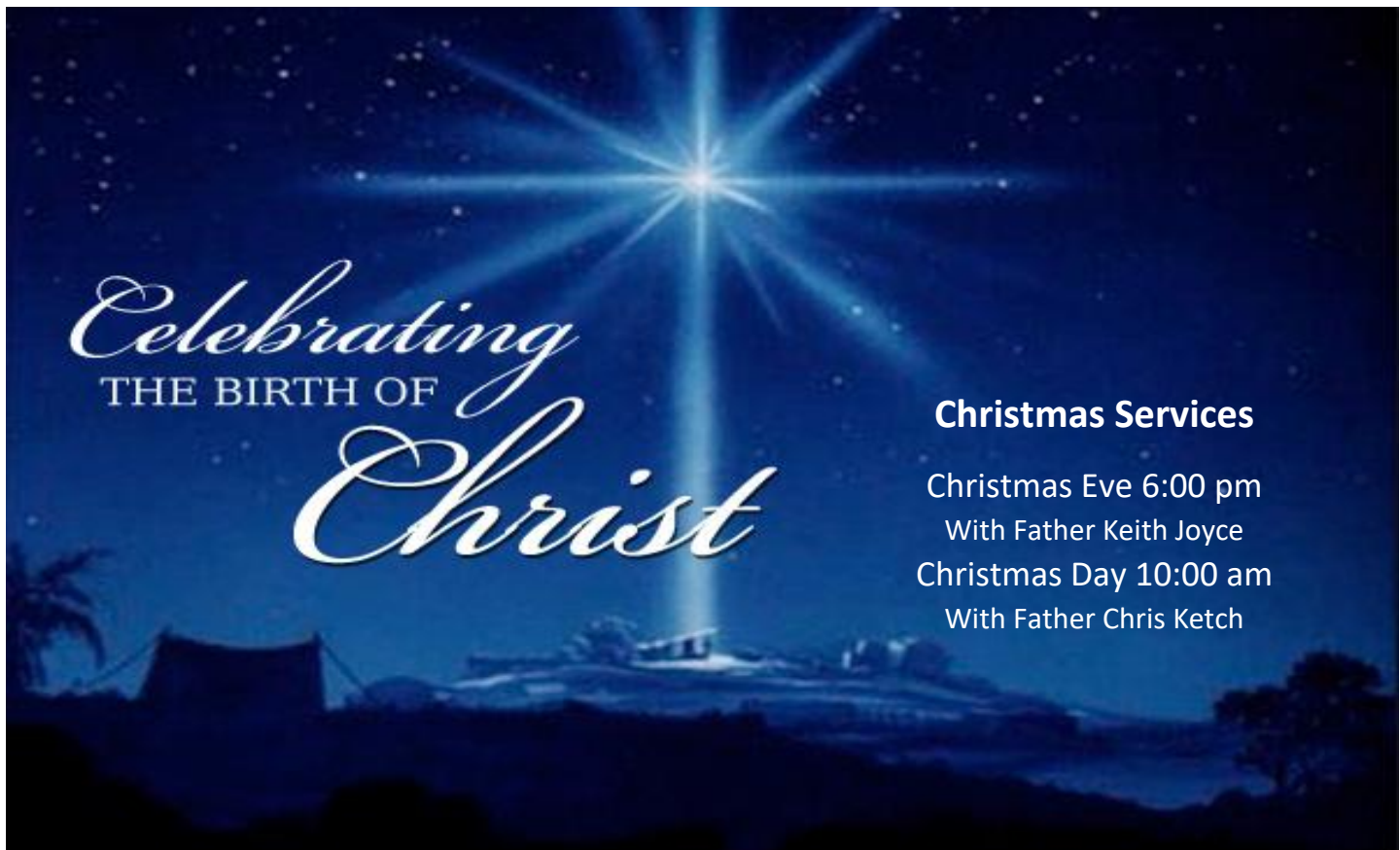




News Around the Flock

The Church of the Good Shepherd
Anglican Parish of Lancaster

Christmas 2025 Newsletter



Christmas Services

Christmas Eve 6:00 pm

With Father Keith Joyce

Christmas Day 10:00 am

With Father Chris Ketch

Phone: (506)635-8145 (Office open Tue, Wed & Fri 8am-12pm)

Email: goodshep@nb.sympatico.ca

facebook "Church of the Good Shepherd, Saint John, NB"

Website: www.goodshepherdsj.ca



We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) and Mi'kmaq Peoples.



Christmas Letter 2025

From the Desk of the Parish Priest

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is hard to believe that I have already been with you for over two months! For those I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Rev. Christopher Ketch, and I am incredibly excited to be serving as your new priest at the Church of the Good Shepherd.

Coming here feels like a joyful return to my roots. I spent my childhood in the North End of Saint John and my teenage years right here on the West Side. I also share history with some of you; I was baptized at St. Jude's, where my grandparents, Clive and Margaret, were active members. Also, during my year at Taylor College, I had the privilege of serving in youth ministry and as a lay reader at St. George's for my practicum placement. It was a delight to hear that former members of St. Jude's and St. George's have found a spiritual home at Good Shepherd.

As we get to know one another, people often ask how I prefer to be addressed. Please feel free to simply call me Chris. However, if you prefer a more formal address, I am accustomed to Father Chris or Mr. Ketch. Additionally, because I volunteer as a Fire Chaplain and have been blessed to have served a few retired soldiers, I also answer quite happily to "Padre." All that said, please use whatever feels most comfortable for you.

I also want to continue to offer clarity on what my presence among you looks like right now. As many of you know, I have served the Parish of Kent for the past eleven years. Currently, I am operating under a Shared Ministry Agreement between Kent and Lancaster, meaning my time is divided 50/50 between St. Paul's and Good Shepherd. Practically speaking, this means I am in Saint John on a bi-weekly rotation, typically from Thursday through Sunday,



to lead worship, engage in ministry events and activities, begin making connections in the wider community, and provide pastoral care.

This arrangement allows me to honour a very important personal commitment. My wife, Laura, and I have been foster parents for some time. We felt it was vital to provide stability for our foster son in his current school and home environment in Browns Yard, rather than rushing a relocation. Our goal is to move to Saint John full-time in the future, by the summer of 2027 at the latest. But for now, this shared arrangement allows me to serve you while caring for my family. I am deeply grateful for your patience and warm welcome as we navigate this season together. The Parish of Kent is grateful as well, as this shared ministry ensures continued leadership for them, avoiding the abrupt departure that often comes with pastoral transitions.

As we approach Christmas, I am reminded that life—much like my current schedule—doesn't always fit into a neat, predictable box. We often feel immense pressure during the holidays to make everything "perfect." We want the lights to be bright and the gifts to be beautifully wrapped. But have you ever received a gift where the wrapping has seen better days? For those of you with young children or pets, you know that sometimes, by the time Christmas Day arrives, there are tears in the paper, dents in the boxes, and ribbons missing. And perhaps life has gotten hold of your Christmas this year, and things feel a little torn and beat up. Thankfully, the wrapping isn't the point, and the condition of the wrapping isn't an indicator of the quality of the gift.

This was true of the very first Christmas. If we look past the pageant versions of the story and the beautiful picture painted in holiday songs, we see that the situation in Bethlehem long ago was not what Mary and Joseph would have hoped for. That holy night was not holy because it was perfect, or beautiful, or free of struggle and stress. That night was holy solely because of the One who was born.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



The radical claim of the Christian faith is that in Jesus, God came into the grind, into our everyday human life. The Son of God came as a very human child with humble beginnings; He came and pitched His tent alongside everyday people. So, however your Christmas is looking this year—beautiful or battered—remember that the wrapping isn't the gift. Jesus is the gift. He is with you through thick and thin. He remains in our midst today.

In that spirit of "God with us," I want to extend a warm invitation. If you have been away from the Church of the Good Shepherd for a while, I encourage you to get reconnected this season. Come and find your place at the manger; we would love to welcome you home.

Furthermore, if you or a loved one are "shut-in" and unable to join us in person due to illness or mobility issues, please call the parish office. Even with my shared schedule, pastoral care is a priority. It would be my honour to visit you at home, in the hospital, or in nursing care to share conversation, prayer, and communion.

I eagerly look forward to growing together in faith and service. May the peace of Christ be with you and those you love this season.

Yours in Christ,
Chris+

Our Dearly Departed

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen

Patricia Vaughan, November 30



LIFT

Our Lift group meets on the second Thursday of the month at 2pm in the Small Hall.

In October members made cute pumpkin magnets to celebrate Thanksgiving. These were made with leftover canning lids from previous Christmas lights; waste not want not!



Our November and December meetings were dedicated to creating a special gift for the congregation who, if they choose, may pass along to someone that needs a little uplift in their life.



A Christmas treat for the students at St. Rose school was once again sponsored by LIFT. The St. Rose Parent Advisory team prepares their annual Christmas dinner for their students in our kitchen each December.





MUSIC

Our wonderful choir, under the guidance of our very own talented David Mitchell performed the **Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols** on White Gift Sunday.





Worship

On November 2, we welcomed Kim Graham and Mary Yates into our church family as they committed themselves to Christ through Baptism.



We will remember.....



On November 9 we observed the Act of Remembrance for those of our congregation and so many others who gave their lives in wars to date, along with those who were injured and those who suffered the psychological damage that often is experienced by those who have seen the horrors of war. We also gratefully acknowledged our veterans and those now serving in Canada's armed forces. And we remembered all innocent victims - adults, children, and infants - of every conflict.

October was **Clergy Appreciation Month**, so we took the opportunity, to welcome and acknowledge how grateful we are to have Rev Chris and his wife Laura join us here at the Church of the Good Shepherd.



If you don't already know, Rev Chris is on Facebook. He shares his creative writing in micro fiction and over the season of Advent he goes live every night at 9pm where he will share a chapter of Luke each day so that when Christmas Day arrives, we will have read an account of the one whose birth we celebrate. reading 24 chapters of Luke.



Altar Guild

Submitted by Sharon Titus

The altar guild met on October 17 with 6 members present, as well as Rev Chris. Saturday November 29 was chosen as the Christmas clean up day. The guild took inventory of the alter linens and will investigate the purchase of a new pulpit fall for the green set of hangings as these are quite worn and possibly the purple fall as well depending on price.

If you are interested in volunteering with the Altar Guild, please speak with Sharon Titus.

Sunday School

Sunday School continues every Sunday taught by Laura Janes. This is a joyful time of learning and growing together in faith.

This past fall, our lessons focused on themes of giving thanks and exploring the Ten Commandments, helping children understand gratitude and God's guidance in daily life.



In December, we turned our attention to Advent, preparing hearts and minds for the celebration of Christ's birth. We look forward to continuing these meaningful lessons each week and invite all families to join us in nurturing the spiritual growth of our young learners.



Youth Ministry



Good Shepherd has partnered with Stone Church in ministering a Youth Connections group. Students in grades 5-10, will meet on Friday nights, and will alternate between Stone Church and Good Shepherd. Youth in grade 11 or older are also welcomed but will have more of a leadership role and a separate devotional time

The first meeting at Good Shepherd happened on November 28 and was a great success with 20 participants, (including adults). The meetings start at 6 pm with the sharing of a meal, followed with a spiritual discussion and an activity. Rev Chris is looking for volunteers to prepare and clean up the meal. These are kid friendly meals, spaghetti, pizza, chicken fingers and fries etc. You would only be expected to cook and cleanup at the Good Shepherd. We are aiming for a team of 2 and if we have enough volunteers, we can alternate like the lunch program. Please let Lori in our church office know if you are interested in this ministry.

The next meeting at Good Shepherd will be held on Friday Jan 23, 6pm-8pm.



Hospitality

A coffee hour was held on November 2 as we celebrated the baptism of Kim Graham and Mary Yates.



A delicious bean and weiner lunch was held on November 16th. Thank you to those who contributed the home made beans for this lunch.



While there was no lunch in December, the ladies of LIFT hosted a sweet reception after the Lessons and Carols service on December 14. Apple cider and yummy Christmas cookies were enjoyed by all.



We will resume our lunches on January 25, 2026 with a delicious chili made by Susan Jack!

On February 15th, Bishop David Edwards will preach and celebrate Holy Communion at our church and we will have a luncheon following that service.



Communication



Please note that the office hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 8 am - 12 pm.

Come one, Come all!

Our **Annual General Meeting** will take place at our luncheon on March 8, 2026 and our traditional bagged lunch will be provided.



Annual Report

Please have your submissions for the Annual Report to Lori (goodshep@nb.sympatico.ca) at the office **no later than February 2, 2026**



Please remember the visitor's pamphlet, which gives a bit of information on the service. We are entering into the Holiday season when people are travelling to visit family and friends. These are available the table in the Narthex. You do not need to be a greeter or vestry member to hand these out.



Mission Projects Update

The **Shepherd's Cupboard** is in good standing thanks to your donations of food. Monetary donations are also welcomed as we purchase milk, eggs and bread when we make a delivery. We are looking for others to join in helping in the delivery of groceries and perhaps offer a bit of outreach ministry when doing so. Thank you for your continued support of this mission.

We continue to support Hillcrest's **Caring Closet** by delivering clothes dropped off in the Narthex. Please pray for those who provide and those who use this ministry.



Within the last year and thanks to your generosity, a total of \$1082 has been sent to the **West Side Food Bank**. Please consider dropping some change into the can in the narthex as you head into church. They are always grateful for our donations.



The Harbourview High School Brown Bag Lunch program continues to feed students every Monday. We are looking for a few more volunteers to help make lunches. We have four teams of volunteers that rotate so you would only be called upon every four weeks (possibly longer due to school holidays). If you want further information or wish to volunteer, please contact Terry Ricketts.

Your contribution to this mission, whether it be volunteering to make the lunches or delivering them, providing monetary support or keeping this mission, volunteers and students in your prayers, has been invaluable.

Christmas Baskets - 2025

Here at the Good Shepherd, we commit to providing groceries for up to 30 families.

Thank You to all who have provided food donations, and monetary donations to this outreach program,





A **BIG THANK YOU** to our neighbours, the Urban Line Dance group who collected \$1000 for our Christmas Basket Campaign. Since 2022 this group has raised over \$3100 plus assorted winter clothing for our Christmas Basket campaign.

It is with deepest appreciation that we thank these ladies for their generosity.





Our **Seafarers Mission** Boat will make an appearance in **January**. We know that donations are needed and welcomed throughout the year. Here is a list of suggestions for items that are appreciated by seafarers.

Seafarer's Mission



Suggestions - Hats, scarves, gloves or mitts, socks, wrapped hard candy (no chocolate), soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, shaving foam, razors, deodorant, lip balm, playing cards, puzzle books, pens, writing paper, postcards.

Building and Maintenance Update



Shayne and Barry continued working on replacing the rotten wood around the sill plate on the side back corner of the church.

We are very thankful for their dedication and diligence for the upkeep and preservation of our church property.



Offerings and Offering Envelopes

We are grateful for all your offerings that allow us to run our church and lead and participate in several outreach initiatives. We are a vibrant church family for which we are very grateful.

Offerings come in 3 forms all of which are identified in our system with an 'envelope' number.

- Sunday offerings: cash or cheque
- E-Giving (diocese) – preferred for security, budgeting and ease of processing
- E-transfers (Interact)

Fewer people are using weekly offering envelopes so we would like to take the opportunity to reduce cost and waste. We are our changing envelope supplier, decreasing the number of boxes we order, reducing our annual cost by close to \$500, and eliminating the many boxes of envelopes that don't get picked up or used.

If you still want to use a weekly offering envelope in 2026, you will still be able to do so. The envelopes will look different, and you may have a new envelope # but they will still be available. **Please contact the office if this is your preference.**

But perhaps this is an opportunity to change to the diocesan managed e-Giving program to make monthly or weekly donations. This method has several advantages:

- You don't need to be in church to make your offering.
- Increased security of your offering as no cash/cheques are on site.
- The diocese does the work. We don't need to count the money, do a bank deposit or load the info into our system.
- There is no delay in hitting our account (bank checks the deposit).

For more information about diocesan E-Giving pick up a pamphlet in the Narthex.

None of us like change but I'm certain we all like to save money. Rest assured that folks that want to use weekly offering envelopes will still be able to. If you do have any concerns or would like additional information about the diocesan e-giving program, please contact Susan Jack. (susan.jack@bellaliant.net, 506-333-9931)

FINANCE UPDATE

Financial results for the end of Nov. are showing a small loss of (\$5,010), which is a substantial improvement over our budgeted year to date loss of (\$17,086). This is primarily due to the fact that when we drafted the budget back in Jan, we had no idea what would happen over the course of the year with regards to our search for a full time rector. We therefore budgeted for full time salaries and full time rectory costs for the second half of the year, but of course, that wasn't the case.

The results to date are also a substantial improvement over last year's results of a loss of (\$21,420) over the same eleven months. This is primarily due to favourable variances in Offering and Rental revenue, as well as Salaries.

With year-end just around the corner, if we can continue to hold this trend on revenues and expenses, we should be able to end the year with just a small loss, or possibly with a surplus.

	<i>Jan - Nov Actuals</i>		<i>Jan - Nov Budget</i>	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
Offerings	124,537	119,233	137,814	126,186
Rents	21,515	17,750	23,833	12,918
Interest	2,243	2,210	2,210	2,210
Misc Income	-	-	-	-
Total Income	148,296	139,193	163,857	141,314
Salaries	75,424	79,330	101,557	80,026
Church Bldg & Office	51,016	53,445	48,292	42,083
Rectory	1,407	2,333	4,928	5,707
Worship & Programs	3,401	2,827	4,108	1,833
Shared Ministry	22,058	22,676	22,058	22,676
Total Expenses	153,306	160,613	180,943	152,326
YTD Surplus/(Loss)	(5,010)	(21,420)	(17,086)	(11,012)



In Other News...

A Successful Trip!

From Myles and Janet Leitch

We have returned from our trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Oct./Nov of this year, and we want to thank everyone who prayed for us while we were away. The trip was very successful. The team of Congolese people we worked with was excellent, and everyone worked hard to achieve the goals of the workshop - to create a writing system for 11 languages which only have a spoken form to this point, in this province of DRC. Myles led the workshop. During the first week, he gave linguistic training to a group of 11 facilitators, and then in weeks 2 and 3, these facilitators worked with groups of people that came from each of the 11 language areas, to produce a small dictionary, an illustrated alphabet, and a small booklet with further examples of words that use each letter of their alphabet, a short written story of the creation story from Genesis (which they already had in oral form in their language), and a few verbs in various verb tenses. This material was printed out and given to each member that came to the workshop, to take back to their village, with the plan that the church will then use the material to start literacy classes and a Bible translation in for that language. This workshop was such a privilege for Myles and I - we had lived as missionaries in the 1980's, right across the border in the neighboring country of Congo, Brazzaville, and worked with a similar language group. It was so special to return to that area and see how life hadn't really changed all that much since we were there. If anyone would like to find out more details about our trip, please feel free to come and ask us. We'd be happy to fill you in a bit more on how things went.

Thank you again.



Prison Christian Ministries

Submitted by Pam Hoben

We have recently learned that one of our faithful parishioners, Pam Hoben, joined the Prison Christian Ministries (PCM), a small not for profit organization with a big mission. We asked Pam to submit a description of this ministry.

Hi, I'm Pam Hoben, and I'm excited to share with you a charity that's truly making a difference. I recently joined Prison Christian Ministries (PCM), a small not-for-profit organization with a big mission. What drew me to PCM was their unique approach to helping young children in prisons in Kenya. Did you know that many young children in African countries are forced to accompany their mothers to prison? It's heartbreaking, but PCM is working to improve that.



100% of donations to PCM go directly towards their mission, excluding only the annual audit inspection cost. That's impressive! As a volunteer, I've seen firsthand the impact PCM is having. They're providing milk to young children in prisons, over 1000 Bibles to prisoners. In Kenya there are over 300,000 children living on the streets so PCM feeds over 100 children in two different cities once per week. But that's not all - PCM has also 4 built safe houses for children who are forced to leave prison when they turn 5, or children of incarcerated parents who are in unsafe living conditions. These children need a safe place to live and PCM is providing them with a safe home, food, clothes, an education through school fees and they learn they are loved by the Lord Jesus. Next month our 5th Tabitha House will be officially opened, and an additional 30 children will be safe.

Please keep Pam and this mission in your prayers as she will be visiting Kenya next month.

For more information about PCM please visit their website to learn more about the vision of building and operating 10 homes for these children; www.prisonchristianministries.com



FICTION

Angels

Micro -Fiction by Rev Christopher Ketch



Father Michael ran a hand over his close-cropped hair, the crisp white of his worn alb a stark contrast to the muted city dawn filtering through the dusty blinds of his office window. He had arrived at the church early to put final touches on a sermon that he was now convinced was relevant to nobody but himself. He sighed, the scent of old incense and fresh coffee clinging to the air, wondering if the words he'd so carefully crafted would resonate with the hurried footsteps

and distant sirens he could already hear outside. The people had been more than kind in receiving him and as he walked from his office to the sacristy an elderly woman sidled up next to him to offer words of comfort and encouragement as the smell of lilies filled the air. "Is it that obvious that I am feeling anxious?" he asked with a smirk. "Only to those who've walked the same path, Father," she replied, her eyes twinkling as she patted his arm with a gentle hand. "Every new beginning holds a little tremor." He stood there his eyes now fixed upon his scuffed brown leather shoes, tears welling up because of the grace and strength offered by this sister in Christ he did not even know. "You'll do fine." she continued a smile evident in the tone of her voice. Father Michael took a deep, shaky breath, the warmth of her simple reassurance settling over him like a comforting stole, giving him the courage to face the waiting congregation. He looked up intending to meet her gaze and offer his thanks but there was nobody there; only a faint and fading glimmer of light. He stepped into the sacristy to collect his thoughts and offer a prayer of thanks.



THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

I recently came across this interpretation of the well-known Christmas song.

DID YOU KNOW THIS?

1. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ.
2. Two turtle doves are the Old and New Testaments.
3. Three French hens stand for faith, hope, and love.
4. The four calling birds are the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
5. The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.
6. The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.
7. Seven swans a-swimming represent the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit--Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.
8. The eight maids a-milking are the eight Beatitudes.
9. Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.
10. The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments.
11. The eleven pipers piping stand for the eleven faithful disciples.
12. The twelve drummers drumming symbolize the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

Thank you, Fr. Chris, for providing more information on the validity of this interpretation:

While this interpretation is a very popular urban legend that circulates every Christmas, historians and folklore experts agree that "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was not written as a secret catechism. The idea that the song is a secret code first appeared in the late 20th century. It is widely attributed to an article written by a priest, Fr. Hal Stockert, in 1982. When pressed for sources, Fr. Stockert admitted he had no documentation to back up the claim (stating his notes were lost in a flood). The song was first published in England in 1780 in a children's book titled *Mirth Without Mischief*. It was described as a "memory-and-forfeits" game. Participants would sit in a circle and repeat the verses. If you missed a line or forgot a gift, you had to pay a "forfeit," such as a kiss or a small candy.



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 24th Christmas Eve Service 6:00 pm with Fr Keith Joyce
December 25th Christmas Day Service 10:00 am with Fr Chris Ketch
January 23rd Youth Connection at the Good Shepherd

January 25th - Monthly Luncheon
February 15th - Monthly Luncheon
March 8th - Annual Meeting & Luncheon



Rev Chris, Wardens, and Vestry
of the Church of the Good Shepherd
Wish You a Merry Christmas
and a
Blessed New Year!

Christmas Hope for All

*May each one know the blessing of the incarnate Son of God,
Jesus Christ, Immanuel – “God with us”, in our lives, our hopes and in all we do,
this upcoming Christmas season and all the days of our lives- now and throughout
all of eternity.*