

For Immediate Release

Bloomfield, Dec 17, 2020

Community Radio Rescues Christmas Eve!

Back in Aug, Cathy Duggan, minister at Bloomfield United Church was lying in bed awake worrying about Christmas Eve. With pandemic fighting restrictions such as physical distancing and 30% seating capacity in place, no congregation was going to be able to offer the traditional Christmas Eve experience to County folks and their families.

“For many people who don’t attend church at other times, going to a Christmas Eve service as a family, squeezing into a pew, hearing the scriptures, singing carols, wishing their neighbours a Merry Christmas- it’s important part of their Christmas traditions, and I knew that this year, because of COVID 19, churches just couldn’t offer that same experience.” says Duggan.

Many churches have asked those who plan to attend worship on Christmas Eve to pre-book a space due to seating capacity restrictions. Some are not able to accommodate those who live and work outside of The County. Some are not singing at all, and others are singing through masks.

What could churches offer those who would typically turn out for Christmas Eve only to find that there might literally be ‘no room at the inn’?

“Lots of churches now have some kind of online worship option, whether it’s a livestream on Facebook or YouTube or a Zoom experience. But like many parts of rural Ontario, internet access in the County isn’t always great. And all churches probably have at least a few folks in our congregations who just don’t use the internet- period.”

That’s when Radio, specifically 99.3 County FM: The Voice of the County came to the rescue!

“I approached County FM through a contact in my congregation and proposed that they work with us to produce a program of Christmas scripture readings and carols that could be broadcast on the radio on Christmas Eve and repeated on Christmas Day. Craig Mills General Manager, and Pat Larkin Production & IT Manager were supportive right off the bat. After all, *everybody has a radio.*”

Once the station was in, Rev. Duggan reached out to other ministry colleagues, who likewise quickly jumped on board, recognising the opportunity that a program like *Celebrate Christmas* offers to those who would have to forgo in-person Christmas Eve services this year. Archdeacon Charles Morris at St. Mary Magdalene Anglican church and Chair of the Prince Edward Ministerial Association gained the

endorsement of that group, and stepped up to work with Rev. Duggan not only as co-manager of the project, but as recording engineer for most of the musical pieces as well! Pat Larkin at 99.3 County FM is also doing a tremendous number of recordings and pulling all of the elements together.

Craig Mills, 99.3 County FM: “Rev. Duggan’s approach to the station was to create something that would be non-denominational and absolutely all inclusive. We embraced the project as a chance to help the community heal and celebrate Christmas. With so many people not being able to safely enjoy their time-honoured traditions it was a privilege for 99.3 County FM to take this on. The program airs on 99.3 FM and streams across Canada and around the globe @ www.993CountyFM.ca. We hope people will spread the word to family and friends.”

In total there are 17 congregations in the County participating in *Celebrate Christmas* -reading scripture, offering music and extending Christmas greetings on behalf of their congregations.

Rev. Duggan says she hopes listening to Celebrate Christmas will be as positive an experience as making it has been.

“Really with the response we’ve had from the station, from the ministers and their congregations, and with how quickly and smoothly this has come together, well, it’s almost like a small Christmas miracle.” Says Duggan.

***Celebrate Christmas* airs exclusively on 99.3 County FM Dec 24, at 8pm and is repeated on Dec 25 at 12 pm.**

Participating Congregations

Anglican

1. St. Mary Magdalene- Picton,
2. St. Philip’s-Milford,
3. St. John’s- Waupoos,
4. St Andrew’s-Wellington

United

5. Cressy
6. Glenora,
7. Picton,
8. Friendship-Demorestville
9. Bloomfield
10. South Bay, Milford

Roman Catholic

11. St. Gregory the Great

Other

12. Picton Free Methodist

13. Bethany Christian Reformed, Bloomfield

14. Emmanuel Baptist, Bloomfield.

15. Picton Salvation Army

16. Gilead Fellowship, Picton

17. St Andrew's Presbyterian, Picton

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