

Christine's Story for Christmas Eve

For those of you that weren't here last year, don't worry. I wasn't here for Christmas service either. Perhaps some of you have come because you felt it was the thing to do. You just know you're supposed to come to church on Christmas. And you made the effort to come. Well done. You can now check the box – attended church at Christmas. Check. I stand before you today because I can relate. I first came to St. John's on Easter Sunday and I checked the box – proudly and in pen! But since then I've come to realize that being a Christian isn't about checking boxes. It's not about faithfully attending church. It's not about the songs, the Sunday school, the great people you meet. It's not even about the potlucks. It's about Jesus and you. Your relationship with the Father. Plain and simple. Everything else is indeed important, for unless you attend church, how can you come to know Jesus? Or form relationships with other Christians if you don't break bread together. But at the core, it's all about you and Jesus.

My story doesn't have a punch line. There's no wow factor. There isn't even a particular day or event that I can pinpoint. For me it's been a gradual process. I wasn't brought up in the church. My parents' didn't have me baptized. They believed that I would choose when I grew up. And I tried – I'd gone to church sporadically, we'd baptized our girls, I took an Alpha, introduction to Christianity course, I tried really hard to be a good person. I prayed a lot when we were trying to have children. I WAS a Christian – I checked that box. To be honest, I never really thought that I was missing out. I'd never had anyone tell me that it was about a relationship. I thought it was all about 'doing'. You know, going to church, baptizing your children, being a good person. I thought that's what being a true Christian was and like I said, I'd checked the box.

So last Easter Sunday... We decided that we would go to church. Of course, we didn't know which church so I Goggled "Anglican Churches in Richmond Hill" and a list came up. We chose the nearest one. 45 minutes later we walked in and were immediately welcomed. I thought this is pretty laid back! People were coming and going, children were running around. We sang songs we'd never heard before and our girls attended and enjoyed Sunday school, on their own, for the first time. I left the building that Sunday knowing that our lives would be forever changed. What I didn't realize was that I needed to be changed, I needed to grow. It wasn't enough to do it for my children. I had to do it for me too. And I certainly never expected such transformation in my husband.



Stuart and Christine Fraser

Over several months our entire family grew spiritually. We started making real connections with people. We started praying as a family. We read bible stories. We started the longest and best

Alpha course ever. We started talking to others about Jesus. I realized just how little I knew and how much hope and promise there is for all of us.

And then in September we had our church weekend. I'm not sure I can express to you with words how much that weekend transformed me. I simply couldn't get enough. I'd heard so much about the church weekend before we signed up. Everyone raved about it. Everyone said it's not to be missed. I was committed. I had high expectations. I was blown away by the teachings and the times of prayer. They were so meaningful; I could relate them to my life. They challenged and continue to challenge me. I couldn't stop thinking about it all. I woke up singing songs, I went to sleep with thoughts on my mind, and I couldn't talk enough about it.

I have a lot to learn. But it is living life with Jesus that is making my life so satisfying and full of purpose. It's a journey that I'm excited about and am thankful that it's a journey I'm not alone in. Thank you my friends at St. John's for sharing your knowledge, your love, your prayers and your friendship.

For those of you that weren't here last year, don't worry. I wasn't here for Christmas service either. But I'm here now and so are you. My hope is to see all of you again really soon – don't wait until Easter!