

Muslims returning to their mosques

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Immaculate in Richmond Hill.

Young married people were left confused about the meaning of recent events, life and God, he noted. "One mother said, 'None of us is safe anymore'."

DeGale said he believes "God takes good" out of every situation and that something can be learned from whatever is painful and hurtful. "Hope is what makes us realize life is worth it," he added.

The terror shook people into reality and has woken some up to the spiritual aspect of their lives, said John Hayward, minister of Newmarket's Crosslands Church, which had its first service Oct. 22. People now appreciate Christmas and family more, he suggested. "I think people are more generous than they were."

Certainly, the pain is felt by members of many faiths here. "Generally there is more alertness to spirituality and the need to get together. Yes, we feel it," Rabbi Yisroel Landa said, before members of the region's large Israeli community gathered to celebrate Hanukkah in a Thornhill hall.

"The shock of Sept. 11 may be forgot by Americans and Canadians but not Israelis," said Landa, who

leads an Israeli congregation for Chabad-Lubavitch. Landa noted Israel sustained heavy losses for a small country on Sept. 11 and in other incidents of violence. "It didn't begin (with Sept. 11) and didn't stop there," he said.

Muslims believe if one innocent person is killed, it is as if a world is destroyed, said Zafar Bangash, president of

"We (Muslims) had nothing to do with it, so why should we be afraid?"

Islamic Society of York Region.

There are people who ask questions, such as Why doesn't God prevent these calamities? But God doesn't operate that way, Bangash said in an interview. "God has given us a choice. We can do right and we can do wrong."

Still, there is apprehension in the Muslim community "that we are being targeted and labeled, that we are basically being held guilty by association (for terror)," he added.

"Initially attendance at our mosques had declined, precisely because of this fear. But we told them, 'We had nothing to do with it, so why should we be afraid?'"

"At the end of the day all

religions preach the same thing," said Shabbir Mohamed, public relations chairperson for the Jaffari Islamic Centre in Thornhill. "They all preach peace and respect for each other. There is no such thing as a violent religion."

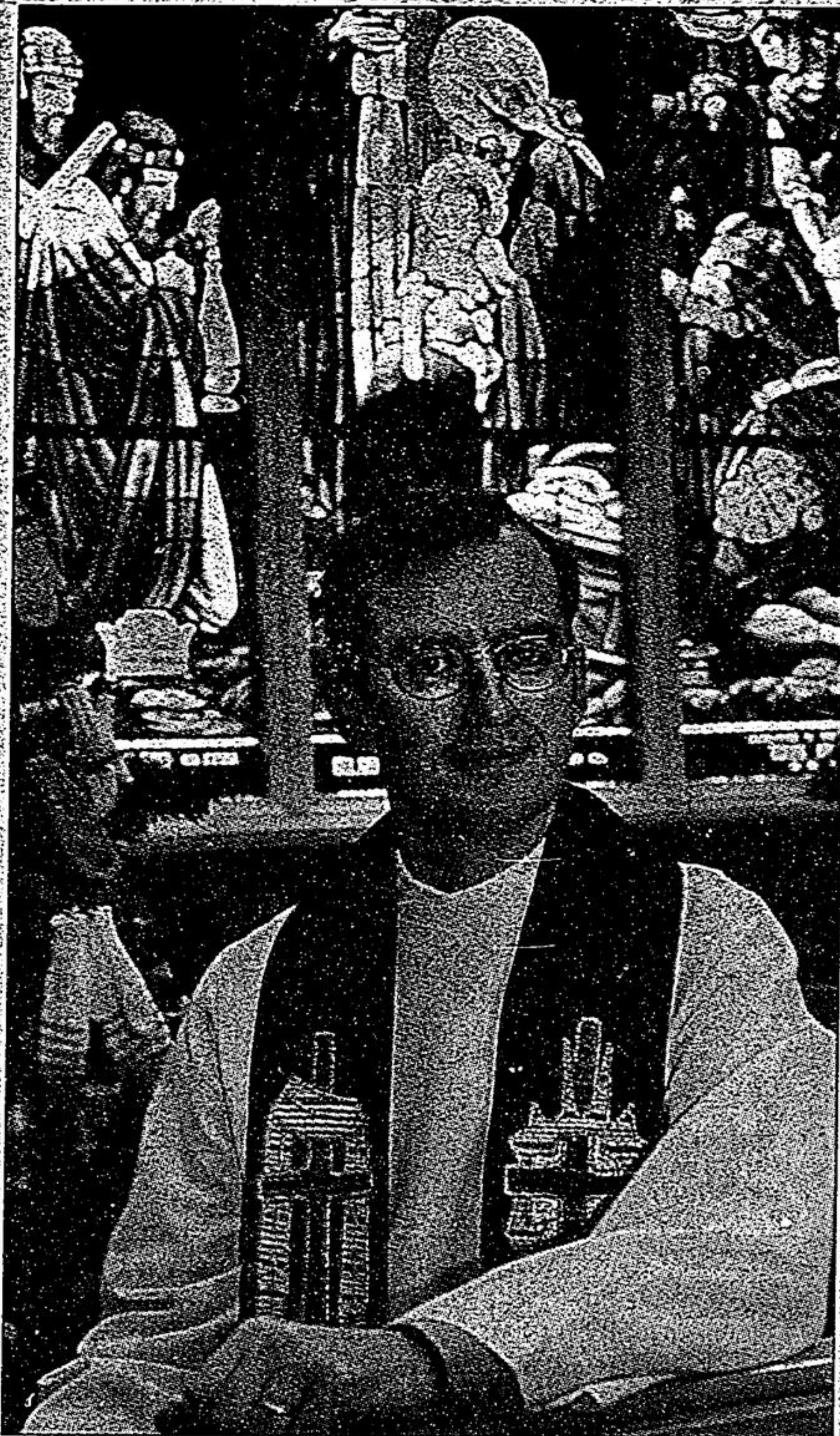
Rev. Robin Wardlaw of Trinity United Church in Newmarket said although people's faith was affected by Sept. 11, they have been adjusting with God's help to a life with less certainty.

"I'm seeing people who are more open to faith matters and to people of other faiths, especially Muslims."

"People have decided we can't ignore the Muslim faith or any faith, nor is our world as safe and predictable as we thought on Sept. 10."

For some, the insecurity of Sept. 11 in the back of their mind feels worse than it does for others. The community, not just parishioners, were invited to a service Dec. 23 to mark the longest night, otherwise known as "Blue Christmas" at Grace Anglican Church in Markham.

The service is for people who have lost someone and do not want to "pretend they are happy, happy like everybody else, if they're not," said Paul G. Walker, parish priest. It's "an opportunity to light a candle and say a person's name if they want," he said.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Newmarkets Trinity United Church pastor Robin Wardlaw sees "people (since Sept. 11) who are more open to faith matters and to people of other faiths, especially Muslims."

Train, car collide

A woman narrowly escaped death after the vehicle she was driving was hit by a train on Vivian Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville just before noon Friday.

When the vehicle struck the engine of the CN train between Kennedy Road and McCowan Avenue, it set off the air bag. The unidentified woman was taken by ambulance to hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

Whitchurch-Stouffville firefighters assisted. A section of Vivian Road was closed and the CN crew worked to clear the track.

Politicians meet at legion levee

Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson and members of council are slated to drop by the Royal Canadian Legion in Stouffville for the annual Branch 459 levee.

This meet-and-greet with residents takes place 1 p.m. New Year's Day. A luncheon will be served and music is available in the downstairs lounge.

The legion is on Ninth Line just north of Main Street. For more information call 905-640-1714.

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE

LCBO offers responsible hosting tips for safe, fun holiday entertaining

"The best way to stop drinking and driving incidents is before they happen," says LCBO Chair and CEO Andrew Brandt. "Hosts should plan in advance to provide safe celebrations and encourage responsible drinking by ensuring guests never drink and drive. These tips are great reference tools for every responsible host."

- 10. Don't plan physical activities when you serve alcohol. People are more prone to injury or mishap after drinking.
- 9. Always have low-alcohol and alcohol-free drinks available for your guests.

- 8. Serve fresh, non-salty snacks. Try veggies, cheeses and light dips — they taste great and don't make your guests thirsty.

- 7. Be prepared for overnight guests — just in case (Limiting themselves to one drink an hour will help some people avoid becoming intoxicated — but not everyone. Alcohol affects everyone differently, depending on their gender, height and weight, age and what they've eaten. Everyone should know — and stay within — their individual limits. As a responsible host, you should encourage peo-

- ple to stay within their limits and drink responsibly.)

- 6. Mix drinks yourself or designate a bartender. Guests usually drink more than they serve themselves.
- 5. Have a plan to deal with guests who drink too much. Someone reliable should help you keep things under control.
- 4. Find out how your guests will be getting home. Be prepared to take away car keys. Know your designated drivers. Have cash and phone numbers for taxis.

- 3. Stop serving alcohol well before the party is over. Bring out more alcohol-free drinks and food.
- 2. Plan ahead so that it's easy to follow this advice. If a legal problem arises, having used these tips may help.

And the number one party tip is:

- 1. Don't drink too much yourself. As a host, you can stay on top of potential problems better when you can think clearly and act quickly.

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