

### HOW DO YOU SPELL JOY?

This morning I typed out the words to the carols we'll be singing next Sunday morning. Struck by the poignancy of one particular line: "*He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations sing...*" I countered "Hmm, I just heard the news and it seems to me that there's not of lot of grace, truth or joyful singing out there."

"*Joy to the world, the Lord is come,*" the title of that song: Not much evidence of that emotion around either. Apart from the occasional *Merry Christmas* and the annual proliferation of retail ads, joy sometimes seems to be in short supply. Even the noise of parties and fun and the anticipated (or hoped for) shouts of glee from someone receiving something very extravagant just don't produce the deep-seated contentment we're looking for in a broken world.

I reminded myself of the real meaning of Christmas and set about renewing my commitment to displaying it. Here's how we're spelling Christmas this week: **JOY** It's a definition that seems ridiculously simple but let me tell you, from my experience at least, it's much easier to preach than to practice.

**J** stands for Jesus and he warrants first place in my life. Trouble is I often want me to be first. Putting him first means making decisions based on what conforms to his commands rather than what I jolly well feel like doing. Then there is the **O** that stands for others. Considering the needs, wants and sensitivities of our immediate world requires a lot of wisdom-based compassion. That leaves **Y** for you (or in this case, me). Another lesson from experience: when our priorities come into line with God's, the joy that results is not dependent on the circumstances or the season.

"...the people rejoiced because they had offered willingly...." (1 Chronicles 29:9)