

TAKE FIVE WITH FIVE OAKS

DECEMBER 2011 EDITION

Five Oaks is a United Church Education and Retreat Centre located on a beautiful piece of property near Paris, Ontario

2011 Journey to Bethlehem (J2B)

Ever since my enthusiastic then-eight-year-old daughter volunteered to be the innkeeper's daughter in 1999, Journey to Bethlehem has been a family tradition. My younger daughter and I joined the market vendors and "sold" fresh fry bread to the hungry travelers coming to pay their taxes.

Both girls delighted to see their dad as a Roman Soldier and yet they saw how some children and also adults were frightened by the show of "force" as the soldiers moved the crowd toward the tax collector's stall. One year, the theme of the journey focused on the soldier's perspective: Did they miss their families? Did they embrace their role as enforcers of the empire? Were they well treated by the system they were obliged to uphold? We often discussed the politics of empire and my younger daughter has developed a passion for ancient history.

So mixed with the fun and excitement of the play acting, the warm wood fires on sparkling cold nights, and the clamour of the marketplace, we experienced a lot of learning as the yearly themes rolled out: homelessness, poverty, power, hope, love.

And always there was the reminder that the birth of a baby means new optimism for the world and a call for all of us to treat each other with kindness, as we would a newborn, throughout the whole year. Thanks Five Oaks.

- Karen Odegard



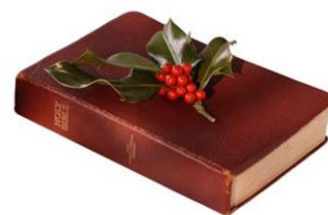
J2B A Spiritual Journey for All Ages

Journey to Bethlehem is truly a spiritual journey for all ages. Our family traveled from Kitchener to Bethel United Church to be bussed to 5 Oaks. We were greeted by a joyful carol sing. With perfect timing, we were interrupted by a very loud Roman Soldier barging in and calling our family (Issachar) to pay our taxes to Caesar.

Our Journey took us from a prophet to beggars to some gossipy women at a well. We shopped in the market place, although the Roman Soldiers advised us to save our money for the tax collector. After a hard day's travel, we searched for an Inn, but there was no room. We met shepherds, who guided us to a heavenly angel, standing on the garbage bin, as Tessa (7), pointed out. The angel proclaimed the good news that a child was born, and pointed us to the manger and baby Jesus. The journey ended perfectly with treats, cookies, hot chocolate and apple cider.

We decided to return the next night as members of the cast. Jenn and the girls, Tessa and Myra (3), were in the marketplace. I can still hear Myra yelling out, "Spices, Spices." I had as much fun as the kids, dressing as a Roman Soldier and yelling out "Hail Caesar". We all felt it was a privilege to be witnesses to the Journey of Mary and Joseph, and birth of Jesus Christ. During this Season of Advent, The Kettles Family wish you all blessings and a Very Merry Christmas!

- Brian Kettles for the Kettles Family (pictured below)



Words to Ponder

From home to home, and heart to heart, from one place to another. The warmth and joy of Christmas, brings us closer to each other.

- Emily Matthews

Upcoming Programs

Included here is a sampling of upcoming programs. For a full list of programs visit the Five Oaks website www.fiveoaks.on.ca

- Rethinking Youth Ministry, January 27-29, Cost; \$250
- Silent Retreat, January 27-29, Cost; \$295
- The Spiritual Practice of Listening, January 30, Cost: \$25
- Mother & Daughter Retreat (daughters between 8-11 years of age), February 3-5, Cost: \$300 for mother and one daughter
- Male Spirituality Circle, two retreats offered, February 6-9, and February 14-17, Cost: \$340
- Spirituality Through Photography, February 17-19, Cost: \$295
- Confirmation Retreats, Feb 24-26, March 23-25, Cost: \$150

Looking for Christmas gift ideas?

What about gifting the people in your life with an experience of Five Oaks? Our evening Spiritual Practices programs would make an excellent gift. An individual workshop is only \$25! Simply contact Jenny in the office to arrange for a personalized gift certificate.

