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RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese.

We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1, 2, and 3 Land, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota people and the homeland of the Metis Nation. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land and their hospitality which allows us to live, work, and serve God the Creator here.

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Nothing Changes on New Year's Day

Photo: [Arnold Dogelis](#)

"New Year's Day," the U2 single from their 1983 album *War*, is one of the most enduring hits for its namesake holiday. As the partying and revelry from New Year's Eve tapers into the morning of January 1, Bono's voice will no doubt, at some point, cut the airwaves with "And so we're told this is the golden age / And gold is the reason for the wars we wage / Though I want to be with you, be with you / Night and day / Nothing changes / On New Year's Day."

The lyrics are epic, but their greater meaning is often lost in the popularity of the song and festivities of the holiday. When U2 released "New Year's Day" in 1983, it was initially interpreted as a reference to the Polish solidarity movement led by labour activist and politician Lech Walesa. Bono told *Rolling Stone* that he'd written the song on a whim, but shortly after its release, the Polish government announced the abolition of martial law, coincidentally, on New Year's Day.

Indeed, "New Year's Day" evokes a strong spirit of global unrest, but it also tells a larger story of the struggle for love. Bono claims he was thinking of his wife when he composed the lyrics. It was the unchanging nature of their love that he imagined as he sang "Nothing changes on New Year's Day."

"New Year's Day" surrenders to a religious and political sensibility, and this is, in part, what makes it such a beloved anthem. In the chorus "I, I will begin again" we feel the boundaries of time dissolve, giving way to some larger, resounding hope. This surrender to love and unrest is also the character of Advent, the season of the Christian New Year in the Church calendar. Traditionally beginning four Sundays from Christmas Day, Advent is the season of

waiting for and reflecting on the fulfillment of God's covenant with humanity. It is the season when Christians prepare to celebrate both the birth and second coming of Christ; the Incarnation as it was 2000 years ago and the hope of Christ's return; God's promise as it endures, unchanging, across time.

Today, the world observes the New Year in January. On New Year's Eve we celebrate with exploding fire, pop cans and champagne; drinking, eating, and dancing into the morning of New Year's Day. But what does the observance of this season of renewal look like in the Church? The song "New Year's Day" scratches the surface of an answer, but the writers featured in our January issue offer some deeper reflections. Andrew Rampton opens the issue with a strong statement on the enduring meaning of Advent in the Church; then, Gerry Bowler winds us through a brief history of New Year celebrations in both the Christian and secular calendars. On page 13, Don Phillips reflects on the cyclical nature of time and what it means for us in our lives; finally, Chris Trott recounts his experience with New Year's festivities in North Baffin Island, where the days are dark from early November until February. Inuit communities here celebrate New Year's with activities that serve to recreate the universe and their place in it. Amid the cyclical darkness, Northern New Year's is understood as, quite literally, the coming of the light.



Sara Krahn is the editor of Rupert's Land News.

Praying for the New Year

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT



My parents taught me to say bed-time prayers from an early age. I remember being held when I was learning to talk, too small for a big-kid-bed, and reciting "Now I lay me down to sleep . . ." When I grew into my first bed, I would kneel upon the floor rehearsing the same prayer, adding only the names of folk I desired God to bless. Grandad also prayed with me, and I remember that some evenings he would let me pray for anything and everything, knowing full well that I was stalling for time. In the grand scheme of my life, I learned to say prayers of blessing and thanksgiving at the end of every day, and I also learned selfishness.

In his book *Beedahbun—First Light of Dawn* (with illustrations by Anishnabek artist Leland Bell), author George Leach writes "Early in the morning at dawn you pry to greet the day. You announce your name, who you are and who you are praying for. Then supposedly at dusk when creation stops you announce your prayer again and your prayer is heard. You praise again and you stand still again . . . All of creation is being purified."

There is an awesome humbleness implied in Leach's writing, and it leads me to understand that God the Creator is the first prayer. God the

Creator is the day we travel. God the Creator is the summation of prayer at the end of our day, so that God can make something new, pure, and lovely as the prayer in a parent's arms. God is making all things new in every moment of "now." This is amazing news for all creation, as it signals a new heaven and earth are born.

A new creation constantly involves the Body of Christ to be a vehicle of change so that the world may have abundant life. Our careful observation of the Church will show that it is reticent to change, like an older child who adds to their prayers simply to stay up a little later. This day will eventually end, and God will make all things new again, even as the world around us seemingly erodes with climate decay, violence, injustice, human migrations, individualism, and consumerism. We should be honoured and privileged to have the choice to enter what God is doing.

God will make all things new regardless of our choice, and this is exactly why we must regularly reaffirm our call to action—our baptismal covenant—to be the people of promise in a world; to be born anew each day. Perhaps, God makes this new day for us to rethink why we are and why we do Church. God making all things new implies that God makes the Body of Christ new as well. It may be time for us to consider just how many parishes need to move into crisis mode before we realize that God is trying to make something new.

I pray and hope that this will be a year of revival and rebirth for the Body of Christ, and that we will find courage and faith on the pathway that God is leading us.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

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Advent: Neither Here nor There

ANDREW RAMPTON

Photo: [Jonathan Knepper](#)

Today, it is commonplace for us to think of Advent as the beginning of the Church's year and the time of preparation for Christmastide's celebrations. This is how we arrange our liturgical calendars and, at worship on the morning of the First Sunday of Advent, people are often heard wishing one another "Happy new year!" This is often done with a knowing smile, a gesture to the countercultural recognition of a new year that happens about five weeks before the civic new year. Advent is the beginning of the year and a familiar cycle of feasts and fasts, seasons, music, art, and traditions. But this has not always been the case. The placement of Advent in the Church's year has varied over time, leaving it, in the long view of history, neither here nor there. And perhaps this is particularly appropriate for this season.

Advent's connection to Christmas seems impossible to separate. The season is filled with images of angels bearing news, John the

Baptist's prophecies, and stable-centred Nativity scenes with empty mangers, all pointing to the arrival of the Christchild on Christmas. Even the secular world has adopted Advent calendars, beginning on December 1 rather than the first day of Advent, marking the days to December 25 and the many celebrations observed on it. Advent also reminds us of Christ's promise to come again, to return in glory and majesty on the last Day. This is especially apparent this season, in Year C of our current lectionary. On Christmas, even as we sing lullabies at the crèche, we remember Christ's promise to return and complete the work begun so long ago.

With this deep connection between Advent and Christmas so firmly entrenched, it may seem strange to think of a time for Christians in the West when there was a midwinter season of preparation and waiting that had nothing to do with December 25. In fact, before the year 380, there is no good evidence for the celebration of

Christmas as its own feast day in the West, outside of Rome and parts of North Africa. For those first four centuries the major midwinter feast for Western Christians was Epiphany on January 6. The Epiphany celebration in those days had a broader scope than today and included the visit of the magi as well as the story of the Nativity and the Baptism of Jesus.

Being that Epiphany was such an important feast and full of associations with the presence of God among humanity, the coming of light in time of darkness, and the baptism of Jesus, it was a popular day for the baptizing of new Christians. The tradition for many centuries—and still in some churches—was that feasts and baptisms were preceded with periods of fasting, prayer, and preparation. Epiphany was no exception, and it is likely that the origins of our Advent lie in this pre-baptismal preparation period.

Of course, while there may have been a general agreement among Christians about the importance of Epiphany and the need for preparation for the feast, there was no kind of uniformity about these practices. There are letters and records of pre-Epiphany feasts of 21 days, 40 days, 40-days-not-counting-certain-days-along-the-way which saw the fast starting on November 11, and many other variations aside. If you think today's squabbles about the most appropriate colour for Advent are difficult, imagine the arguments about when to start the season!

At the end of the fourth century, the tradition of celebrating Christmas as feast on December 25, separated from Epiphany, began to spread through the West. Advent settled into its current form of four Sundays prior to Christmas around the year 600, courtesy of Pope Gregory I. In many places at this time, most notably powerful and influential Rome, it was the Christmas feast that marked the beginning of the Church's new year. Advent was a heavily eschatological season, marking the end of the year, looking toward the end of time with the promise of Christ's return. Indeed, for many generations Advent contained thematic focus on the Four Last Things: Heaven, Hell,

Death, and Judgement. A rather different sermon series than the now-common Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love!

While the length of the season is settled by Gregory I, its character is not quite what we imagine Advent to be. It seems to be understood as a season at the end of the year, before Christmas and its new year, rather than the pre-Christmas preparation that we think of. As with all our traditions, this changes over time. About 550 years later, Bernard of Clairvaux writes about Advent as a time of reflection on the coming of Christ, but he refers to three comings: past, present, and future. To paraphrase his reflection on these three moments: The first coming was visible when Christ was seen on earth and dwelt among humanity. The final coming will also be visible, and all people will see the glory and majesty of Christ. The second coming is invisible in power and spirit, and lies between the first and third, like a road on which every Christian travels.

Here, in Bernard's reflection, I think we have a clue about how to make the connection between the historical Advent and how we observe and keep the season today. Over the generations, Advent has been associated with Epiphany, Christmas, baptisms, different lengths of time, the end of the year, and now, the beginning of the year. We know a God who came once, whose spirit remains with us, and who has promised to come again; a God who makes all things new. While the historical changes of Advent may make it feel like a season that is neither here nor there, I cannot imagine a more fitting character for a liminal season, bridging years, kept by a people who walk together on the road between the first and final comings of Christ.



Andrew Rampton is the Priest Incumbent at Holy Trinity Church, in Winnipeg. He is always up for a conversation about liturgy, especially liturgical calendars and the communion of saints.

Christianity and the New Year

GERRY BOWLER

Photo: [Michael Jasmund](#)

In Colombia they put on yellow underwear because that is the colour of gold and one wants it next to the skin as a new year begins. In Spain they devour twelve grapes as the seconds to midnight count down. In Brazil it is seven which is the lucky number, so eating seven pomegranate seeds will keep your purse full in the year to come. At the stroke of midnight, Danes jump off chairs to leap into coming good fortune while Greeks are eating a piece of sweet vasilopita bread. New Yorkers gather in the cold to watch a giant ball plummet in Times Square while in Sydney a million Australians are gathering on a summer night to watch fireworks explode over the harbour. Around the globe there will be much kissing, drinking, and singing as the planet celebrates the arrival of New Year's Day. And on the morrow, the first day of the year, millions upon millions of resolutions for better behaviour have been made and have begun to be broken. Optimism and steely resolution have started to give way to the realities of our broken natures.

How will Christians be marking these

moments? For the most part, much like their neighbours of other faiths or no faith at all.

Over the past two thousand years Christianity has been ambivalent about the propriety of making merry as one year passes into the next. In late antiquity, when the Romans' Julian calendar began on January 1, their observances of the Kalends drew the ire of churchmen. St Augustine complained about pagans "parading about the streets, carousing at banquets and balls, bawling out mindless chants and soulless anthems." John Chrysostom compared the New Year revels to an invasion, not of barbarians but "of demons leading a procession in the forum. For the diabolical night-festivities that occur today, the jests, the abuse, and the nocturnal dances, and this comedy, absurd and worse than every enemy, took our city captive." Asterius of Amasea spoke of the hypocrisy and tawdriness of the season. Others condemned its cross-dressing, dancing and drunkenness. During the Dark Ages this concern abated as the fall of the Roman Empire in the West and the rise of new

barbarian kingdoms saw new dates used for the start of the year: Christmas, March 25 (Lady Day), and Easter were commonly chosen. Even when Pope Gregory XIII's calendar reforms of 1582 led to more countries returning to the first of January as the beginning of the year, it was a long process. While Catholic Europe quickly adopted the new system, it was resisted by the Eastern, Protestant, and Orthodox Churches. Only in 1752 did the English-speaking world sign on, and it was not until 1923 that Greece became the last European nation to agree.

As far as the Church was concerned, the start of the liturgical year was Advent which began on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. January 1 was not without religious significance – it was the time for marking the Feast of the Circumcision of Jesus (later known as the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus), a particularly important day for those churches in Europe (as many as 18) which all claimed to possess the genuine Sacred Prepuce. In addition, January 1 is the Octave of the Nativity, and the Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. There was also a myriad of saints whose day it is, ranging from Adalbero to Zygmunt.

The Reformation's abandonment of saints' days and most Catholic festivals meant that the infant Church of England had to devise a new liturgical calendar. The early-modern Books of Common Prayer had prayers dealing with the end of the siege of Malta, the snuffing out of the Gunpowder Plot, and the restoration of the Stuart dynasty but had nothing to say about New Year's Day – though they did take note of January 1 by a set of assigned readings and in this collect:

Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

More modern versions of prayer books give brief nods to the Holy Name and the start of the calendar year; sermons are sometimes preached in early January on the virtues of fresh

beginnings, often invoking the perils of climate change or racial disharmony – but there is something essential that prevents churches from making more of January 1 than they do and this also speaks to a difference in the way Christianity and the secular world observe time and its passage.

With the exception of Advent and its anticipation of the *Parousia*, all points on the Christian calendar are rooted in history: they look backward to a moment in time. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus; the deeds and deaths of the saints; the regular rhythms of the natural year. The Church values these temporal anchors more than it values novelty or innovation. At the turn of the year, the secular world cries "out with the old" (equating it with "bad") and "in with the new" (which it makes synonymous with "good"); change is valued – New! Improved! – and traditions must give way in a blast of merriment. Little wonder that churches have never quite tuned in to the popular culture of the occasion.

Christians realize the truth of Robertson Davies' assessment of our nature – "we are human beings, and not creatures of infinite possibilities" – and understand that any improvement in ourselves can only come with God's assistance. Perhaps one way that can both honour our ties to the past and seek hope in the new is in a Watch Night service, a tradition John Wesley learned from the Moravians and one which has been adopted by other denominations. The themes of such services are usually recommitment of one's life to God, gratitude for blessings of the past year, and a looking forward with joy to whatever is to come.

*Another year is dawning,
Dear Master, let it be
On earth, or else in heaven
Another year for Thee.*



Gerry Bowler is a historian specializing in the intersection of popular culture and Christianity. He is the author of *The World Encyclopedia and Christmas in the Crosshairs*.

Parish News Roundup

Grant awarded to 1JustCity Indigenous-led program

In August, PWRDF launched a new grant program to support Indigenous-led organizations supporting their communities, working in Community Health, Climate Action, Empowering Youth and Safe Water. PWRDF is happy to report that three grants have been allocated to Indigenous-led organizations in Eastern Ontario, downtown Winnipeg and Quebec.

The Responsive Programs grant was launched with the objective of partnering with more Indigenous organizations to broaden our reconciliation efforts. Since then, donors have given more than \$62,000 to support the grant, including more than \$8,500 donated through the World of Gifts campaign.

Grants will be awarded on an ongoing basis and donations can be made at pwrdf.org/indigenousgrants. To the right is a glance at the newly-awarded 1JustCity program in Winnipeg.

Elder-in-Residence and Harm Reduction Program

1JustCity, Winnipeg – \$10,000

- Community Health
- Empowering Youth

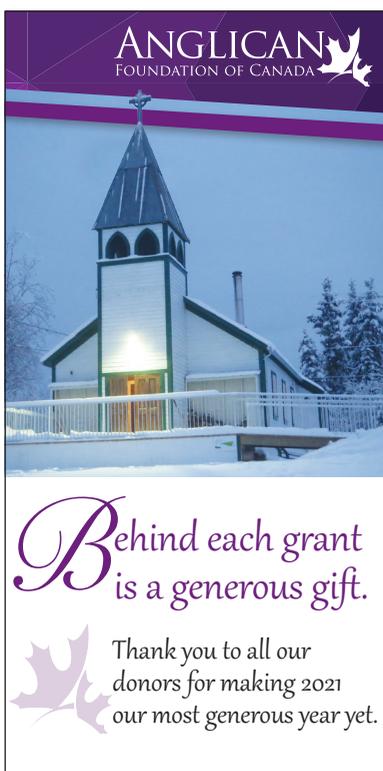
Project goals: *To support community members who have experienced intergenerational trauma, are survivors of residential or day schools or who are coping with addiction.*

1JustCity supports three drop-in community centres in the core neighbourhoods of West Broadway, the West End and Osborne Village.

The program will fund an elder-in-residence and a Harm Reduction/Outreach program, to distribute safer drug use supplies on the streets in those three neighbourhoods.

The Elder-in-residence will be present at each of the 1JustCity's sites one afternoon per week to build relationships. They will also provide occasional informal programming that may include smudging, drumming, sharing circles and more. The Harm Reduction program worker will travel around the areas directly surrounding each of the three drop-in sites one morning per week, distributing safer drug use supplies and information, and building relationships.

- Janice Biehn, PWRDF



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in your congregation others
should know about?**



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Bishop's Message for Christmastide

The angel said to the shepherds, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!' Luke 2.10-14

Resilient, adaptable, hope-filled, and deeply yearning. That is how I would best describe the disciples of Rupert's Land engaged in mission and ministry. Indeed, this is what I saw when I went looking for a "child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." God continues birthing the Body of Christ limitlessly, lovingly, gracefully, and occasionally with protest. Birth pangs signal the intense hope of God's home among us beginning and completing again. Our honour is to live that

rebirthing within the revealing presence of God in all of creation.

You are blessing of comfort in a milieu of dis-ease. You are a familiar voice in a cacophony of distraction. You are shelter amidst the storm of distress. You are a vital story that God is telling during a global wilderness wandering. You have been, for me, a sign that God is again making all things new.

Let us listen and look for God's incarnation in the ordinary and extraordinary, in the expected and in surprises, and in the unfamiliar and familiar. There is a stable somewhere near you which requires your hope and gifts. After our visit to the stable, let us be prepared to share our stories with the world and one another to build upon the faith that is within us. May this year's Nativity be for us a prophetic nudging, a disruptive call, and a re-kindling of relationships. May God bless you, and all whom you love.

Yours in the peace of Christ,
+Geoffery



Upcoming Issues...

February 2022: "Poets" — We're featuring Anglican poets in the diocese and beyond, including conversations with English poet and priest Malcolm Guite and local poet Joanne Epp.

March 2022: "Light" — For the Lenten season, we're reflecting on the Church's role in social and climate justice; featuring essays and photography.

April 2022: "Refugees" — April's issue will focus on Refugees in the diocese, exploring what refugee spirituality means, and what it means to "live in between."

Photo: [Lucas Marcomini](#)


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The Annual Cycle in our lives: What does the New Year mean for us?

DON PHILLIPS

Photo:
Warren Wong

Some four thousand years ago, Babylonian culture celebrated the new year at the beginning of spring in our contemporary month of March. Since that time, various societies have based their year on the movement of both the moon and the sun. Europe (along with those countries who trace their roots to European origins) eventually adopted the Roman Gregorian calendar. In this calendar, January is the first month of the year, which means January 1 is New Year's Day. In ancient Rome it was customary to inaugurate new consulships on this date. Since late medieval times, it is still customary in some places to observe New Year's Day with family gatherings and the exchanging of gifts.

In the Western Christian Church, the liturgical year is based on the Festivals of Easter and Christmas. Easter connects the Christian calendar with Passover and the Jewish liturgical calendar, and Christmas, set on December 25 in the fourth century Roman calendar, coincides with the (then) pagan observance of the winter solstice. The Church in the West set aside a period prior to Christmas, including four Sundays, as the Season of Advent, and designated the First Sunday of Advent as the beginning of the Church year.

What does this cyclical nature of time mean in our lives? From ancient times, it was useful to

be able to designate the passage of time and the cycles of sowing, growth, and harvest in a meaningful way. In several of these ancient societies (in the northern hemisphere), the new year began with the coming of spring and the new growing season. In that agrarian context, there was a strong sense of "life beginning again" and, hopefully, looking forward to the fruitful end of an abundant harvest. Even now, with the New Year happening in the middle of winter (in the northern hemisphere), the sense of an opportunity for renewal and the chance to make changes at the beginning of a New Year is strong. Along with celebratory parties involving too much food and drink, many of us think about reflecting on the past year and laying out changes we want to make – commonly called New Year's Resolutions. These are often aimed at some type of personal self-improvement, whether it be physical, psychological or spiritual.

The same annual cycle plays itself out in the Church year from the First Sunday of Advent to the celebration of the Reign of Christ on the last Sunday of that year. The seasons that make up that year follow from preparing to celebrate Christ's birth and eventual return (Advent and Christmas); realizing the divine significance of Jesus of Nazareth (Epiphany); relating to his challenge to, sacrifice for, and victory over the

brokenness of humanity and creation (Lent and Easter); coming under the empowerment of the risen Christ (Easter and Pentecost); and learning to live in God's Kingdom (the remaining period of the Church Year called Ordinary time).

Of course, many of us participate meaningfully in both of these cycles. How do we engage them? What are our expectations? Do the cycles overlap or influence each other in some way? I believe that the greatest overlap of the two cycles takes place in the celebration of Christmas. In contemporary Canadian culture, many people who have little or no connection to Christianity still observe some kind of preparatory period leading up to Christmas. While it's true that for many of us the secular lead-up to Christmas begins way too early (immediately following Hallowe'en) there still is a common sense of preparing for some joyous event that will hopefully bring out the best in us.

I believe that in secular society there is some sense of Christmas being the final commemorative act of the year before celebrating New Year's as the beginning of a new life cycle. It is often a time of stating intentions for changes in personal lives. People make plans for the coming year that might involve vacation trips, seeking different employment, or furthering their education. Sadly, if the drop-off in participation at fitness and physical recreation facilities during later

January and February is any indication, many people quickly abandon their good intentions and pick up much of the activity (or lack thereof) from the previous year.

Advent is the first season of the Christian New Year. We celebrate this season with provocative Scripture readings and sermons, intentional liturgical actions (lighting of the Advent Wreath and pageants for all ages) and beautiful, ornate worship services at Christmas. As a liturgical leader, I have tried to sustain some of this Advent spirit into the season of Epiphany (in January). But the experience of a "bleak mid-winter," the lack of cause for celebration in other areas of peoples' lives, and drop-off of Sunday attendance following Christmas can quench this spirit of "new year enthusiasm." Sometimes, the Advent energy may be recaptured with a well-planned and participatory Annual General Meeting. This congregational gathering, typically held in February, can capture similar imaginations and energies found in the personal plans we make for the secular New Year.

So, does engagement with the "new year" (secular and church) provide an opportunity to re-start? Is it a resource for renewal? The short answer is: it can be! But in both the secular society and the church congregation, it is not enough for an individual to try and re-start or renew on their own. In both arenas, it requires a community. Re-starting requires companions who are equally committed to following through on good intentions and determined to consciously engage the cyclical nature of their lives. It requires support for one another – whether on a new physical fitness regime, or a commitment to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ through being immersed in Christian learning and action. Together with others, both new years can be effective springboards for transformation.



Don Phillips is the former Bishop of the Diocese of Rupert's Land.

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A New Year in Inuit Nunangat

CHRISTOPHER TROTT

Photo: [Daiwei Lu](#)

Aijajaja

Alianai+aliqpuq inuuniarliqtunga

Aijajaja

Akuttujuuk saqirput ulluq suli tauvva

Aijajaja

Aijajaja

It fills one with joy that I will continue to live

Aijajaja

Akuttujuuk is appearing; surely there will be day

**- Sung by Arnaujumajuq in Arctic Bay,
December 1980**

In North Baffin Island, the sun goes below the horizon on roughly November 7 and does not reappear until February 7. It is not dark the entire time; rather, there is ever shortening twilight in the middle of the day. Inuit must rely on the light of the moon and the stars during this period. There is a short time, however, when both the sun and moon are below the horizon. During that period, occurring roughly around Christmas, Inuit look for the rising of the constellation Orion, called Akuttujuuk in Inuktitut, meaning the "shoulders of Orion" (Betelgeuse and Bellatrix, the "shoulders" in the constellation Orion). As Orion appears (saqirput) above the horizon, Inuit know that the sun will be returning soon and that the opportunities for hunting and new life will begin with the return of the sun.



Akuttujuuk

In historical times, when Akuttujuuk appeared, it marked the time for the great tivaajut ceremonies. These ceremonies consisted of a series of competitions (physical/sports competitions for men, throat singing for women, and drum dancing), the calling up and harpooning of Arnaaluk Takanaaluk, the "Mother of Sea Animals," and concluded with spouse exchange organized by the shamans. The whole point of the ceremonies was to re-create the entire universe: physical, animal, and social relations through the people's actions.

It so happened that the tivaajut coincided with the celebration of Christmas. Inuit first

encountered and celebrated Christmas with the whalers who began to winter over in the north starting in 1854. While the Royal Navy required daily prayer from the Book of Common Prayer to be said on all ships, such was not the case for the whalers. Religious observance was determined by the captain of the vessel. It is not clear that Inuit were apprised of the celebrations' Christian content, but they quickly learned that it was a time of feasting, games, dances, and general revelry. Remember, too, that most of the whalers were Scots from Dundee who celebrated Hogmanay with even greater enthusiasm, thus extending the party for an entire week. Gradually, this morphed into Christmas/New Year's celebrations that lasted from December 21 until January 1. When I was in Arctic Bay in 1979-81, Christmas began on December 21 with the school concert, and then every day consisted of a church service at 6:00 p.m., games in the community hall at 7:30, and dancing until 4:00 a.m. Community-wide feasts punctuated these daily activities on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. By celebrating God's re-creation in the birth of the Christ child, the community continues to re-create the universe every year.

As Akuttujuuk moves across the sky it continues to celebrate the returning daylight. In Igloolik, when the sun appears above the horizon for the first time in early February, all the lights and lamps in the houses are turned off. A new fire is struck in a qulliq (the seal oil lamp), and the children run from house to house bringing the new flame to each one and receiving candy and gifts in return. Truly, the new year has arrived.

Now, every year in December as I watch Orion swinging up into the night sky, I pause and sing Arnaujumajuq's song and think of the new world to come.



Christopher Trott is the former Warden of St. John's College.



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