There was a radio program I used to listen to from time to time on commercial radio. I think it was a syndicated program that was broadcast by several different stations. A person would begin telling a story giving enough information to hold your interest and then invite you to stay tuned for the rest of the story. There would then be a break while several commercials would be run and then a return for “the rest of the story”. Today’s reading from the book of Daniel reminded me of that radio program. Enough detail to get me interested and leaving me thinking there must be more to the story. I have to admit that over my years in ministry I have not spent a lot of time thinking about Daniel and his story. I do recall something about a den of Lions, oh and something about a furnace and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. How much of Daniel’s story do you know? What do you recall?

It turns out there is a lot more to Daniel’s story more than I can speak about in the next half hour. Daniel’s story begins in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim. Actually, it starts much earlier that that with his birth and childhood but the book of Daniel doesn’t give us any of those details. So, in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The siege was successful and the Lord let King Jehoiakim fall into the power of King Nebuchadnezzar, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God which were taken off to King Nebuchadnezzar’s treasury. He also took members of the royal family into exile in Babylon, to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans, among them Daniel and his friends. The king made provision for them to have wine and food from the royal stores. Daniel and his friends wanting not to be defiled by the royal rations asked if they could be allowed a special diet of vegetables and water. The palace master hesitated thinking that they would not thrive. Daniel convinced the palace master to do a ten day experiment. At the end of the ten days Daniel and his friends were obviously in better health than their young Chaldean companions and the arrangement continued. A small victory for a vegan diet a long time ago.

Somewhere along the way King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that left him confused and troubled. He commanded that the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and Chaldeans tell him his dream and to interpret it, threatening them with execution if they did not. It was a completely unreasonable demand. The execution was about to take place when Daniel intervened. He asked for some time and used the time to ask God to provide the knowledge he needed. God provided and Daniel told the King that he had dreamed about a large statue with a head of gold, a neck and chest of silver, a middle of bronze, legs of iron and feet of clay and iron. Further that the statue had crumbled starting with the feet because clay and iron don’t mix and followed by the iron legs, the bronze middle, the silver chest and neck and golden head. Daniel went on to say that the dream was a message that after several generations the kingdom of Babylon would crumble just as the statue had. The king was satisfied by this and there was no mass execution. There is much more to Daniel’s story but as I indicated earlier, that will have to wait for another time.

Dreams were an important part of the faith journey of our ancestors. Jacob, the son of Isacc, had dreams as part of important events in his troubled relationship with his family, as did his mother. Joseph’ son of Jacob had dreams that he unwisely shared with his brothers that led them to sell him into slavery in Egypt. In Egypt Joseph developed a gift for interpreting the dreams of others eventually interpreting the dreams of a pharaoh in a way that led to his having prominence and power in the royal household and eventually allowed him to provide sanctuary for his family as they fled a famine. After many generations the Egyptians forgot about Joseph and what he has done for them turning against the Hebrews and enslaving them leading to the Exodus which is a foundational story for the Hebrew people.

Dreams are an important part of the Christmas story. Joseph is told in a dream to honour his relationship with Mary. The Magi are warned in a dream to not return to King Herod but to return home by another route. And later Joseph is warned in a dream to flee with Mary and her son into Egypt making them refugees and connecting Jesus to the Exodus story. The ancients believed they needed to pay attention to their dreams.

So, what about our dreams? Dreams are not just a part of our sleep. We also dream while we are awake. We call them day dreams and they are part of the vision that guides and directs us.

As we begin this new year what are our hopes and dreams for “the collaboration” and its faith communities. What are our dreams, what are our hopes and wishes, what is our vision for St. Andrew’s Lumsden, for Regina Beach, for Eastside, for Heritage and for St. James. What do we need to do to make our visions, our hopes and dreams into our reality.

Today, I invite you to think about your dreams, the ones you have at night. The ones you have when you are not asleep. How are love, hope, grace, peace and joy a part of them? How might you work to realize them? And may the Spirit, Holy Mystery, be with you as you contemplate and consider. As you work and as you play?