



OF MEANING AND MYSTERY

As we enter Advent, the anticipation of celebrating the arrival of the long awaited Messiah invites us to reflect on the parallel themes of meaning and mystery.

Hundreds of years before the first Advent, the prophet Isaiah wrote these now familiar words . . .

*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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and
upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

As is the nature of the prophetic, Isaiah's words both spoke to his day and down through the centuries to a fulfillment that was yet just beyond the horizon.

In the mind of the Trinity, the meaning was certain. God, in highest heaven, through his son, Immanuel, empowered by the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord, would enter into history. The Messiah would come and with him, freedom from oppression and freedom to restored relationship with Yahweh.

In the minds of Isaiah's contemporaries, the meaning was interpreted in the significance of the immediate. Discerning that the prophetic here reflected God's words to the serpent in the garden would be a mystery lost on all but a precious few.

This side of the angelic pronouncement, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel," are we perhaps more similar than we would want to admit to Isaiah's contemporaries? It is possible that we have a fuller sense of the meaning. And is it also possible that the mystery too is lost in favour of the significance of the immediate, whatever that might represent for each of us.



Image courtesy of Jason Jenicke

That Jesus was born the one who would crush the head of the serpent is certain to many. The incarnation, well, if we are honest . . . a mystery to likewise many!

That Jesus embodied salvation, which has been “prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” is certain. The presence and transformational work of the Holy Spirit imparting life and life more abundantly, a mystery those who name the name of Jesus are invited to lean into and embrace daily.

Within the kingdom inaugurated by the Messiah’s arrival, Fairhaven was founded upon the ethos and mission of encouraging the health and renewal of Christian leaders. This is our *raison d’être* . . . our meaning. God’s faithfulness and His provision in the unfolding story that is Fairhaven today and His presence and work in the lives of those who come seeking rest and renewal remains a profound mystery.

Here at Fairhaven our prayer is that those who come will encounter this One who, unrolling the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, read . . .

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*

His invitation is certain. May we respond by embracing the meaning and mystery of this Christmas season.

GOD WITH US

Here at Fairhaven our guests regularly remind us of the connection between their sense of God’s presence in this place and the rest and renewal they experience while here.

One recent guest wrote . . .

“Thank you! What a wonderful place and an equally wonderful weekend in which we could meet with God! The calm came and the stress left almost immediately upon arrival – proof of a much prayed over space. Thank you again for your hospitality. Blessings to you!”

“Proof of a much prayed over space.” Proof indeed. This speaks to the many of you who partner with us regularly in prayer for Fairhaven, our staff, and for God’s revealed presence in this place and to our guests. Thank you!

BUILDING INTO THE FUTURE . . . into the lives of our Guests.

From those uncertain days as the founding board stepped out in faith to call the Franks, through the present leadership transition and completion of the third staff residence, Fairhaven exists as a miracle and often, a mystery reflecting the certainty of God's faithfulness. In this coming year we want to continue to build on this momentum.

First and foremost, we are looking to build an *intentional and immediate link* between Fairhaven and you, our faithful prayer supporters. Would you consider joining our prayer network and being part of an email group committed to praying with us and for the ministry of Fairhaven in this next year? We are looking for fifty people (excited for more!). If so, please e-mail us at info@fairhavencanada.com and we'll add you to our prayer list and begin sharing regular updates and prayer requests with you.

Second, as we move into the future, is *building capacity*. This is twofold. As mentioned in our previous newsletter, with ongoing growth comes an increase in day-to-day operating expenses. Whether ongoing upkeep, cottage refurbishment, or staff remuneration, we desire to honour God in all that we do. To meet these realities we are praying for 165 new partners who would join us in this good work giving the equivalent of \$100.00 per month each. Would you prayerfully consider and trust with us for God's provision in this need?

Building capacity is also related to *staffing*, particularly as it relates to the coaching, counselling, and spiritual direction that is so central to our mission. This is in keeping with the strategic plan so that we are able to free up staff to travel and share the Fairhaven story beyond our spring dinner and dessert events. "Provision for this need will directly impact the experience of our guests and strengthen our capacity to care" and support those who come seeking rest and renewal. It will also allow those of us who serve here at Fairhaven to more fully live into and model the very things we are inviting our guests to experience. Would you pray into this need with us? Provision for this need will be the primary focus of our events this coming spring.

Building at Fairhaven is almost always synonymous with the *next construction project*. This is our third building piece as we lean into the future of what God has for Fairhaven. Not long after arriving at Fairhaven, a faithful supporter inquired in passing . . . "Have you ever thought of . . ." After much observation, discernment, and consideration, the board recently approved moving forward on the construction of a facility that would allow Fairhaven to respond to the growing number of requests for group retreats; retreats involving smaller intimate gatherings of pastoral staff/teams, boards, denominational leaders, and theme-based retreats like soul care and marriage enrichment for Christian leaders.

This facility would incorporate multiple guest accommodations surrounding a core cottage ambiance that would house spaces for meetings with a common lounge and kitchen facilities. The guest accommodations will also be designed with private entrances so that they can also expand our capacity during the months of June – September when we are typically turning inquiries away.

Like all building projects at Fairhaven, initiating construction is dependant upon the prior provision of funding. We want to begin sharing the vision now and inviting participation as we anticipate breaking ground in 2018.

As you consider year-end giving, might one of these areas resonate with your heart?

These are exciting days at Fairhaven. We invite you to embark with us on this next chapter in the unfolding story!





IN CONCLUSION

As 2016 draws to a close, thank you for “your partnership in the Gospel.” Over the years, guests of Fairhaven have been blessed by the generosity of individuals like yourself. Your investment, whether through prayer, financial gifts, shared talents and skills, inviting others to partner with us, or through referring guests to us is making a profound difference in the hearts and lives of those called to kingdom purposes.

This partnership then ripples outward impacting the leaders’ family as well as those they minister to on a day-to-day basis. It is participating in this mission that captures my heart. I trust yours as well.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Gwen and myself, and the onsite team, warm wishes to you and yours this season of certain meaning and profound mystery.

Blessings,

Tony Schnare,
Executive Director.

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