A Cross-Shaped Life

I was in a conversation with someone in the sanctuary recently, and when I pointed out that the building is literally in the shape of a cross, they were surprised—they had never noticed it before. But the symbolism goes deeper than that. The architecture of a traditional Anglican church, like St. James Westminster, isn't just functional; it's a deliberate reflection of our faith, designed to remind us of the central truths of the Gospel and to shape the way we live our lives.

Take the sanctuary itself. It is divided into 2 parts. The sanctuary proper is elevated three steps above the nave, and is a visual and physical reminder of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who stands at the heart of all worship. The nave, where the congregation gathers, represents the body of Christ—his people journeying together through life. Extending outward are the transepts, forming the arms of the cross, a clear reminder of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us.

At the very top of this cross shape is the sanctuary, where the altar is placed. This is where the bread and wine are

Reflections on Gifts

(Karen Henkel)

The gift of a beast of burden
to ease the long journey.
The gift of a celestial sign to light the way.
The gift of The Wise Men,
and their long pilgrimage of honour.

The gift of the awe and wonder
of the shepherds
for the Ultimate Shepherd.
The gift of song and continual praise
of the Angels.

The gift of our fellow creatures,
the first to witness the stable birth.
The gift of a human father,
protecting his family.
The gift of a human mother,
bearing a child who became one of us.

Christ, Bearer of burdens,
Light of our lives, Shepherd of all.

We wait on You.

consecrated, drawing our focus heavenward, to Christ's sacrifice and his resurrection. In many ways, the altar becomes a visible sign of our ultimate destination: communion with God.

Other elements of the space carry their own symbolism. In the intricate stonework and woodwork of St. James Westminster, you can find 39 clovers, representing the 39 Articles of Religion—the foundational beliefs of our tradition. And though the tapestries currently beautify the sanctuary, they stand where the Ten Commandments once hung, a reminder of God's law, which guides us as we seek to live faithfully in his world.

Even the windows and light in the space are intentional. The stained glass filters sunlight into rich colours, reminding us that God's grace transforms even the most ordinary things into something beautiful. Every aspect of the architecture is meant to teach and inspire, to point us back to God.

This architectural symbolism isn't just about aesthetics; it's about discipleship. The spaces we inhabit shape us, often in ways we don't immediately realize. The cross-shaped design of our church building is a visual invitation to live cross-shaped lives—lives of self-sacrifice, love, and faithfulness.

Just as the church is centred on the altar, our lives are called to be centred on Christ. The nave reminds us we don't walk this journey alone; we are part of the body of Christ, a community of believers called to bear one another's burdens. The sanctuary's elevation reminds us to seek the things above, to live with a heavenly perspective, even as we dwell here on earth.

So, the next time you step into St. James Westminster, look around and let the architecture speak to you. Let it remind you that your life, too, can be shaped like a cross—a life of worship, humility, and love for God and others.

May the spaces we inhabit guide us, and may our lives reflect the beauty and grace of the cross-shaped story we are called to live.

Michael Bruce—Rector

Advent and Christmas at St. James

♦ Sunday, December 1, 9:30am	Meet in the Middle Advent meal and crafts
♦ Sunday, December, 22 at 4:00pm	Christmas Lessons & Carols
♦ Christmas Eve, December 24 at 4:00 p.m.	Family Christmas and Holy Communion
♦ Christmas Eve, December 24 at 7:00 p.m.	Christmas Jazz Mass
♦ Christmas Eve, December 24 at 10:00 p.m.	Solemn Choral Eucharist
♦ Christmas Day, December 25 at 10:00 a.m.	BAS Holy Communion with Hymns
♦ Christmas I, December 29th at 8:30 and 10:30	Regular Sunday schedule

Ringing in Holiday Memories

(Mary Lou Anderson)

This weekend, Ken and I will begin to put up our Christmas decorations. Ever since Thanksgiving, my phone has been flooded with reels on tips for creating the perfect artistic arrangements designed to transform one's house into holiday magic. In contrast, we will retrieve the decorations that have been stored in our basement; decorations that are laden with memories of Christmases past. We will look nostalgically at the paper angel made by our granddaughter in Sunday school, the bright red Chinese streamer given to us by a visiting exchange student, and the hodgepodge of ornaments that were gifted by dear friends throughout the decades.

We have one new decoration this year. For years, I have been on a mission to find it and was thrilled to have accomplished my mission during a recent travel adventure. I had been searching for an ornament reminiscent of one my grandmother had – a brass coloured, round holder with four candles. (My grandma's candles were always red.) Above the candles, a metal whirlygig would begin to rotate when the heat from the burning candles caused it to spin. From this rotation, little heavenly angels holding shining trumpets would orbit. Small metal tendrils drape from the angels and tinkle against brass plates below. It all sounds quite complicated as I describe it. But it isn't. It's simply ingenious.

Quite likely you have similar nostalgic items in your home, mementos which evoke sounds, scents, and snapshots of another time. As I am re-creating the recollections of my past, I am also aware that these experiences may become embedded in the future memories of my own children and grandchildren. Of course, the decorations are only one small aspect of Christmas keepsakes. For me, the traditional music, the carol service, the candle light of Christmas Eve evoke more significant messages of the deeper meaning of the season. Throughout this nostalgic blend, maybe someday, this little angel ornament will help transform a future home of another generation into its own holiday magic.

Memories of Christmases Past

(Libi Clifford)

A Christmas Pageant Story

For many years, a Christmas pageant at St James Westminster took place during the 7pm Christmas Eve service. There was no 4pm service. Christmas pageants are great because there is a role for every child who wishes to take part. There can never be too many sheep, angels, or shepherds. Costumes were plentiful.

The pageant participants processed up the centre aisle with the choir and clergy before the service and then went to sit with their parents until the big event. Sometime in the 1980's my younger son Peter took part. As the procession came up the aisle, there was a swell of laughter that came with it. Because I sat on the outside aisle, until they were opposite me, I wasn't able to see what was happening, but somehow, I knew who was likely involved. My son Peter and his friend Peter (sometimes referred to as Pete and re-Pete), were coming up the aisle with the others. Sometimes they were on their hands and knees and sometimes walking. They were continuously bumping and charging into each other to the amusement of all, especially my father.

When my son joined us, the question was asked. Why? The answer was simple and obvious to him—they were Ram-sheep.

The Wonder of Christmas Eve

Many years, there is no snow on the ground before the Christmas Eve service. I have always been awe struck by the number of times there was snow gently falling as we left the service —not a snow storm, but enough to coat the parking lot and to convince children that there was magic in the air and they needed to get home and into bed quickly. God and Santa must have a wonderful pact.

Meet Christina Rossetti

(Peter Clements)

You may be already acquainted with Christina Rossetti. In our blue hymn book Common Praise, there is an index of authors and composers, and a quick survey will reveal almost no women's names whatsoever (probably less than 10) but you will find Ms. Rossetti twice: once for the lyrics for the carol, "In the Bleak Midwinter", Hymn #122 (one of my favourites!), and again for the lesser-known carol "Love Came Down at Christmas", Hymn #131.

During her lifetime (1830-1894), spent almost entirely in London, she became one of the most famous poets in England, often referred to as the successor to Elizabeth Barret Browning. Christina and her family were actively involved in the arts community in London. Her mother was a published poet, and Christina had two brothers and a sister; two became writers and one became an artist.

Christina was home-schooled, and the isolation partly led to a nervous breakdown at the age of 14. During this period, she, her mother, and her sister became absorbed in the Anglo-Catholic movement (the Oxford Movement) that developed in the Church of England. After this time, religious devotion came to play a major role in her life.

Christina's first published collection "Goblin Market and other Poems" was published in 1862, when she was 31, and was illustrated by much-praised woodcut illustrations contributed by her brother. She continued to publish collections of poetry for the rest of her life, mainly devotional work and children's poetry. Many of her published collections can still be found today.

In one of her published collections "The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti", there is a poem simply called "A Christmas Carol" which includes a dedication: "For My Godchildren".

About 20 years ago I searched through Christina Rossetti's extensive Christmas poetry to find a text that I could set to music as a "Christmas anthem" for the St. James choir. I chose "A Christmas Carol" especially because it is "a children's carol" and I wanted to write a piece that would be appropriate for joint performance by both senior and junior choirs. At that time St. James had a small junior choir directed by Sarah Morrison.

We no longer have a junior choir, but my "Christmas anthem", with words by Christina Rossetti, will be performed with a soprano soloist fulfilling the role of the children's choir. It will be performed in the Advent season. It will be accompanied by organ or piano, and a newly-composed "obbligato" for flugelhorn.

The title of the anthem is Glory, Glory. These are the words:

A Christmas Carol

by Christina Georgina Rossetti

The shepherds had an angel,
The wise men had a star,
But what have I, a little child,
To guide me home from far,
Where glad stars sing together
And singing angels are? —

Lord Jesus is my Guardian,
So I can nothing lack:
The lambs lie in His Bosom
Along life's dangerous track;
The wilful lambs that go astray
He bleeding fetches back.

Lord Jesus is my Guiding Star,
My Beacon Light in heaven:
He leads me step by step along
The path of life uneven;
He, True Light, leads me to that land
Whose day shall be as seven.

Those shepherds thro' the lonely night
Sat watching by their sheep,
Until they saw the heavenly host
Who neither tire nor sleep
All singing " Glory glory"
In festival they keep.

Christ watches me His little lamb,
Cares for me day and night,
That I may be His Own in heaven:
So angels clad in white
Shall sing their " Glory, glory"
For my sake in the height.

The wise men left their country
To journey morn by morn
With gold and frankincense and myrrh
Because the Lord was born:
God sent a star to guide them
And sent a dream to warn.

My life is like their journey,
Their star is like God's Book,
I must be like those good wise men
With heavenward heart and look:
But shall I give no gifts to God? —
What precious gifts they took.

Lord I will give my love to Thee,
Than gold much costlier,
Sweeter to Thee than frankincense,
More prized than choicest myrrh:
Lord make me dearer day by day,
Day by day holier.

Nearer and dearer day by day:
Till I my voice unite
And sing my " Glory, glory"
With angels clad in white,
All " Glory, glory" given to Thee
Thro' all the heavenly height.

Peter and Iris Clements have been members of St. James (Westminster) for over 50 years. Peter did sing in the choir for short periods, and sat at the organ console for a few rare occasions. He was also a performer and arranger for "the Three Keyboards": with Angus Sinclair and Steve Holowitz, who performed at St. James several times, including two concerts with BrassRoots.

Peter also wrote a communion setting especially for St. James: A Village Mass. Parts of it have been used in the communion service at various times. A special treasure is his association with Steven Holowitz, who he helped to bring to St. James.

Peter served as a churchwarden for 4 years with Derwyn Jones, just before he became bishop, and Iris served two years on the Board of Management.

A Child's Imagination

(Ingrid Pawley)

I was perhaps 4 when I heard Santa on the roof of our house in West Vancouver. There were truly footsteps and to a young girl in bed, it was so exciting. Then the footsteps passed by my window (we were a bungalow with a porch), I was so excited that I remember hiding under the blankets with my eyes open, afraid to really look. The next thing I knew it was Christmas morning. I told my parents about it, and they just smiled. When I was older, I was told it was my uncle, but I still believed it wasn't him—it was Santa!

A child's imagination can do wonders and I was so glad my daughter had the same reaction when Santa visited her at our home in Coldstream. She was 3 and in her nightgown, holding her doll, getting ready to go to bed, when there was a knock on the door. Opening up, there stood Santa and Mrs. Santa with a present for her - she took one look at him and said, "I'm good," and ran to her bed. (We had neighbours who did this every year—going to all the houses in the rural area. We would put a gift outside for them to give to the children they visited). It made for a beautiful memory.

Blessings to all those with a child's imagination!

Friendship Dinners

Let's get together and get to know each other. In the new year, St. James members will host dinners in their homes and welcome other members for food and fellowship. Would you be willing to host a dinner? This would entail planning a menu and providing the main dish. You can ask guests to bring other parts of the meal. Think about how many people you would like to host and choose a date sometime in January or early February.

In the new year, members will have an opportunity to sign up to attend a dinner. This will be a great opportunity for us to build friendships with new and old members of our community.

If you would like to host a meal, or have questions or suggestions, please contact Julie Ryan at julieryan132@gmail.com or by phone at 226-377-0906.

Christmas Flower Donations

If you would like to remember or give thanks for a loved one by donating toward the **Christmas flowers in the Church**, please contact the office by Friday, December 20th. Please let us know who the donation is being made by and in whose memory or honour the donation is being made. **Cheques should be made out to "St. James Westminster" with "Altar Guild - Christmas Flowers"** in the memo or cash may be placed in an envelope that states "Altar Guild - Christmas Flowers".

From the desk of your Family Ministry Team

From our Sunday School curriculum, Illustrated Ministries Mini Revolutions

Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year. Advent is a time when we prepare and wait in expectation of the birth of Jesus on Christmas. More than anything, it is a time of great wonder and mystery. Author Madeleine L'Engle wrote the following of Advent: "This is the irrational season, where love blooms bright and wild. If Mary were filled with reason, there would have been no room for the child."

We hope all St. James families are enjoying this season of waiting and preparing for the birth of Jesus. We know this season might be very busy for our young people with school concerts, holidays, and other special activities. So much joy, so much to be thankful for!

During this season, we will share messages of joy and thankfulness from the letters from Paul to the Thessalonians and the Philippians, from Isaiah's prophecies, and Mary's Magnificat in Luke's Gospel.

In this season we encourage you to slow down and enjoy all the special moments of preparing for Christmas; maybe whisper a prayer of thanks whenever you feel that joy.

We are so thankful for all our young people at St. James. Merry Christmas!
Laura Manias, Mary DeKay & Gerry Adam

Deck Your Halls with an Advent Garland

All ages are invited to visit our creativity table at the
Meet in the Middle Advent Breakfast on Dec 1, at 9:30 am
String together a garland to place
around your home as reminders of
HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE, and IMMANUEL—God With Us!
For more information, please contact gerryadam@diohuron.org
**Please note, if your child is under 6, they will need adult help.*

Advent Greening

Sunday December 1, at 10:30 am

Inspired by traditional services of the "Hanging of the Greens", this year we are going to assemble our advent wreath as part of the service. Fir and pine boughs are natural signs of everlasting life, persisting in summer and winter and retaining their colour even as leaves change and fall. Cedar wood is associated with royalty.

Everyone is invited to bring evergreen boughs from your yards and gardens to weave into this year's wreath.

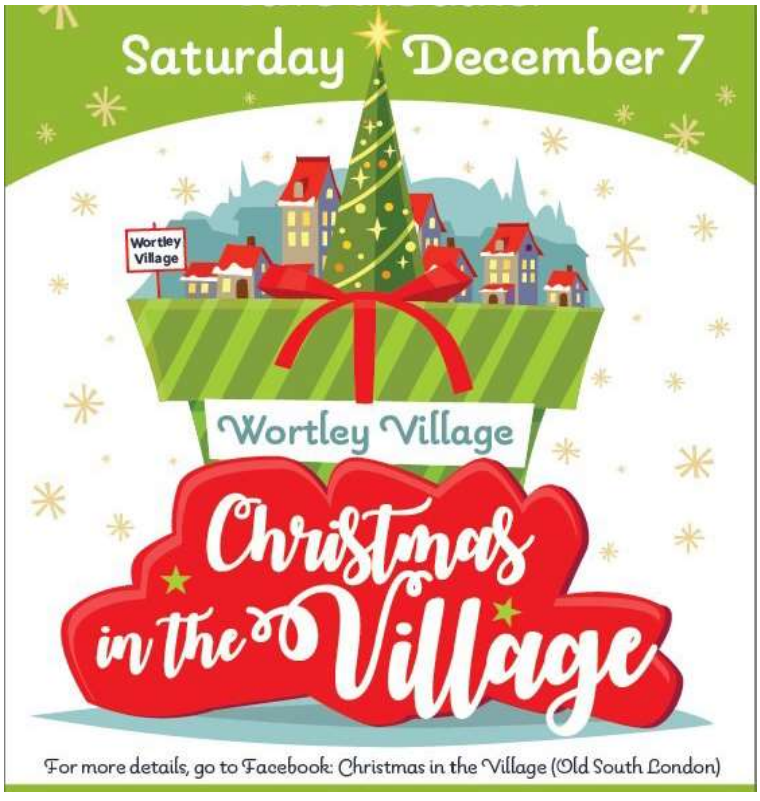
As we prepare our sacred space for the coming of the Christ who was, is, and shall be, together, let us create this symbol of our green and growing faith, a faith that is made richer and deeper by our shared life.

No one need bring too much, and a suggested length is somewhere between 12- 18 inches. For those who do not have greenery, we will have lots to share if you wish to participate. Directions will be provided as we arrive for worship. If you have questions, please feel free to contact gerryadam@diohuron.org

"And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing!"

A most joyous Christmas to one and all from Camp Huron!

Watch for more details about our next season at www.camphuron.ca or contact gerryadam@diohuron.org 519-434-6893 x 217. Online registration opens February 25, 2025



Breakfast with Santa

Breakfast with Santa is back this year on Saturday, December 7th, 2024!

St. James Westminster Anglican Church along with Christmas in the Village (Old South London) will host this event at 115 Askin St (accessible entrance and parking lot 120 Bruce Street).

Tickets ($2, cash only) can be purchased from Landon Library (167 Wortley Rd.) starting Nov. 23. Tickets are sold for four different seatings - 10am, 10:30am, 11am, 11:30am.

Come enjoy a visit with Santa, a warm beverage donated by Black Walnut Cafe, & breakfast treats donated by Tremblett's Your Independent Grocer (London, ON, Canada).

Advent Candlelight Communion Services

Wednesday December 4 & 18 at 7:00 pm

St. Jame's Westminster Anglican Church
115 Askin St, London

Amidst the busyness of this season
take these moments for quiet and contemplation

Enter spiritually into this time of preparation
for the gift of the incarnation,
the birth of Jesus, the Son of God

Christmas Gift Cards

FundScrip – Purchase gift cards to stores you already shop at, and a % is donated to our fundraising campaign. Available each week after the 8:30 and 10:30 services in the Parish Hall.

You can also special order cards at the table or by emailing judyshendavid@msn.com

Deadline for Christmas Gift Card Orders is Sunday, December 8th.

Meet in the Middle Advent Breakfast
December 1, 9:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall

Whether you come to the 8:30 or the 10:30 service, please join us as we come together to catch up with one another, and to share food & fellowship!

Toonies for Turkeys

We are collecting financial donations for the Christmas hampers distributed by Church of the Epiphany. Please drop your financial donations in the designated box in the church. If you wish to be receipted for cash donations, please use an envelope and include your name and address.

If you wish to write a cheque, please make it out to "Church of the Epiphany" with "Food Bank" in the memo. We will pass your cheques and cash on to the Epiphany food bank and you will receive your receipt from Church of the Epiphany. Thank you!

Indwell Advent Series

Advent is here! Indwell has again developed a series of **five Advent devotionals.** This year they're written from the unique perspectives of five Indwell staff members!

Sign up now at indwell.ca/advent to have the devotionals conveniently delivered into your inbox ahead of each Sunday of Advent.

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