



## City Centre Church

# The City Centre Scroll - Christmas 2020

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## From Pastor Gabriel’s Desk

Rev. Gabriel’s Christmas Message 2020

As I sit here, I find myself in a strange state of being. No, not the kind induced by alcohol or drugs. The kind you enter when you have a new experience and find yourself at a place you have never been before. See, I tested positive for COVID-19 two days ago. I probably contracted it when helping with classes at my son’s school, a school that was closed the next day because of an outbreak.



I have some shortness of breath and do feel tired. Every now and then I feel an unpleasant stinging pain in my ribs. But it is not what this virus puts me through physically that pains me currently. It is what it puts me through mentally and emotionally. I struggle with the idea of the extent to which this virus controls. It is almost like he is the president who is legally voted out but wouldn’t leave, while I feel I am the president elect that is more deserving to rule over my fate than he is.

But he has moved in uninvited. I cannot ignore him. I have to allow him to prevent me from going to work, seeing people that I care for, and doing things that I like. I can cope with all this even though it is not easy. But what gets to me is his unpredictability. He could leave me in but three days, with me having had no more than average flu symptoms. For most people my age and in my state of health, it is the case. But he could also take me to a tense world of ventilators, hazmat suits, and even final goodbyes through a tablet. There are people my age taken down that road, those who also felt very healthy and fit like me when he first moved in. It feels like I am at his mercy and that the way he extends mercy is unreasonable and erratic. Like a madman spinning cylinder of his revolver blindly before he points and shoots impulsively. Not every chamber has a deadly bullet, but nobody knows when or what shot will be fired next. I don’t like this guy presiding over my fate, taking over, and ruling over so many aspects of life. I’d like to at least have a say in who rules over me, and with this one, I feel I don’t.

I know many know these felling very well and live with much more chronic and serious ailments or challenges. My own grandmother, for instance, is fighting the virus at the age of 90 and it threatens her life way more than it does my own as I write this.

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# PRAYER AND PRAISE

## Praise God For...

- Regular online Zoom Church Services, every Sunday <https://zoom.us/j/435172943> and Facebook Live services.
- Frontline workers in hospitals, care homes, supermarkets, and other essential services.
- Increased scientific wisdom in knowing how to deal with COVID-19.
- The continuation of sandwich-making supplies and volunteers
- New vaccines being approved!
- Keeping us safe
- The knowledge of doctors, nurses, respirologists, etc during these pandemic times

## Prayer For...

- Patience and endurance for the time between now and the end of the pandemic
- A greater understanding of this special time of year in our Christian calendar
- Peace and joy to people and countries around the world
- Peace and stability for war-torn countries
- Shut-ins and small families to feel loved and supported, especially over Christmas time
- Food for the hungry, shelter for the those without ones, and clothes for the needy.
- Safety for children living on their own around the world
- Godly decision-making within governments

## **Prayer for acceptance in uncertain times.**

Lord we are thankful for this advent season. It reminds us that Christmas isn't just a time to spend with family and that it isn't just a time to give presents. It is a time to rejoice in the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. It's a time to remember that your mercies are new every morning and your faithfulness is unchanging. We have been witnesses to these truths. Though COVID has changed our lives, impacted our finances, and our communities, we have seen Your provisional faithfulness daily. In Your mercy You have given us time to ponder, like Mary, how 2020 has changed us as individuals, revealing the attitudes of the heart, the longings of the soul and the depth of our need to depend on You. We thank you for the emergence of vaccines to bring some relief but help us to never forget the lessons You have taught us. Teach us to continually depend on Your mercies and faithfulness daily.

In Jesus name, Amen.



Ezekiel 34:15 "I myself will be the Shepherd of my sheep, and cause them to lie down in peace, the Lord God says. "I will seek my lost ones, those who strayed away, and bring them safely home again."

# ALL THINGS CHRISTMAS

We all need to simplify somewhat, even with Christmas cookies. Here are some homemade cookie hints.

Need an easy way to frost your cookies? Simply mix a little bit of water with icing sugar and a drop of food colouring. Try very little water first, or you can always add more icing sugar to thicken.

Or, alternatively, use marshmallows! Dip one side of a marshmallow in water when the cookies have about 3-5 minutes left to bake. Wetting one side prevents it from sliding off the cookie. This is best done with mini marshmallows. When the marshmallows start to melt but are not too runny, take the cookies out and spread with a spoon. Its best to catch the cookies before the marshmallows brown because they will not spread and are not as attractive!

If you want to make a simple cookie or any cookie really stand out, use chocolate. Dip the whole cookie, or even half the cookie. For an extra treat drop some peppermint extract or candy cane bits into the chocolate as well. Or, thin out the chocolate and drizzle the tops in a zig-zag fashion.

It's a classic problem while cooking or baking. You are missing an ingredient. If the recipe asks for buttermilk or sour cream you can substitute. Sour cream can be substituted with plain yogurt, but not the non fat kind. As for the buttermilk, add a tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice to a cup of milk. Let sit for 5-10 minutes.

And lastly, there is help in keeping your cookies soft. To keep your luscious cookies soft and prevent them from drying out, store them in a glass container with a slice or piece of bread, half an apple or an orange peel. Cookies will absorb the moisture from these items and not dry out as quickly. Alternatively, cookies can be simply frozen.



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“True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.”

-Martin Luther King Jr.

# ALL THINGS CHRISTMAS

Ever wonder how certain Christmas traditions came to be? Lets delve into some old traditions and see how they began.....

Why do we bake cookies? Throughout history people have been known to celebrate with food. During the winter solstice for example. pagans would gather to eat before the cold weather would destroy crops. By the time the Middle Ages arrived, Christians celebrated the arrival of Christ in a similar way but added the expensive ingredients such as butter, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Around the world evergreen trees are widely seen as a universal decoration. Displaying branches as a reminder of the coming spring was frequently done in the pagan world. As well, the Romans would put branches around their temples honouring the god Saturn, the god of agriculture. It's thought that the first time the evergreen tree was used as a decoration was either in Tallinn, Estonia, or Riga, Estonia. In Germany in the 16th century, Christians brought the tree inside their own homes, using it a symbol of everlasting life. Apparently, Queen Victoria had her German husband Prince Albert place a Christmas tree in the palace. This routine became very popular in the interior of homes in England and the Americas.

It is said that the first person to have been seen putting up Christmas lights is Martin Luther. He was walking in the forest one evening and noticed the twinkling stars shining between the tree branches. When we returned home he wanted to create the effects of the lights on an indoor tree by using candles on the branches. Today of course, we use electric lights on strings and even decorate our homes with these bright bulbs.

The year 1380 is the year of the first documented snowman. But mankind most likely was rolling snowballs before that. Due to the lack of resources, monetary issues, and the need for some artistic expression, the Middle Ages was a time when snowman making was extremely popular. Surprisingly, Michelangelo was even commissioned by his patron, Piero deMedici, to build a snowman for the ruler of Florence in a year of unusual amounts of snow! He was not yet twenty years old, but was already extremely talented. According to the New York Times, this snowman was no ordinary feat, but a sort of practice 'run' for his 'Michelangelo' which would be built and sculpted over a decade in the future.

-taken from Dec.2020 Readers Digest (condensed)

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Did you know that there are over 5000 verses in the Bible that call to help the refugee and poor, reach out to the environment, help the downtrodden, etc?

## Announcements and Affirmations

### Garden News:

As a congregation we are thrilled at the work God is doing among us. We imagined through and past COVID about ways to partner with Jesus in our community. The community garden in this regard is a seed that is germinating well. We have interest from people to participate and construct and we also have an indication that we will receive a grant from the city to help! All this is positive news as we move toward March for planting. Please remember to pray for the building and start of the garden. Your prayers are like water on the freshly planted seeds of the kingdom!

-John Santic, Board of Managers chairman

### Building Committee Report:

The City Centre area of Surrey is currently undergoing big changes. As you move out from the new City Hall, you see many new buildings and sky rises, as buildings develop and the region revitalizes. But for those who live and work in the area, it is clear that there remains issues with poverty, homelessness and drug use. We hope that City Centre Church remains a core part of this neighbourhood in the years ahead, and so we are looking for ways to renew and revitalize as well. Part of the plan includes looking at a new church building, and the core concept is that we replace our current building with a multi-storey facility (Concept 1 – 6 story building focused on low cost housing; Concept 2 – 20+ stories, including a community hub, low-cost housing and other facilities). We have begun initial discussions with a planning group, and also with the City of Surrey. As a group, Session is conducting a visioning session to help plan our direction, our needs and our wants. We want to continue to partner with our community partners including SUMs, and the local schools. So, while COVID has slowed down our planning in 2020, we hope to hammer out firm plans during 2021. A key part will be getting input and hearing from all of our congregation. We all need to make these decisions about our future together.

City Centre Church Building Committee – Neil Singh, Dave Doble, Brenda Locke, Gabriel Snyman, John Santic, Mike Musgrove, Bob Astop



Luke 1:37 “For every promise of God shall surely come true.”



# COOK'S CORNER

## Cracker Crunch

30 whole graham crackers

1 cup butter

1 cup brown sugar

1 cup finely chopped or diced almonds, walnuts or pecans

Ground cinnamon (optional)

3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Line greased 10"x15" jelly roll pan with graham crackers, trimmed to fit edges.

Combine butter and brown sugar in pan. Heat and stir until starting to boil and sugar is dissolved. Boil for 3 minutes, without stirring. Pour evenly over graham crackers.

Sprinkle with nuts and cinnamon. Bake in 350 degree oven 7-9 minutes until bubbly and edges are slightly browned. Sprinkle with chocolate chips and cool. Makes 30 pieces.

## Pink Popcorn Balls

1/4 cup hard margarine or butter

Miniature white marshmallows, lightly packed

1 pkg (3oz) wild raspberry or other red coloured gelatine (jelly powder)

About 1/2 cup unpopped kernels (~12 cups popped)

Melt butter in large saucepan. Add marshmallows. Heat and stir on medium heat until melted.

Add jelly powder. Stir to dissolve.

Pour marshmallow mixture over popped corn in large bowl or roaster. Stir until well coated. Grease hands and shape into 12 balls. Wrap individually in plastic wrap or plastic bags to store. Makes roughly 12 balls. Great to make with the grandkids, or for the grandkids!

## Surprise Cheese Puffs

1/2 cup hard margarine or butter

2 cups grated sharp or old cheddar

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp paprika

1/8 tsp cayenne pepper

1 cup white flour

84 gherkin pickles

Cream first 5 ingredients together in medium bowl. Add flour. Mix well.

Mould 1 tsp dough around 1 gherkin piece until covered completely. Repeat with remaining dough and gherkins. Arrange on ungreased baking sheet. Chill until firm. Bake in 400 degree oven for about



When I told him it would be nice to have breakfast in bed, he told me to sleep in the kitchen!

## Following the Star - John Santic

Christmas is my favourite time of the year. Ever since I was a child, it was a time of mysterious wonder. My family put a lot of energy into the season with my father going especially overboard on decorations. I recall vivid sights, sounds, tastes and smells that bring the memories back to me today. We had a way with traditions at Christmas that deviated from the norm and flirted with the eccentric. I want to share those with you here.

We were Catholics. My mother, father, my two sisters and I attended Corpus Christi Parish in East Vancouver, a short walk from our home. The Christmas season began with the activities of advent. At church, our mouths would recite the liturgies and these words would somehow startle our hearts into attention around the imminent and special time to come. Our house was moved to preparation with all sorts of traditions steeped in Austrian and Croatian heritage. As a kid I dreamt of mountains of snow that never came and gifts that would fill me with an unknown joy.

Are you ready for some eccentric traditions?

Every year, my father built a Bethlehem in our living room. This was no ordinary Bethlehem. It was huge. We brought out the carpentry tools and two by fours and constructed a nativity that consumed our rather large living room. I was the apprentice helping my father build his masterpiece. It had glistening tin foil walls, a blue plush-fabric sky, a big mirror for a lake and plastic duck figurines—were there ducks in Israel? Foil-wrapped cardboard stars hung from the sky and the ground was made from real tree moss. I remember going to Central Park with my father and combing through the forest, picking clumps of moss off stumps and putting them into plastic bags, bugs and all. We would bring it home and carefully place the moss across the Bethlehem terrain and set figurines in their proper places. The wise men were farthest from the manger and moved closer each day until January 6, when tradition suggests they arrived. Joseph and Mary knelt angelic before the empty trough. The scent of winter forest filled our home.

I remember my sister had an old doll, about three feet tall. I'm not sure whether she gave it to my father or he took it from her, but the doll was set apart in true biblical fashion to be turned into a three-foot-tall holy angel. The infant angel had a halo and wings, and her flowing robe was made to shine with silver spray paint. Then my father strung her up outside our front door for all to see. This was embarrassing to me as it looked like a child was hanging beside our door. I wondered what people thought when they walked by: "Hey, why do those people hang their kid up like that?" Glory to God in the highest nonetheless!

Baking was a big thing in our house. Cookies and cakes made their way into our bellies. The process was special as I recall it today. My mother was a force in the kitchen and my passion in the kitchen comes from her. I wish she were here today so my kids and I could play with her for just one Christmas. When we had company, the wine would flow and food covered the dining room table. There was no shortage of cheer and the baking reminds me of the magic of Christmas in so many ways.

The most special moment was the short walk with friends to church for midnight mass. I recall looking up into the sky and seeing the star. I was certain it was the Christmas star of wonder and I followed it to mass with my heart strangely warmed on the cold night. In that moment I believed in the magic of Christmas and the story of Christ with us was tangible. Maybe this is why memory and traditions are important no matter how eccentric they may be? When our world is dark, they can help our eyes to see the star that signals the hope for the world through Christ.

Merry Christmas!

John Santic

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Need to take a night off to take your family and 'bubble' out of the house? Here is a list of Christmas lights and displays that can be viewed safely from your car.

19367 62A Ave, Surrey. On display until Dec.31, 4-11pm nightly. This is an annual event with donations taken for BC Children's Hospital. Includes 40,000 lights and an interactive musical snowman.

17022 62 Ave, Surrey. On display until January. This is a large and beautiful display with thousands of lights and inflatables. They are collecting donations for the Surrey Food Bank.

9277 132nd Street, Surrey. The lights dance to music and the Grinch is there, as well as Santa in the window.

15097 90A Ave, Surrey. Nightly until Jan.1, 6-10pm. More than 10,000 lights, and a nativity scene.

9241 213th Street, Langley. Here you can tune your radio in to 106.1 and listen to the lights. More than 15,000 lights, set with four singing Christmas trees and more.

6116 163A Street, Surrey. This is a show that starts on the hour and lasts about 35 min. They accept donations for the Parkinsons Society of BC.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- That you can still listen to sermons even though you do not have access to wifi or have a computer? There are numbers to dial to connect to Zoom, or simply ask your elder for information.
- That Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church is still making muffins for us to put in the bagged lunches for the homeless? They began with making hundreds of banana muffins



from over ripe bananas we had. Then they found a connection with a local farm who donated pumpkins for pumpkin muffins. They have made well over 6,000 muffins!

- A few primary classes at Surrey Christian School have

made some Christmas cards for the homeless. They will be popped into the lunch bags as a little surprise for clients.

- That Gabriel regularly posts blogs on the church's Facebook page and on the church's website. Have a read and keep up to date! It's also a great way to introduce others to our church family.



"Someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am, so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. I baptize you with water but he will baptize you with God's Holy Spirit!" Mark 1:7-9



## From Pastor Gabriel's Desk — Continued

This all made me think. I realize what I and many others are feeling during this pandemic is pretty much how life must have felt under Roman occupation during the time of Mary. The Roman Empire by this time functioned like a virus. It didn't see its duty as that of giving or enhancing life to everybody within its borders. It rather saw its mission as sucking life from all to enhance its power in the form of unreasonable taxes, unquestioned submission, and blind allegiance. Every time a uniformed centurion raced into town and spoke down to the people from high on horseback, people expected the worse. Their wings got clipped and their roots got pulled at and starved. And people had little if any say in it all.

Which was why the news of the birth of Jesus was such good news. And also why you will find such a royal emphasis, stating that this Messiah is not just a saviour but a King in the announcement stories. He is a different King with a completely different kind of kingdom, one you needn't fear, tolerate, or manage, but one you could breathe in, live, and dance for joy in. Because this king was to know his subjects intimately. His reign was in their best interest as his glory was tied up in his people having life and having it in abundance.

I find it so sad that the coronavirus seems to be the impetus of so many fear mongering conspiracy theories, including ones among Christians. One such theory is that the vaccine might be the mark of the Beast and we shouldn't get it as believers. To me it is akin to loading the madman's revolver with even more deadly bullets. I think at this time we should instead speak of how we are all marked by what the King born in Bethlehem did to make us his own. And about how no virus or threat can change the fact that, through our faith in Jesus, we belong to Christ and are citizens of his heavenly kingdom.

I guess I will have to tolerate my unwanted guest some more, but I am going to tell him that neither in life nor death will he have the last say over me. I might be his hostage and his doings might hide the reality of my King and his kingdom for a short while, but through Jesus I am not his subject nor fated to stay under his rule for ever.

I am not president, but neither is the virus. Because Jesus is the King.

That gives me hope. That gives me joy. The very same kind that made the shepherds excited and Mary full of songs and the Holy Spirit—a hope and joy that will get us all safely there and will trample evil under our feet as we are heading through this journey. Even through the difficult parts.

Merry Christmas!

Gabriel J Snyman

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Entering the house where the baby and Mary his mother were, they threw themselves down before him, worshipping. Then they opened their presents and gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

And this will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Luke 2:12

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." Luke 2:15

And these verses display Mary's obedience and joy at hearing she is to be the mother of Jesus, "He has looked with favour on the low status of his servant, Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favoured because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honours him as God."

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Matthew 2:5b-7 "...for this is what the prophet Micah wrote, "O little town of Bethlehem, you are not just an unimportant Judean village, for a governor shall rise from you to rule my people Israel."

## THE LAST PAGE

### Canadians love some Christmas traditions!

Statistics Canada say that more than 5.9 million litres of eggnog were sold in Canada in 2018. The word comes from the word 'grog,' as a traditional drink made from water and rum, used primarily in the British naval squadrons in the West Indies.

Ever since 1982, the post office of Santa has employed mailroom elves from Canada. Over twenty million letters from children around have been received. The volunteers have donated over 200,000 hours of their time each year to assist Santa in answering letters.

In the year 2016, Canada had 182 Christmas tree farms. Most farms were found in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. On the flip side, in 2017, Canada exported over two million Christmas trees to over twenty countries.

If your birthday is after 1964 you most likely viewed the holiday special "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" a few times. But did you know that all but one of the characters were performed by Canadian singers, actors, and voiceover artists at the RCA Victor Studios in Toronto? The only exception is Sam the Snowman.

-taken from Readers Digest Dec. 2020

### COVID Funnies...

"I'm going to stay up on New Year's Eve this year. Not to see the New Year in, but to make sure this one leaves."

"The dumbest thing I've ever purchased was a 2020 planner."

"The buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other."

"Keep in mind, even during a pandemic, no matter how much chocolate you eat, your earrings will still fit."

"I never thought the comment 'I wouldn't touch him/her with a six foot pole' would become a national policy, but here we are."

"When does season TWO of 2020 start? I do not like season one."

"If I had only known in March it would be my last time in a restaurant, I would have ordered dessert."

"I still can't believe people's survival instincts told them to grab toilet paper."

"At the store there was a big X by the register for me to stand on...I've seen too many Road Runner cartoons to fall for that one."

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"Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you."

- Pope Francis

"People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other."

-Martin Luther King Jr.