

WE ARE CALLED...

TO BE LEADERS OF HOPE AND MERCY

December 2016

***“Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come...
And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.” ~ Mark 13:35-37***

The month of December is joyous for many reasons in Edmonton Catholic Schools. Our schools enter the exciting time of Advent, which has us anticipating the birth of Jesus. This scripture passage is one which is often used during Advent. Jesus is giving his disciples a message of hope about the coming of the Messiah, assuring them that they should keep faith in God’s promise, even during challenging times. It calls for us to be alert and to prepare a place for Jesus in our daily lives.

Classrooms will be abuzz with activities that help students to prepare just such a place in their lives for Jesus and explore the great gift of love that our Father has given us in the person of His Son over the four weeks of Advent. In this year where *We are Called... to be Leaders of Hope and Mercy* in Edmonton Catholic Schools, we are reminded of what hope truly means as we prepare for the birth of our Savior.

Our schools and sites also turn their attentions to mercy through their many social justice projects. Our annual *We Care Challenge* is one way in which this occurs. Many of our schools and sites carry out a variety of engaging activities to raise funds for the Edmonton Catholic Schools Foundation and Catholic Social Services’ Sign of Hope Campaign. Other schools will collect socks and mittens, build hampers, and raise funds for the many organizations in Edmonton and beyond that help people in need.

We have several exciting enrichment opportunities for students who are passionate about music through our All-City Choir and All City- Band Programs. These highly committed students come together regularly to hone their skills as ensembles. There are several occasions for people to enjoy these spectacular groups at their Christmas concerts. The concerts start at 7:30 pm: All City Choir @ St. Joseph’s Basilica- Dec. 5, Junior All City Band @ John L. Haar Theatre (MacEwan)-Dec. 7, Senior All City Band @ U of A Convocation Hall – Dec. 13.

Our Council of Elders hosts a Sacred Pipe Ceremony four times a year to welcome and honour each new season hosted at a Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin (Way of Life) School. The winter ceremony will be held at Our Lady of Peace School on Thursday, December 15. This is a time to celebrate friendships, welcome new friends to the circle, and to ask God/Creator for his blessings. If you are interested in attending the Sacred Pipe Ceremony, please contact The Council of Elders office at 780-471-2360.

There are many times where we report our accountability to the public. There are two major reports of this nature which will be presented at the November 29 Public Board of Trustees Meeting, our *Audited Financial Statements, August 31, 2016* and the combined *Annual Education Results Report 2015-2016 and Three-Year Education Plan 2016-2019*. Once approved by the Board of Trustees, the reports will be posted on our public website on the **Annual Reports and Results** page at https://www.ecsd.net/AboutUs/annual_reports/Pages/default.aspx.

As we turn our eyes towards Christmas and the birth of Jesus, we also reflect upon the willingness of his mother, Mary, to humbly serve our God. Her incredible faith, echoed in her joyous acceptance of the news that she was to give birth to the Messiah, reminds us that God calls on us, too. Pope Francis shared the following thought on Twitter - "Mary is the woman who says yes, a yes of surrender to God, a yes of surrender to her brothers and sisters. May we follow her example." (02/13/16) Mary's 'yes' changed our world!

I wish you all a blessed Advent and a Holy Christmas as you turn your eyes towards a lowly manger in the town of Bethlehem and the precious gift of love to be found there!

Sincerely,

Joan Carr
Superintendent