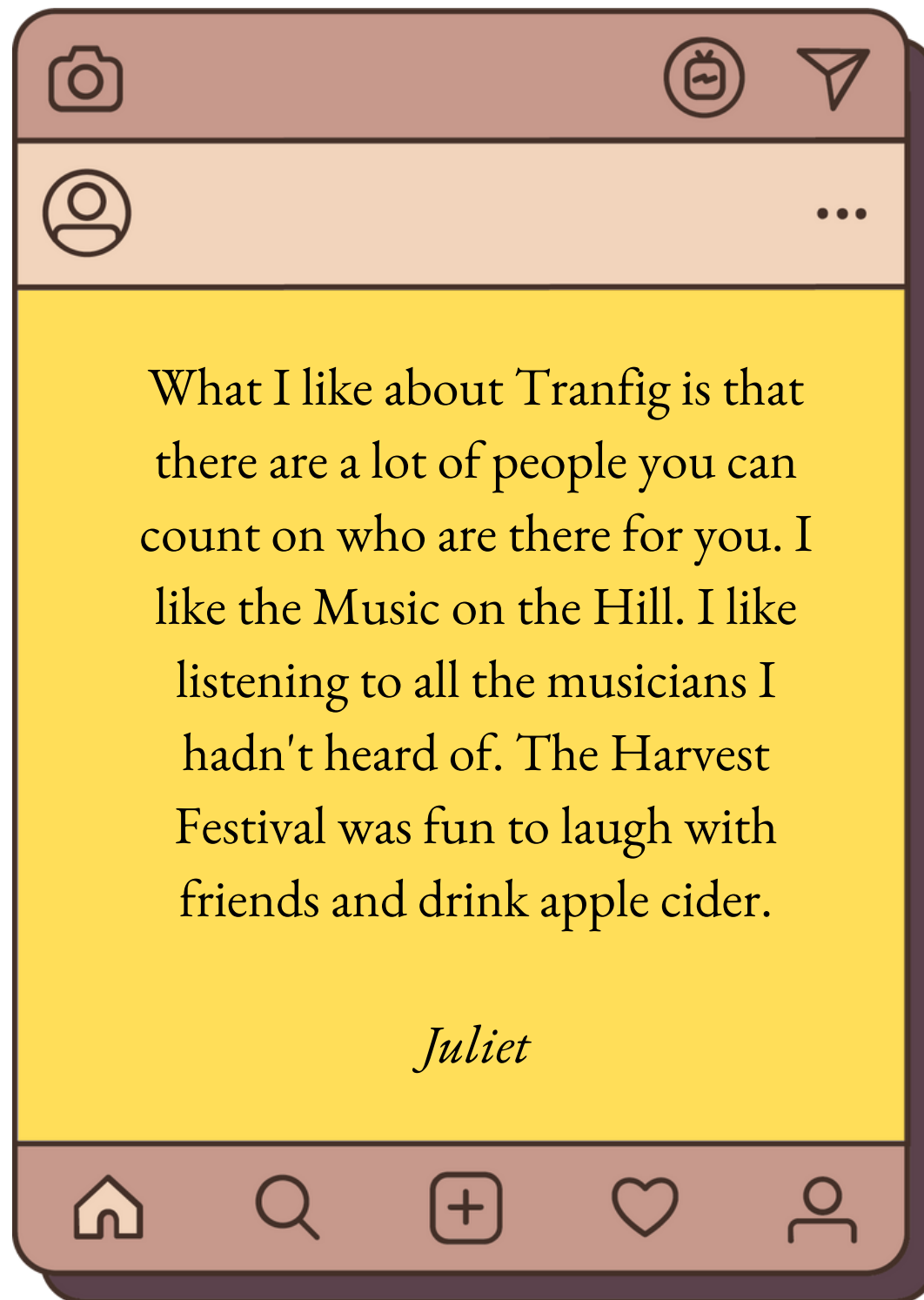
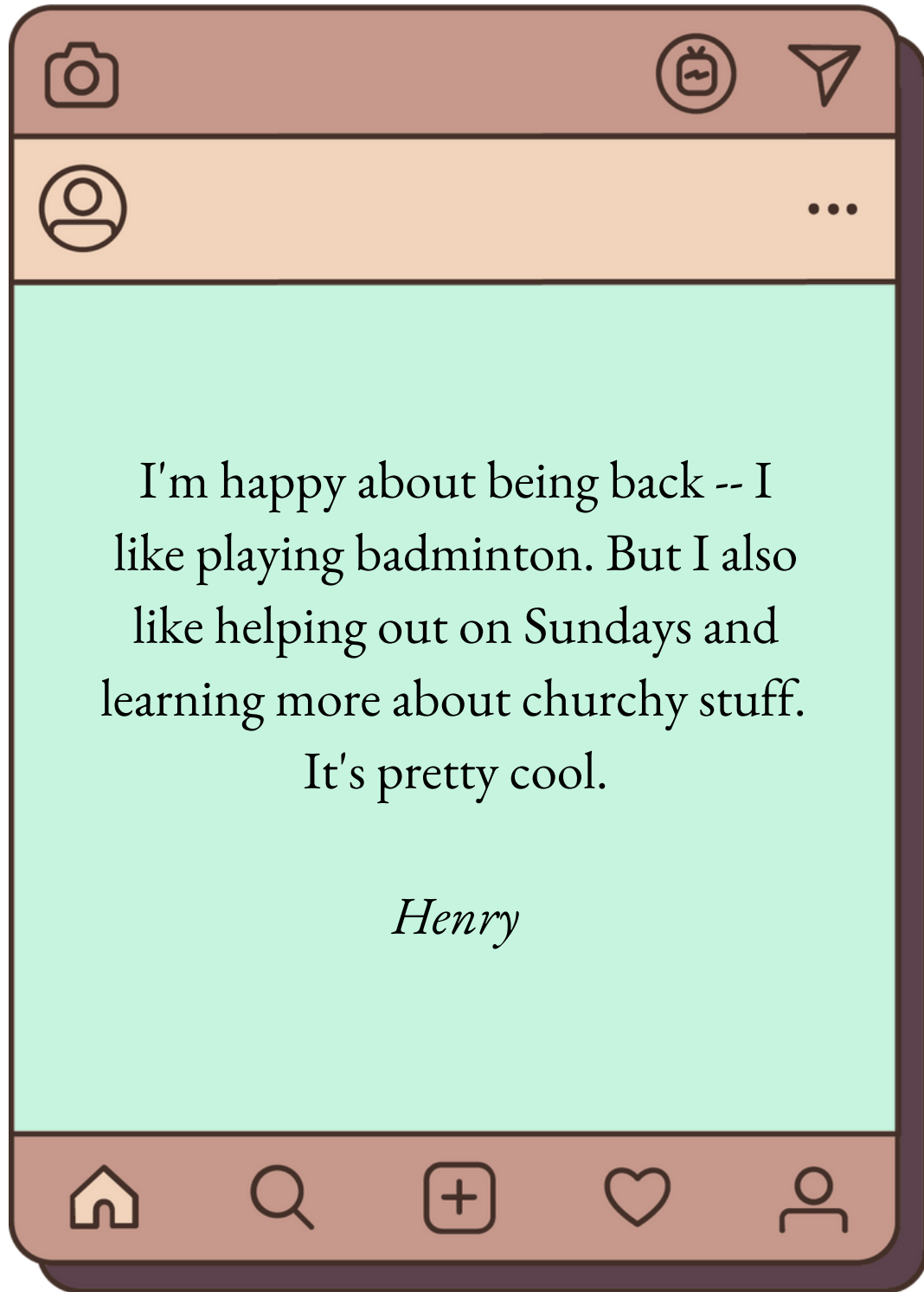
The Christmas cactus comes from a small genus of cacti that are native to the coastal mountains of south-eastern Brazil. It has been cultivated since the 1800s, and is now a very popular houseplant. In the northern hemisphere it blooms in mid-winter, reminding us of the Incarnation, of Jesus' coming into our world, bringing life out of death and joy out of grief. It invites us to consider: what are the unexpected gifts that catch us by surprise? when we pause to reflect, where do we find the grace and love of Jesus in our lives?



This one lives on
Rev. Michael's
office windowsill.



Kids' Corner

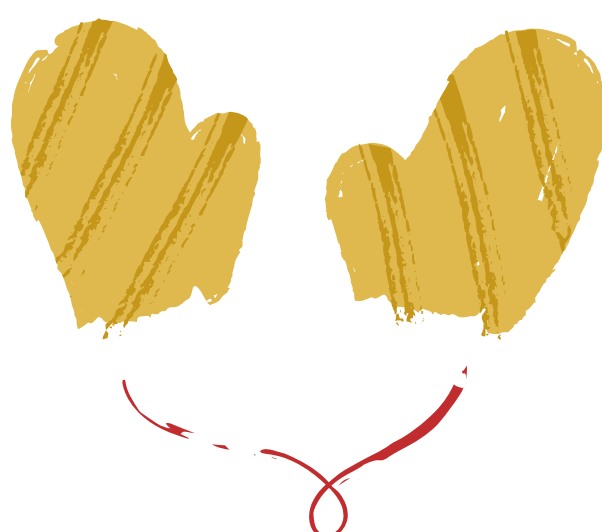


Join us for Christmas Carolling

Friday, December 17 from 7-8pm

we'll gather around the bonfire and have a merry time

(we recommend bringing a flashlight or headlamp to see the music by)



Meet Ann and Yang

Even if you don't know their names, if you've been at Transfig any length of time, you will have seen Ann and Yang! **Ann has been our steadfast soprano soloist for many years now. Yang has occasionally played xylophone at our Christmas Vigil, and now is our tech wiz who operates Zoom and does all the set up that online streaming requires.** Our church would not be able to do the things it does without them, so we wanted to give the parish an opportunity to get to know them both. So, the next time you're in the pews or joining us over Zoom, you can give them a hello!

Where did you grow up?

Ann: Toronto

Yang: Nanjing, China; Mississauga, Texas, Toronto, New York, then back to Toronto

What do you like about your role at Transfig?

The welcoming community, and the wonderful staff :)

What instruments do you play?

Ann: voice and piano

Yang: 50 different percussion instruments (we counted)

When you were little, what did you want to do when you grew up?

Yang: a dentist

Ann: a vet

Yang running Zoom

What are some of your interests outside of work?

Yang: playing Nintendo Switch, seeing friends, eating good food :)

Ann: reading, petting Bailey the cat, watching movies, and eating good food

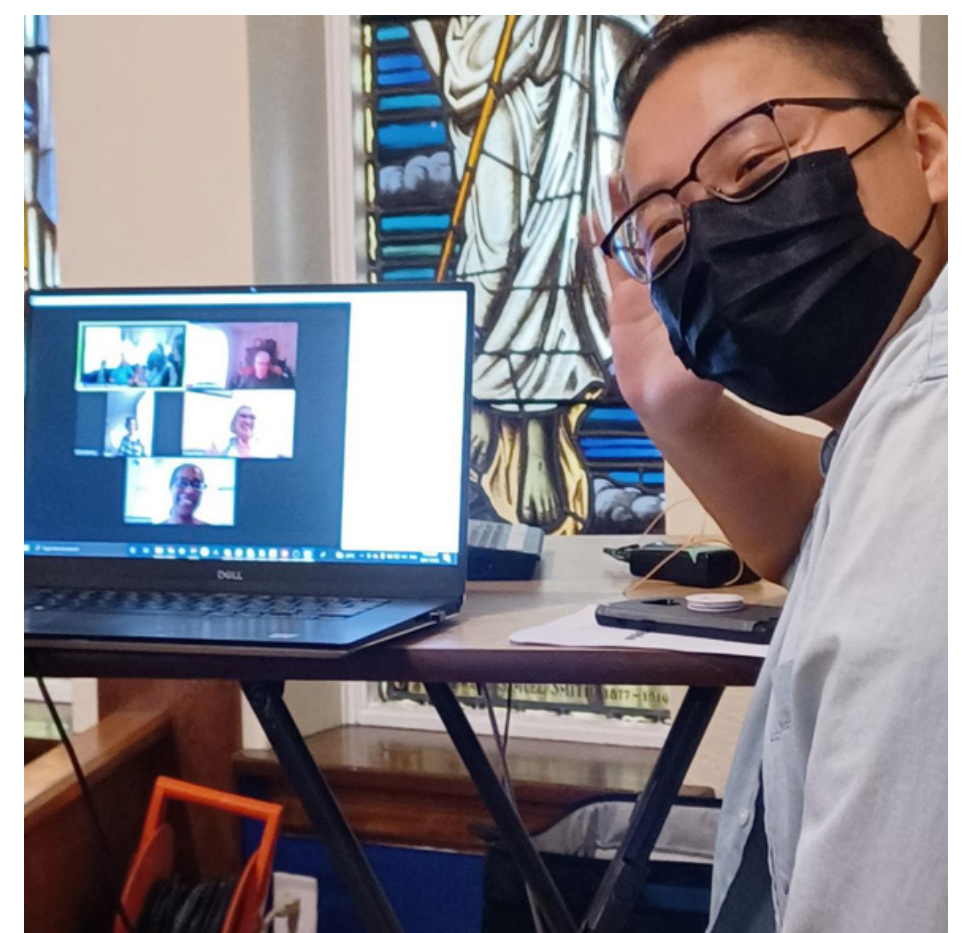
What's your favourite food?

How could you ask us to pick only one??

What's a food you have eaten but would not eat again?

Ann: headcheese

Yang: fish eyeballs or cilantro



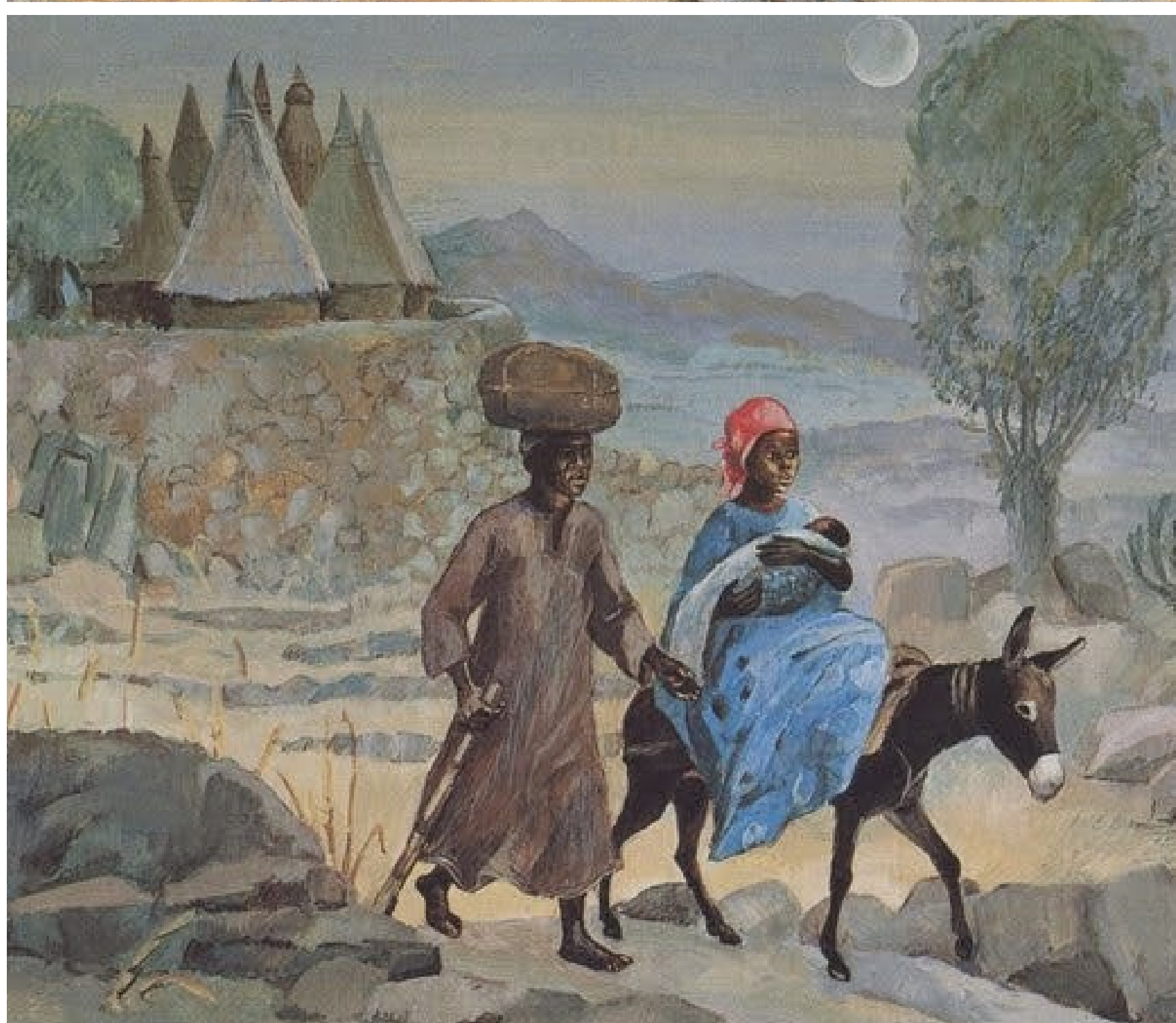
Ann singing at
a summer service





In the early 1970s in Cameroon, a Christian community created JESUS MAFA (featured on the cover of this issue), a response to the New Testament readings from the Lectionary. Each of the readings was selected and adapted to dramatic interpretation by the community members. Photographs of their interpretations were made, and these were then transcribed to paintings.

The paintings here represent parts of the Advent & Christmas story. Can you name what story each picture represents?



Upcoming

Advent is a season in which we yearn for God, asking "How long, O Lord, how long?" and a season of gratitude for and reflection on what it means for Jesus to be Emmanuel - "God-with-us". What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ? What does it mean for our entire lives, not just on Sundays but on every day of the week? What does it mean to ask God, "How long, O Lord, how long?" These are aspects of faith we explore every Sunday morning and Thursday evening. This Advent season, you are invited to join us!

**SUNDAY
WORSHIP**



**DISCIPLESHIP
NIGHTS**

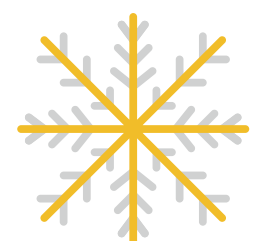
December

- 2 - Taize @ Christ Church Deer Park (7pm)
- 5 - Book a Month Club (James & Philippians)
- 9 - Candlelight Compline (7pm)
- 16 - Quiet Christmas (7pm)
- 17 - Carolling on the Hill (7pm)



Christmas Services

- 24 - Christmas Pageant (4pm)
- Christmas Eve Vigil (9pm)
- 25 - Christmas Day (10:30am)
- 26 - First Sunday after Christmas (10:30am)



Complete details are in the weekly email. Not yet on the mailing list?

Email Amanda at office@churchofthetransfiguration.ca