

Rosemary's Reflections – December 2018

A number of years ago my husband and I were in China as part of an Ecumenical Study Tour organised by the Canadian Council of Churches. We had a wonderful time connecting with Chinese Christians, worshiping with them, meeting and eating with them. Once we had birthday cake for breakfast because our hosts thought that was what Westerners ate! Everywhere we went, people enthusiastically applauded our efforts to speak our few words of Chinese. We visited sophisticated cities and rural villages. And one wet and windy day, locked out of our coach while the driver had lunch, we found refuge under the Golden Arches of McDonald's!

We did some sightseeing as well, walking on the Great Wall and across Tiananmen Square. We saw the Terra Cotta Warriors exhibit and visited a Buddhist monastery. As we left, the abbot sent us off with words I've always remembered "You come in joy. You go in peace." One of the things we saw was the Nestorian Stone. This is a huge slab of black rock dug up one day in a farmer's field. It records the earliest Christian presence in China and is a review of Christ's sayings and doings as seen through the eyes of 8th century Chinese people. On the stone those

sayings and doings are called "The Bright Teaching." Perfect description of the Gospel! It makes me think of Jesus' words "I am the Light of the world."

The Bright Teaching is something we desperately need these days, surrounded as we are by "wars and rumours of wars." It's hard to stay positive sometimes in the global climate of rejection of The Other, simply because she or he is not like Us and is therefore to be feared or disrespected or disposed of. In a recent Tuesday morning Bible study we were looking at some words from Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet. He was telling the people of his day that bad though things looked, God's promise to them was for better things to come. And he offered the sign of a baby, whose birth would change everything. Isaiah's prophecy came to be regarded as a foretelling of the coming of Jesus many centuries later.

One of the questions the group discussed was "In today's world when the news seems dark, what kind of promise do we need?" Many people agreed that our world needs hope, the kind of hope Isaiah spoke of. It was suggested that we, people of faith, are that hope. Someone has said that our job as Christians is to poke holes in the darkness through our words and deeds. When we do this, we let the light of the Bright Teaching shine through. Christmas isn't only candles, decorations, the tree, presents and parties, fun though these are. Christmas is the re-revelation, the re-celebrating of the Bright Teaching, which affirms the words of John 1:5 "The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out." Merry Christmas, everybody!

Rev. Rosemary Doran

.....

The Bible quotation is: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out. (John 1:1, 3a-5)