

The City Centre Scroll - Christmas 2021



From Pastor Gabriel's Desk

Weird Christmas Traditions

Austria. Here the beloved St. Nicholas has an evil counterpart called "Krampus". During December you won't only see Christmas Father costumes but also terrifying Krampusses strolling the streets, looking for bad children. There is also an annual Krampus parade in Vienna.

Spiderwebs are something you might associate with Halloween. Well, in the Ukraine these webs are an important Christmas decoration. Legend has it that a poor widow wanted to do Christmas decorations one year for her children but could not afford any. The spiders in her house took pity on her and spun webs all around the Christmas tree and house. The next morning the children woke up to a beautiful array of spiderwebs decorating their humble dwelling.

In Japan Christmas is not a national holiday but the KFC branches in Japan long ago decided to offer Christmas meals. It has grown into a tradition and thousands of Japanese people have KFC on Christmas Eve. I will chicken out on this one!

A tradition from 16th century Germany is to hide a pickle in the Christmas Tree. The child that finds it gets an extra gift. Some say it originated in Spain, not Germany. Two Boys were imprisoned in a pickle barrel there and set free by St. Nicholas.

In Caracas there is a tradition that people roller-skate to mass on Christmas morning. Authorities even close the streets to other traffic so prevalent this tradition is. It is said that children should tie one lace of their roller skate to their toe and let the skate hang out the window so that their friends can wake them up to join them.

In Finland people love their saunas and many homes have their own. On Christmas eve there is a tradition where you pay respect to ancestors on Christmas eve by sitting naked in a sauna for a good session with the "sauna elf" before you head out for celebrations.

In the days leading up to Christmas children in the Netherlands place their shoes by the fireplace in the hope that they would be filled up with small gifts by Sinterklaas. They often leave a carrot in the shoes so that Sinterklaas's trusty steed Amerigo should have something to eat. In the old days, naughty children would get a potato in the shoe instead of the gift but the Dutch in time went soft and don't do the potatoes anymore.

In Iceland, a giant cat was believed to roam the countryside during Christmas

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PRAYER AND PRAISE

Praise!



Praise For...

- The increased number of folks attending church, including new faces and former friends/members
- All of the frontline workers keeping us safe in the medical facilities, seniors residences, and other care facilities
- The Snymans becoming new Canadian citizens!
- The technology that is available to us to broadcast our services
- All the volunteers that make the church function
- Our church family
- An amazing community Christmas Party and celebration.

Prayer For...

- The coronavirus to disappear
- Recovery and remuneration to those farmers and residents of the Sumas prairies
- Comfort and peace to those who find the holiday season challenging
- More members for the board of managers
- The peace that passes understanding even in difficult times
- Food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless and life for the addicted
- Those who attended the Christmas bbq to continue to feel the love and support we offer in Christ's name
- Celebration Recovery to reach the needs of those searching for answers

Father we are reminded that in the beginning of earth's creation, the earth was in chaos. "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep." Genesis 1;:2. Lord, it feels like 2021 has been a year without form, a year that was dark. Covid has turned the whole world upside-down, economic fallout is still wreaking havoc with businesses, jobs and personal finances. Even in our own precious country, there is division and disunity. Our hearts are grieved for the unsettling upheaval we have been experiencing. How we desire that life could return to normal; how we long to be spontaneous and give a simple hug, hold a newborn baby laugh and cry together without fear. How long, O Lord, how long must we wait for light again?

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8;12. As 2021 comes to a close we are thankful for the reminder that You went into the chaos and dispelled the darkness. Your light brought life, goodness, purpose and hope to the earth. Give us eyes to see You working, give us hearts willing to be yielded to work alongside You. Empower us to find joy in doing for others. Father, we pray for a deeper faith to trust you in the uncertain times and rejoice always in all circumstances. We may not know what 2022 will bring but we do know the One who brings Light into the chaos of this world. Amen.

Thanks to Linda Littlejohn

"After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary his mother and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then , opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." -Matthew 2:11

Weird Christmas (continued from Page 1)

time, known as the Yule cat. Legend has it that good workers would get a new set of clothes from their employers but the cat will devour the lazy ones. To this day people buy new clothes for themselves over Christmas time, lest anyone think they were lazy...and less the legend of the hungry cat was true and it is out to get them.

In Norway you hide away your broomsticks and sweepers on Christmas day. The witches of the area are said to use Christmas day as a day of mischief and tomfoolery in the skies above and you don't want your broom to be an accomplice in their evil mischief.

At exactly 3 pm on Christmas Day, Swedes gather in front of their television sets to watch "Donald Duck and his friends wish you a merry Christmas". Even family lunches and dinners are planned around the broadcast. It originated at the dawn of television broadcasting in the 1960's in Sweden when Disney cartoons were a staple diet in television. Up to 40 percent of Swedes follow this tradition

religiously. Also, Sweden has another tradition stemming from the 11th century called the Yule Goat. It is a tradition that evolved. It used to be a manlike goat led by St Nicholas who had power over evil. In the 17th century men used to wear yule goat costumes and went around pulling pranks on people and demanding gifts. Over time the Yule Goat must have had some conversion because it is now a good creature and the bestower of gifts. The Yule goat is a decoration seen on many Christmas trees.

I imagine that some believers will look at all this and say: "This is not what Christmas is all about!". They do have a point. It is ever so easy to make Christmas about ourselves and other things instead of Christ. Almost like a child more interested to play with the gift wrapping rather than with the gift. But there is also another way to look at this and say that all these unique traditions across the globe shows that Jesus' birth was so impactful on the course of human history that nobody can ignore it. It kindles the imagination (it is like Jesus's birth in turn gave birth to many ideas and rituals), it gives people hope and joy, even those that have not come to faith yet. In whatever way people celebrate and fantasize around Christmas time, it is undergirded by the reality of God's Son becoming flesh, One of us, to save us. I think God finds great joy in all the weird and unique ways people embrace and unwrap his ultimate gift, even though some might still choose to play more with the wrapping than engaging the gift itself. God knows that one day all will know and acknowledge what a Great Gift He has given us in Jesus.

You know it now together with thousands of other believers across the world. Some of these people might have customs you find weird and odd. But the fact that—apart from all the differences between them and us - one important similarity binds us close and de-alienates us from each other: God's love for us, shown in Jesus.

May this peace and joy burn brightly in you this Christmas!

In Christ
Gabriel J Snyman
December 7th 2021



"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." -Isaiah 11:1

Holiday Gingerbread

We all know the gingerbread man fairy tale, but do you know the history of the Christmas sweet that we all know and love to decorate? There are actually many forms of gingerbread, including gingerbread cake, gingerbread cookies and of course, gingerbread that is made into candy houses. Until the 15th century, the term gingerbread meant preserved ginger. Looking way back to its origins, ginger root was first grown in ancient China where it was quite commonly used as a medicine. Due to the Silk Road, ginger made its way to Europe. In the Middle Ages spices were used heavily in meat preservation, and ginger became popular for its ability to disguise the taste of preserved meats.

Apparently the first known recipe for gingerbread came from Greece in 2400 BC. The cookies were fairly hard and were sometimes decorated with gold leaf and were shaped like animals, kings and queens. They were a usual sweet treat at Medieval fairs in England, France, Holland and Germany. Credit can be given to Queen Elizabeth I for the idea of decorating the cookies to resemble the dignitaries visiting her court.

As for gingerbread houses, they were first seen in Germany in the 16th century. These elaborate houses were decorated with foil as well as gold leaf, and became related to Christmas traditions. The Brothers Grimm may have increased the popularity of gingerbread houses full of candies on the outside, with their story of Hansel and Gretel.

In our modern era, there have been records set for the largest gingerbread houses. In the Mall of America, in Bloomington, Minnesota, the previous record was set in 2006. But that record was broken in 2015 in Bryan, Texas. The latest record breaking gingerbread house was just over 39 000 cubic feet and required a building permit as it was built similarly to a traditional house! During its construction 4 000 gingerbread bricks were used. The house was 60 feet long and 42 feet wide and over 20 feet at its highest point. Eighteen hundred pounds of butter were used, 7200 eggs, and 7200 pounds of flour just to name a few ingredients. They do say everything is bigger in Texas!



“May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!” -Psalm 72; 10,11

A Charlie Brown Christmas

In 1965, Charles Schultz, a devout Christian and creator of the Peanuts comic strip, was asked to create a special for CBS featuring the Peanuts characters. He agreed with one requirement, that they allow him to tell the story of the birth of Jesus. Although the network executives were hesitant and tried to convince him otherwise, he was insistent. As a result, for the past 50 plus years, millions of people have watched a Charlie Brown Christmas” and heard the story of Jesus and “what Christmas is all about.”

It wasn't until a few years back that I realized a “hidden message” was in the film. Linus is a child who seems to have some insecurities as he carries a security blanket with him at all times. In fact, Linus NEVER drops his blanket, except once...

While sharing the message of ‘what Christmas is all about’, Linus drops his blanket at the exact moment he says the words, “fear not”.



In this seemingly innocent moment, Linus delivers a powerful reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. We are to ‘fear not’, for Jesus is born. We needn’t rely on material things for security: we have God with us, “Immanuel” (Matthew 1;23) Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.-the true meaning of Christmas.

Awhile back, someone informed me, indignantly so, that Linus picks up his blanket at the end of the speech so my interpretation must be incorrect. Well, he was right.

Linus does pick up his blanket at the end of his speech. However, he “drops’ it again later....

Amid big bright, colorful, shiny artificial trees, Charlie Brown chose the least of these, a little, wooden tree with just a few branches. Shortly thereafter, Linus uses his blanket to wrap about the base of the tree and says, “Maybe it just needs a little love”. In that moment, the tree “awakens’, stands tall and firm. A reminder that no matter who we are, how many mistakes we’ve made, a ‘little love’ can make all the difference.

*Lets strive to “fear not”
(Luke2;10) and love one another
(John 13;34), not just at
Christmas time, but the whole
year through.*

*Borrowed from Charlene M.
Speer and Christian Life
Ministry on Facebook*



“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1;17

COOK'S CORNER

BREAKFAST SPECIALS FOR XMAS!

Here are some fantastic Christmas breakfast ideas. Tired of the usual bread casseroles? These recipes could be made for a Boxing Day brunch or even New Years morning. Try them both!

Apple Cheddar Dutch Baby.

If you are not familiar with a dutch baby, it is usually a plain baked good, and can also be called a puffed pancake. This recipe is a variation on the theme with the addition of apple and cheese. It serves 4 to 5 (or more if accompanied by more side dishes).

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 apples, such as honey crisp or gala, cored and sliced
- 1 tsp kosher salt divided
- 8 large eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup flour
- 1 1/2 c shredded cheddar cheese preferably sharp or smoked

Preheat oven to 450F. Heat the butter in an oven safe 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Once its bubbling, add the apples and 1/4 tsp of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the apples are just tender, 5-7 minutes. While the apples cook, whisk together the eggs, milk, flour, and remaining 3/4 tsp salt until mostly smooth. It's ok if it has a few small lumps.

Pour the egg mixture into the pan with the apples. Top with the shredded cheese. Transfer the pan to the oven and bake until puffed and golden, 12-15 minutes (check often, may need a few more minutes). Cut into wedges to serve.



Breakfast Nachos

- 2 large tomatoes, finely diced
- 1 avocado, finely diced
- 3 tbsp minced red, yellow or white onion
- 1 large handful of cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp sliced pickled jalapenos finely chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh lime juice
- Kosher salt
- 6 large eggs
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 6 oz. tortilla chips, about 6 cups
- 1 cup coarsely grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup coarsely grated Monterey jack cheese
- 1/2 cup sour cream

Position your rack 6 inches from the broiling element and turn the broiler to high.

Place the tomatoes, avocado, onion, cilantro, pickled jalapenos, and lime juice in a large bowl and season with 1/2 tsp kosher salt. Mix gently to combine and season to taste with more salt if needed. Let the mixture sit while you prepare the nachos. Place the eggs and 1/2 tsp salt in a small bowl and whisk well to combine. Place the butter in a pan over medium heat. Once it melts, add the beaten eggs and cook, stirring until the eggs are just set, about 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and reserve the mixture. Lay the chips in an even layer on a sheet pan, top with the eggs, and sprinkle with the remaining cheese on top of the eggs.

Broil until the cheese is melted. Watch carefully!

Top with tomato mixture and dollop of sour cream on top. Serve immediately. Enjoy!

“I am not a glutton—I am an explorer of food.” -Erma Bombeck

Our Christmas Stories

Will I Ever Get it Right?

Christmas over the years seems to come in glimpses, rather than stories. Funny what you remember. I didn't grow up a Christian. It was more of a "warm, fuzzy" time...most of the time. The beautifully decorated downtown Vancouver Woodward's store windows for sure, brought on warm fuzzies. At home, at Christmas, it seemed more the importance of the big dinner. It was always something to look forward to. But there was always an element of "would things go well" around our house for Christmas? Things could get pretty tense. Like the Christmas my Mom forgot to buy a turnip for our Christmas dinner one year. Who knew Christmas was about a turnip for my Dad? Everything fell apart before we even had dinner and that was the end of the joy that year. The next year my Mom wrapped a turnip in pretty paper and put it under the tree for my Dad. Memorable!



Dave and I got married Christmas Eve twenty-nine years ago this year. It seemed like a good idea at the time? We had just received Christ as our Lord and Saviour in late October of that year. That would certainly be a good time for warm fuzzies. It was a lovely time, but honestly, we really hadn't gotten it right yet. When we started a family, I think my parents wanted to get Christmas right for their grandkids so they would come to our house with a GIANT stocking of toys; much bigger than my children were, stuffed to the brim with Barbies, Lego....etc. My kids would stand in awe as they walked from the car. Then there was the year after my parents had passed and my uncle came to our house for Christmas dinner, but fell asleep on the couch and slept right through dinner no matter how hard we tried to wake him. We definitely didn't get it right that year.

Over the years, of course, Christmases come and go...and as my love, understanding and appreciation for Christ and what He actually did...come to earth on a mercy mission for my



sins...it really doesn't matter as much if I get Christmas right. I have truly had some lovely Christmases as well. But I stress, I worry, and I really do want to get it right. I will never get it right. God got it right by sending His Son. All I really have to do is respond in awe as I worship Him, who knew I could never get it right.

thanks to Susan Daoust for her story

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him." Matthew 2;1-2

Church Classifieds and Info

Fund raising for our new carpet has been very successful but is ongoing—we are over half way there. We hope to make some decisions early in the new year and have the work completed by early spring but still need to raise about 40% of the funds. A big thank you to a who have contributed so far.

Also, we would love to see more members join us in the Board of Managers. This group takes care of the actual church building, inside and out. We arrange for painting, repairing , and general clean up days in the fall and spring as well. We meet once a month in the evenings for roughly an hour, and can accommodate you on Zoom if you prefer. See Jane Kyle at janekyle@telus.net



There is a small duty that needs to be taken on if anyone is interested. For a few decades now, Linda Duddek has faithfully taken care of the advent wreath, and putting it together each year. This task is not a time consuming one and simply needs someone to take care of it and arrange it on the table, taking less than 20 minutes each year. If you are interested in taking on this very important (but simple) responsibility please inform Linda Duddek at church or at lindaduddek@gmail.com (thankyou Linda for your service!)

DID YOU KNOW?

- Some additional monies are still needed to cover the cost of some new carpet. Please prayerfully consider.
- Sisters Closet is planning on returning in the spring? For those new folks, this is an event where we clear out the sanctuary and hang gently used donated clothes for the community to shop for free. Stay tuned.
- That Divine and Alex had a baby boy? Christopher Pemba. Congratulations!

- That we are having a Christmas Eve service Friday Dec.24 7pm? This will be a family friendly evening with special music and décor. And will be only an hour long so you can still go home and shake that special gift!
- That the Snymans have all become Canadian citizens? The ceremony was held Wed. Dec.10 online. Many congratulations to all four of you!
- Are you technically inclined? Perhaps you could help Neil on the occasional Sunday with the

- camera and online service?
- Please consider a special Christmas offering. Our budget for this offering is \$15,000. Envelopes are being handed out or alternatively, write Christmas gift on your cheque of online gift. Christmas offerings will be used to meet the ongoing needs of the church.

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.”

-CS Lewis

A Covid Christmas (anon)

'Twas the night before Christmas, but Covid was here,
 So we all had to stay extra cautious this year.
 Our masks were all hung by the chimney with care
 In case Santa forgot his and needed a spare.
 With Covid, we couldn't leave cookies or cake
 So we left Santa hand sanitizer to take.
 The children were sleeping, the brave little tots
 The ones over 5 had just had their first shots,
 And mom in her kerchief and me in my cap
 Had just settled in for a long winter's nap.
 But we tossed and we turned all night in our beds
 As visions of variants danced in our heads.
 Gamma and Delta and now Omicron
 These Covid mutations that go on and on
 I thought to myself, "If this doesn't get better,
 I'll soon be familiar with every Greek letter".
 Then just as I started to drift off and doze
 A clatter of noise from the front lawn arose.
 I leapt from my bed and ran straight down the stair
 I opened the door, and an old gent stood there.
 His N 95 made him look pretty weird
 But I knew who he was by his red suit and beard.
 I kept six feet away but blurted out quick
 "What are you doing here, jolly Saint Nick?"
 Then I said, "Where's your presents, your reindeer and sleigh?
 Don't you know that tomorrow will be Christmas Day?"

And Santa stood there looking sad in the snow
 As he started to tell me a long tale of woe.
 He said he'd been stuck at the North Pole alone
 All his white collar elves had been working from home,
 And most of the others said "Santa, don't hire us!
 We can live off the CERB now, thanks to the virus".
 Those left in the toyshop had little to do.
 With supply chain disruptions, they could make nothing new.
 And as for the reindeer, they'd all gone away.
 None of them left to pull on his sleigh.
 He said Dasher and Dancer were in quarantine,
 Prancer and Vixen refused the vaccine,
 Comet and Cupid were in ICU,
 So were Donner and Blitzen, they may not pull through.
 And Rudolph's career can't be resurrected.
 With his shiny red nose, they all think he's infected.
 Even with his old sleigh, Santa couldn't go far.
 Every border to cross needs a new PCR.
 Santa sighed as he told me how nice it would be
 If children could once again sit on his knee.
 He couldn't care less if they're naughty or nice
 But they'd have to show proof that they'd had their shot twice.

But then the old twinkle returned to his eyes.
 And he said that he'd brought me a Christmas surprise.
 When I unwrapped the box and opened it wide,
 Starlight and rainbows streamed out from inside.
 Some letters whirled round and flew up to the sky
 And they spelled out a word that was 40 feet high.
 There first was an H, then an O, then a P,
 Then I saw it spelled HOPE when it added the E.
 "Christmas magic" said Santa as he smiled through his beard.
 Then suddenly all of the reindeer appeared.
 He jumped into his sleigh and he waved me good-bye,
 Then he soared o'er the rooftops and into the sky.
 I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight
 "Get your vaccines my friends, Merry Christmas, good-night".
 Then I went back to bed and a sweet Christmas dream
 Of a world when we'd finished with Covid 19.



The CCCCCC (City Centre Church Community Christmas Celebration)

On Saturday, December 18 we had an amazing Christmas party and BBQ at the church. Santa and his elves were there, lots of helpers and even a holiday decorated life-size skunk to greet the kids (thanks Skunky)! The elves estimate that around 113 children had a visit with Santa Claus. A new addition this year was being able to take a picture with Santa that was printed and sent home with each child.



The night before was snowy and then a heavy rainfall dampened the morning spirits. But despite the cold and wet weather the party and BBQ went on, much to the delight of many families. There was singing by Gary and his guest singer. Kids and toddlers danced to the Christmas music. Santa visited non-stop with all the kids and fielded questions and comments like “are you real?”, “I

just want peace in the world” and “can I have a puppy?” A huge thank you to all the volunteers who made cookies, hot chocolate and coffee, barbequed, fried onions, set up tents, volunteered with the food handouts, sang and helped take down equipment. What an amazing group effort. Please continue to pray for new relationships to be built with our neighbours and community. What a celebration of God’s love at Christmas!

*Prayers Needed For This Refugee Family*

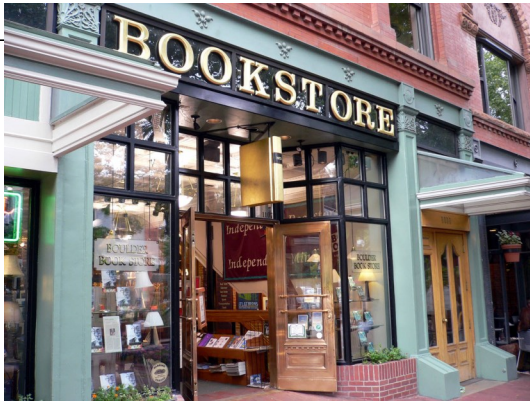
As stated in the Easter newsletter, there is an African refugee family of six who is trying to emigrate to Canada from a refugee camp in Rwanda. They are far away from their home and are living in uncomfortable conditions separated from their father. As previously stated by Pastor Severin “...the only way to save this family from insecurity and traumatism is to find them an asylum in another country where they can finally meet again and reunite as a family.” As a result, Faithful Spiritual Pentecostal Church, who meet in our building, are trying to get the family to Canada. We are applying to bring them in through the PCC immigration/refugee ministry. This African church is paying for the application, but the PCC head office treats the application as if is coming from City Centre Church—they are our people. It is very important that we fervently pray: for the safety of this family as the camp is traumatizing for them as well as for togetherness and for an expeditious transfer out of the camp and to safety in Canada. We have heard that it could be another year or two yet, so please pray for their papers to be expedited. (limited details can be published for the privacy and protection of the family).

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world, He was in the world, and the world was made through him...” John 1;9-10

THE LAST PAGE

So true.

I just do not think our psyches were developed to hold, feel and respond to everything coming at them right now—every tragedy, injustice, sorrow and natural disaster happening to every human across the entire planet in real time every minute of every day. The human heart and spirit were developed to be able to hold, feel and respond to any tragedy, injustice, sorrow or natural disaster that was happening IN OUR VILLAGE.



Here's an interesting fact...

In Iceland, books are exchanged as Christmas Eve presents, then you spend the rest of the night in bed, reading them and eating chocolate. The tradition is part of a season called Jolabokaflokkur, or "The Christmas Book Flood", because Iceland, which publishes more books per capita than any other country, sells most of its books between September and November due to people preparing for the upcoming holiday.

Apparently, ever since 1944, the Icelandic book trade has sent out a book bulletin to each household in mid November when the Reykjavik Book Fair occurs. People use this particular calendar to order books and give them to family members and friends alike on Christmas Eve, which is the standard time in all of Europe to have gift openings.

And As We Wait.

Advent, meaning "the coming", is a time when we wait expectantly. Christians began to celebrate it as a season during the fourth and fifth centuries. Like Mary, we celebrate the coming of the Christ child, what God has already done. And we wait in expectation of the full coming of God's reign on earth and for the return of Christ, what God will yet do. But this waiting is not a passive waiting. It is an active waiting. As any expectant mother knows, this waiting also involves preparation, exercise, nutrition, care, prayer, work and birth involves pain, blood, tears, joy, release, community. It is called labour for a reason. Likewise, we are in a world pregnant with hope, and we live in the expectation of the coming of God's kingdom on earth. As we wait, we also work, cry, pray and ache; we are the midwives from another world. -Shane Claiborne. *Common Prayer*. Shane is a Christian activist and author.

Times change. People change. Circumstances change. *But Jesus does not change.* He is our source of stability in an every-changing culture and world. ***Merry Christmas!***