

# The City Centre Scroll - Christmas 2022



## From Pastor Gabriel's Desk *Stasis, Comfort and Certitude Interrupted*

There are three things all people like and gravitate towards by default.

The first one is stasis. We like stability. We love to stay put in familiar surroundings we know well. It makes us feel safe to stay where we are and with what we know best.

The second one is comfort. Who doesn't like comfort? Whether it is the feel of plush leather seats in a car, a silk pillow under our head when we sleep, or a house full of buttons we can press that make life easier, such as the ones for your dishwasher, robot vacuum, or remote control.

The third one is certitude. When I attend a concert, I love it when they hand me a program at the door because it is nice to know exactly what comes next and how long the concert will be. Planning often gives us certitude, as does information; therefore, for most of us, it is an obsession to do and get as much as possible of these. We don't function well without a fair amount of predictability in our lives.

### Inside this issue:

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<a href="#">Pastor's Message (continued)</a>	2
<a href="#">Praise and Prayer</a>	3
<a href="#">A Congolese Christmas</a>	4
<a href="#">Our Christmas Stories</a>	5
<a href="#">Cook's Corner</a>	6
<a href="#">Christmas Traditions</a>	7
<a href="#">Fun Santa's Reindeer Facts</a>	8
<a href="#">Things you'll never regret</a>	9
<a href="#">The Last Page</a>	10

I think of Joseph, Jesus's earthly father, and the events involving him around the time of Jesus's birth. He lived in a time when life was simple in the sense that people didn't have as many choices and decisions to make as we do today. The family structure was primary. You usually lived in the village and community where you were born, practicing a trade all your life that was passed on from your father. You married a girl you and your family knew well, and you went about it with a map, the one that custom, traditions, and religious law dictated. The comforts people enjoyed way back then do not compare to the scale or degree of the ones we enjoy today, but maybe the sheer simplicity and consistency of life's rhythms then more than made up for it in the comfort department.

But what we read when Joseph is introduced to us is a story of a man whose stasis, comfort, and certitude are greatly disrupted. The woman he loves tells him she is pregnant even though he did not yet have intercourse with her. Not only that... she claims a story about her pregnancy having a divine origin that is far outside the frame of reference of most people. According to law, she could be stoned. Also, at a time when one would ideally want to be home with the expertise and support of trusted women of your community, the time Mary gave birth, they found themselves far from home attending a state mandated census. A stable could hardly be thought of as a comfortable place to give birth, no matter how many romantic pictures you see of it on Christmas cards. Soon after the birth, they needed to flee even further, to another country, because even the life of their newborn child wasn't certain anymore.

Joseph's initial impulse when his stasis, comfort, and stability get threatened is one we all can relate to. He wants out. When we are in a situation where we live

[Continued on Page 2](#)

Pastor's Message (continued from Page 1)

with uncertainty, are forced to move and feel uncomfortable, we look for the exit sign and move towards it until our stasis, comfort, and certitude are restored. But an angel leads Joseph to do something counterintuitive. He is asked to embrace rather than flee the instability, uncertainty, and discomfort looming over him.

Why does God sometimes ask us to do without these three things we so instinctively feel we need to live well? Because God knows the difference between healthy stability and unhealthy stagnation. Because God knows that comfort can sometimes only be enjoyed and appreciated fully when its opposite was endured. Because God knows the difference between true and false certitudes and securities and wants to teach us lessons about it.

If you walk with God (and we all do as the story of Jesus's incarnation tells us that God walks with humankind) I can guarantee you this: You will be confronted with disruptions to your stasis, certitude, and comfort. You will never have it 100 percent the way you want. Some people value stasis, certitude, and comfort so much that it begins to function as an unholy trinity in their lives. And, like all idols, it then gets an unsatisfiable appetite for more. It eventually drains their souls as they try feeding, protecting, and restoring it.

There is, however, a better way. It is the way of Joseph, the way of faith. That is to embrace discomfort, being shifted, and uncertainty. This, in pursuing what God has shown you, is good and important to Him. To trust Him to lead you through such seasons. To trust that should the stasis, certitude, and comfort return to your life, it will meet you as a more mature, appreciative, and empathetic human being. To realize that the uncertainty, discomfort, and shifts we sometimes feel forced to endure could be planting seasons for God when the hope of an even better stasis, certitude, and comfort can germinate and grow.

We do not read much about Joseph after the birth of Jesus. Some say that he probably died an early death. There is much of him we do not know and can only speculate on. But this we know: His obedience, trust, and courage, and willingness to move away from the familiar and to get disrupted and challenged, contributed to us finding in Jesus a more solid foundation, a greater comfort, and the firmest certitude of all: The knowledge that God loves us fully.

Joseph's longsuffering in uncertainty, shifting, and discomfort made Jesus and his love for us known.

We live in a time when we are challenged. We are overwhelmed by choices. We are limited in our ability to plan with so many uncertainties looming, things like climate change and pandemics and political division. Inflation obliges us to do without comforts we would have liked. Maybe through an unexpected diagnosis or family situation you feel all this even more personally. Maybe you are anxiously looking for an exit sign.

Hear the angel's message to Joseph: "Do not be afraid. God is up to something special and big. Tell the world who Jesus is by being obedient and trusting. Keep at it. Serve God's purposes humbly and obediently. Trust Him more than your own plans. Love Him more than your own comforts. Allow yourself to be moved by Him to people and places where you can grow and contribute to His Kingdom purposes best. The best stability, certitude, and comfort is found not by not letting go of the controls but by surrendering to God's plan. And He has one for all people. One that will bring lasting peace and joy.

Merry Christmas!  
Gabriel J Snyman



"Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our world."

C.S. Lewis

# PRAYER AND PRAISE

# Praise!



## Praise For...

- Our wonderful multicultural congregation. We are rich in diversity.
- The boys who run the Facebook Live broadcast, faithfully every Sunday.
- The new families and children filling our pews and our church lives.
- Our church community garden that flourished in the summer.
- The Christmas barbeque and all of the neighbours who shared in the festivities.
- Marriage and families.
- The meaning of the season and God's son who truly is the origin of Christmas.
- Our Canadian democracy.

## Prayer For...

- All those who have difficult memories of this time of year.
- Marriages and families going through hard times.
- Our church to be a beacon of light in our neighbourhood.
- Peace for unsafe countries, for families in war torn areas.
- Unity in Christian churches.
- People to know the real reason for the season.
- Immigrant families to cope with all the newness of Canadian culture, language etc.
- That we meet our church budget this year and next year. And get a new elevator.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- That we will be holding another Sisters Closet in the spring? Stay tuned for details.
- If you would like to bring coffee into the sanctuary please make sure your travel mug or carry out mug has a lid.
- There is always room for more volunteers? PowerPoint (very easy to learn), scripture reading, coffee hosting, even ushering can be done by anyone. See your elder or Pastor Gabriel.
- That we are in need of a sub-

- stantial amount of money to get the elevator up and working again? Please see any member of the Board of Managers for further info. Jane Kyle, Yolanda Boyd, Diane Mohrsen, Robin Allaby, or Sandy Gaudette.
- That our church is becoming known for our philanthropic deeds in the neighbourhood? The Christmas BBQ, Sisters Closet, neighbourhood dinners with Shepherd's House, and at Celebrate Recovery. It is good to pass on the blessing!

- That a refugee family who has been previously mentioned in other newsletters is now close to be accepted into Canada? This is the family of six who has been living in a refugee camp for quite some time in Africa. Please continue to pray for their safety meanwhile and traveling mercies when they emigrate to Canada. They are being sponsored through the Presbyterian church of Canada.

“But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old ancient times.” -Micah 5:2

# Christmas Around our Congregation

## Congolese Christmas tradition

In my tradition we used to have two events of Christmas and Christmas. Christmas was known as a children's party celebration. We celebrated both Christmas Evening and Christmas Day.

**For Christmas Evening:** This day before Christmas, we used to meet with other children in the neighborhood and others from different neighborhoods, without being rebuked by the parents, it used to be a day of much freedom. It looked like how Canadian kids celebrate Halloween day—kids can hang out with strangers collecting gifts from any person by wishing merry Christmas!( Joyeux Noël!) Kids gathered in groups then starting singing songs, going neighbourhood to neighborhood and shouting and shouting NOWELI!, NOWELI! NOWELI!,... ( Christmas Christmas )!

We used to sleep later because we used to go church late at night. In church we heard preaching about Mary getting a revelation from the Angels sent by God, and the Angels who came to the Wisemen, who came from far way by following the east star which led them to Jesus 'birth place. In brief, we heard the story of Jesus Christ's birth, and after church the priest would distribute children's booklets of the New Testament. It was the day that all children could stay with the adults in church from beginning to the end. After church we used to keep singing all the way from church to home (and we kept wishing people Merry Christmas expecting to receive a gift which mostly was money).

Teenagers and kids would burn tires around the neighborhood and they could stay all night long by singing, sharing stories, then waiting to get to midnight so everyone may shout loudly NOWELI EEEHH!! NOELI EEHH!! Ringing bells, or clanging steel objects together in order to make more sounds! Unfortunately this



tradition of staying up overnight is no longer because of security and safety issues.

**For Christmas Day:** this day as kids we used to know it was the day of shining, and we would start by wearing brand new clothes and shoes. It was also the day of tasting different foods, and especially eating chicken. It was tradition for all families to do so, no matter their situation. The lowest income families started planning for Christmas 3 to 5 months before, so every family can afford something special for themselves. Nowadays it's starting to be hard to be able to have something special because of the war, and insecurity which is across the region.

On Christmas day we must go to church wearing brand new clothes and shoes. I grew up in a Roman Catholic church. We used to follow those traditions of reading the same bible scriptures read around the world. We would have some theaters (plays) of Jesus Christ's birth. After church, some rich families would cook a lot of food and bring it to the church to feed orphans and vulnerable people, By lunch time, after church, we would be surrounded by many members of our family. Christmas used to make our family united. Throughout the day we would have family members reunite. Our tradition is that it's family reunion day; everyone loves it and cheers.

**Christmas recipe's:** most families used to cook chicken, It's very symbolic and tradition to have chicken on the menu, likes most Canadians have turkey on Thanksgiving Day (editor's note: and on Christmas Day!). The chicken is followed with paf paf (doughnuts), rice (pilawu), fufu (cornmeal), cassava leaves (sombe) and a lot of other traditional foods.

This is the story of the way we celebrated Christmas back home.

Thank you!

Alex Kingumb (Alex and Divine, and their son Christopher have joined our congregation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, in Africa).

Editor's note: we made some minor grammatical and editorial edits to this story to correct verb tense etc., but the story is as written by Alex. Regards, Neil

“You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look up into the Father's face and tell Him you have received His Christmas gift”

-John R. Rice

## Our Christmas Stories

*Rabin Allaby's Christmas memory.*

*When I was a little kid, perhaps four years old, our family was living on a little farm in Sackville, New Brunswick. There were five kids in the family at that time. Eventually there would be eight of us. I am the third oldest.*

*One Christmas morning someone woke up and yelled to the rest of us that Santa came. We all leaped out of bed and ran for the stairs. I got part way down and my brother came behind me pushing me out of the way to get to the living room faster. I crashed on the stairs, splitting my head open. My dad bundled me up and, because there was so much snow, he had to take me by horse and wagon to the doctor's house. The doctor stitched me up right there in his house. When I came home, everyone had already opened their presents so Mom and Dad made my own "opening presents time" to make it special for me after what I had gone through.*



A Christmas memory by Ian MacGillivray.

When my children, Clarice, Shannon and Alex, were young, they would wake up early, all excited to see what Santa had brought. It didn't take long for me to remind them that I needed to get the camcorder set up downstairs to record all the excitement. It must have seemed like an eternity for them to wait at the top of the stairs while I got things ready.

Finally, with the camcorder rolling and the level of excitement rising, it was time for the kids to descend to the basement and gather around the Christmas tree. The girls, old enough to read, would pick out the gifts from under the tree. Alex, waiting patiently for one of the girls to call his name, was all smiles when it was his turn to receive a gift. Soon the girls would find gifts with their names so then their mom would take over and pass out gifts. Within thirty minutes all that was left were piles of wrapping paper and opened gifts. But the sense of joy and thanksgiving lasted throughout the day.

-with thanks to Diane Mohrsen for gathering these stories of Christmas

One Christmas when our family joined our extended family to make a grouping of fifteen we decided to play the "steal a Christmas present" game. The gifts were purchased by all age groups from age 7 to 70. There were Calgary Flames fans, Montreal Canadiens fans, and Vancouver Canuck fans in the group. Some more staunch than others! We had lots of laughs at the John Deere puzzles (Saskatchewan relatives), the perfumey bath products that the seven year old boy opened, etc, etc. There were a few super popular gifts that got stolen a few times and also some duds that we just laughed at. But by far the funniest moment was the very last gift that my brother in law got to open. He thought that his number was the best as it was the last one—number 15. He knew he could have his choice of all the gifts or open the last one under the tree. He picked the gift under the tree. My brother-in-law, a die hard Calgary fan in every sport, opened it with everyone watching with bated breath and curiosity. His gift? A lovely Vancouver Canucks calendar! It was a priceless moment, a great memory and a fantastic way to end the game. - Elaine Singh

"In a loud voice she exclaimed; "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

-Luke 1:42

# COOK'S CORNER

The wisemen in the nativity story brought gold, Frankincense and myrrh to the stable. Frankincense and myrrh are both resins extracted from trees and therefore very expensive. Only the wealthy could afford such luxuries. Cinnamon was in the same category because of its scarcity and was considered so valuable that it was equal in value to that of gold and ivory. It's a spice that has been used for centuries and is known for its warm properties. It originated centuries ago and is from the inner bark of trees scientifically known as Cinnamomum. These two recipes include cinnamon and the second one comes from the Middle East.

## Mayan Hot Chocolate

- 1 cup milk or alternative
- 1/3 cup semi sweet chocolate
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tsp honey
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 red chilli, seeds removed

Melt the chocolate in milk on low heat. Add the water, honey, cinnamon and vanilla. Add halved chilli and bring to a near boil. Remove and let sit for 10 minutes. Remove chilli when its reached your desired spice level.



## Moroccan Stew

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 tsp cayenne
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 2 1/2 cups vegetable broth
- 4 cups butternut squash, cubed
- 1 cup green lentils, rinsed
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Black pepper to taste

## Garnishes

- 1/3 cup cilantro
- 3 basil leaves
- Plain yogurt
- 1/2 lemon juiced

Heat the oil on medium heat. Add onion and garlic, and cook until soft. Add spices and cook for one minute.

Add all of the remaining ingredients and stew for 25 minutes. Add lemon and discard garnishes when done.

This recipe is vegetarian but meat could be added in cubes or pieces, and would need to be cooked longer. Season the meat with cumin, salt and pepper. Dried apricots and/or raisins could be added as well.

An authentic Moroccan Stew would be cooked in a tajine if you have one!

## Legend of the Christmas Spider

A long time ago in Germany, a mother was cleaning for Christmas. Spiders fled up to the attic to escape the broom. One quiet Christmas Eve. The spiders slowly came down for a peek. "Oh what a beautiful tree!"

In excitement, they scurried up and out along each branch. They were filled with happiness as they climbed amongst the glittering beauty. But alas! By the time they were done the tree was shrouded in their dusty grey web.

When Santa came with gifts for the children and saw the tree covered with spider webs he smiled because he saw how happy the spiders were, but knew how heartbroken the mother would be if she saw it covered in dusty webs.

So he turned the webs to strands of silver and the tree was even more beautiful than before.

That's the story of tinsel on trees and why every tree should have a Christmas Spider in it's branches.

## I was Grown to be a Christmas Tree

I was planted on a tree farm to be enjoyed by a family at Christmas. During my growing years I was fertilized, pruned, and cared for, which is why I have such a perfect shape and lush growth. Throughout my growing years I released the air, provided oxygen, protected the water supply and made a home for a while. I also beautified land that was previously barren. When I was cut, another tree was put in my place.

-Your Live Christmas Tree



“Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect.” -Oren Arnold

## Fun Santa's Reindeer Facts

Do you ever wonder how it is that Santa picked reindeer over cows for example? Or how the reindeer were named? Let's take a look at the issues.

First of all, reindeer are not very affected by snow, wind or cold temperatures due to the fact that they have long, thick and buoyant hair. Cows need a shelter to keep warm. The average dairy cow is also too large, weighing in at over half a ton, same with a horse—they're big! Conversely, reindeer weigh 300-400 pounds and are only 45 inches in height. They are also fairly low maintenance animals, do well in frigid temps, and can forage for 62 different species of lichen and many, many kinds of seed plants that are native to the North Pole. A reindeer's feet can shrink and tighten, which exposes the hoof, which in turn can cut into the ice; an advantage when you're on a slippery roof!

The first reference to Santa's sleigh being pulled by a reindeer appeared in an 1821 illustrated poem in New York, but the author and illustrator are unknown. The names (and the number) of the reindeer, were largely credited to the poet Clement Clark Moore in his poem "Account of a visit from St. Nicholas" which most of us mistakenly think is titled "Twas the Night Before Christmas", pub-

lished in the Troy Sentinel in December 1823. This poem listed Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, plus Dunder and Blixem (rather than the now more familiar Donner and Blitzen). Dunder and Blixem meant thunder and lightning in colloquial New York Dutch. Some early accounts say there were six reindeer and the terms Dunder and Blixem were added as a call to the six to go faster, just like thunder and lightning. Publishers later changed these names into Donner and Blitzen.

Years later, in 1939, Robert L. May, who worked for Montgomery Ward came up with Rudolph. He later wrote how he needed the story of Rudolph as he was going through a difficult time—his wife passed away from a long illness. First published as a free softcover story book, it later was republished in hardcopy. This red nosed reindeer became Robert's underdog hero, shunned by others but vindicated in the end. His brother, Johnny Marks wrote the song made famous by Gene Autry in 1949. The 1964 TV special still stands as one of the most popular Christmas movies of all time.

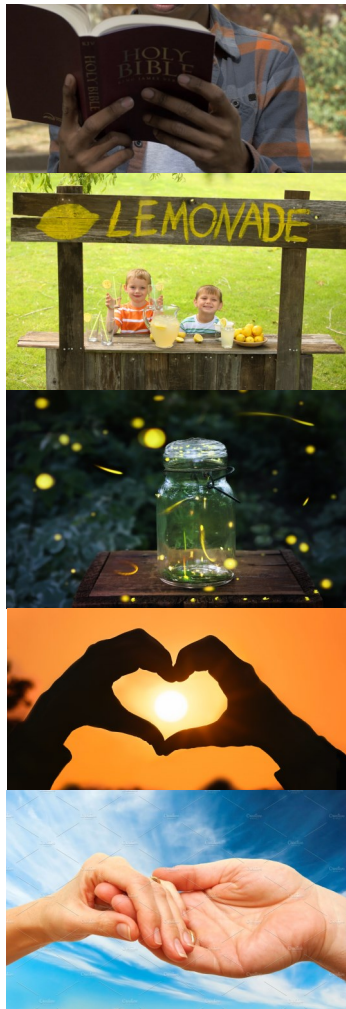


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"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." -Matthew 2:2



## Things You'll Never Regret



- Praying
- Putting your phone down
- Listening over talking
- Visiting Grandma
- Reading the Bible
- Kindness on social media
- Investing on memories over things
- Not gossiping
- Thankfulness over comparison
- Buying lemonade at the stand
- Taking the higher road
- Catching fireflies with your kids
- Forgiving yourself
- Forgiving others
- Doing that scary thing
- Giving the compliment
- Drinking more water
- Saying "I love you"

## A Prayer for today

Father, if we view today's world through only our human lens, our hearts race and we feel the turmoil and upheaval at the state of the world; war and rumours of nuclear war, floods and famines, human indignities and pandemic threats. Our hearts are quickened and anxious, troubled by these potential perils. There's no doubt that 2022 has been a year of menacing dangers, yet in midst of all of this comes Grace (God's Riches At Christ's Expense). Grace issued from the throne room of a loving, caring, Almighty God.

Grace that reminds us in Psalm 86 "there is no god like You and no works like Yours. Lord all the nations You have made will come and worship You. They will honor You. You are great and do miracles. Only You are God." You remind us not to worry but to come to You with our anxieties and burdens, to present our requests before You and You will hear and answer. So Father we pray today:

- Let there be an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- Protection for the vulnerable in the world and in our Whalley community.
- Wisdom for countries' governing leaderships to choose to do what is right in Your sight that we might live peaceable lives.
- Teach us how to live our lives that whatever our hands find to do we do with all our hearts knowing others may see good works and glorify God in heaven.
- Lord we ask that we would have the same heart and attitude of Mary, who in the midst of personal turmoil and uncertain future pondered these things in her heart and submitted to Your will.

We thank You Lord for the Grace that will carry us through 2023. Amen (thanks to Linda Littlejohn for this prayer)

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."

# THE LAST PAGE

Its Advent! A time when we wait expectantly.  
 “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, ache; we are the midwives of another world.

-Shane Claibourne, Common Prayer

Christmas,...

It’s an unwed woman who carries God..  
 It’s the pagans from the East who recognize God.  
 It’s the workers in the field who hear from God.  
 It’s the marginalized neighbourhood who welcome God.  
 It’s God who chooses the lowly and the broken to rise.  
 Christmas is here.  
 Let hope in.



According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid December.

Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa’s reindeer, EVERY single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl.

HA! HA!  
 HA! HA!  
 HA! HA!

We should've known....ONLY women would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost.

“And the angel answered her , “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy– the Son of God. -Luke1:35