



Saint Paul's Episcopal Church

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Dear members of St. Paul's,

Every year we go to Toronto for Christmas, and every year I am amazed by how little I know the city of my childhood. Neighborhoods I lived in are unfamiliar; I know few faces; and, left to my own devices I am sure I could never find the house where we lived upon arriving from Scotland. There is one intersection I remember well, however. It is imprinted in that primal area of my brain that I rarely access. For the first time in decades, this year we drove along Scarlett Road to the underpass.

* * *

I did not read the headlines of the Toronto Star that gray day – six-year-old kids don't read headlines. Or at least they didn't in 1952. It must have been late winter, because the falling precipitation was more rain than snow. I remember I was wearing a dark green wool coat, a turquoise cap that kept my ears warm, and I was carrying my Rudolph-the-red-nosed reindeer umbrella that Santa had recently brought me. I had stayed after school to help Miss Coe clean the blackboards. I enjoyed cleaning blackboards – I was a weird kid. Thus, it was after 4:00 p.m. when I began my solo walk home. Darkness comes early in wintertime Toronto, and the rain made the day gloomier still. Nearly halfway home, along Pritchard Avenue, a car pulled alongside me. Obviously I had been told never to get into cars with strangers. But, "it's my job to take little girls and boys home from school on rainy days," the man said. Well, that made all the difference in the world – grownups don't lie, do they?

I climbed into the car and off we went. "Do you like horses?" the man asked. "Oh yes," I replied. "Would you like to see my horses?" Naturally I thought that was a great idea. He drove north – along Scarlett Road and through the underpass, towards rural countryside unknown to me. After a long drive we turned left, onto a dirt driveway. I could see stables at the top of a hill and someone working there in deep shadow. Suddenly, the man said we had to leave. "Why?" I asked. "It's getting late and I need to take you home," he replied. About four blocks from where he picked me up he pulled to the curb and told me to get out of the car. "But I live three blocks down there," I said, pointing toward my street and thinking I was really being cheated out of a ride home. The man insisted he had to go, so I got out and walked calmly home, into the arms of my frantic mother, father, sister, the principal of my school, and several police officers! I could not understand what all the fuss was about, but everyone seemed mightily upset. The next day two detectives picked me up at school and drove me around the city, asking strange questions, trying to see what I could remember. I'm afraid I wasn't much help, and they scared me much more than my abductor! At home we never spoke of the incident again. We did move out of the city shortly after, however.

No, I don't think God saved me so that I could come to Wilmington and help save St. Paul's – that would be hubris of the highest order. *Guard your children well* – that is the lesson of my story. Be thankful for all the blessings of this life, and as it says in Isaiah, "Sing to the Lord a new song, sing His praise from the ends of the earth . . ." If we do this, God will save St. Paul's, I know He will. He saved me, didn't He?

Yours in Christ,

Lynda Miller, Senior Warden

P.S. If I had read the newspaper headlines that day, I would have known there was a serial killer of children roaming the streets of Toronto.