

## The City Centre Scroll - Christmas 2024



### The Heart of the Gospel

From our Interim Moderator Rev. Richard Watson

Christmas is all about the amazing gift of Jesus coming into the world. Apostle Paul said it well in his letter to Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people." This is the heart of the Gospel: salvation to all through Jesus Christ.

Sometimes it is hard to believe these words because there are so many people who are suffering and seemingly left out. In our world today people are facing barriers left right and centre, such as the increase in violent behaviour among human beings or the wars among nations. These are symptoms of a growing problem— people are not focused on salvation but are focused on surviving in a hostile environment. Our local communities are struggling as well. For many it is harder than ever to buy enough food and pay the rent where affordable housing, homelessness, and addiction are some of the tragic consequences. Furthermore, all these struggles are amidst the regular challenges of life that have come in every age: birth, death, growing up, learning, getting old. And even though we are supposedly more connected and informed than ever before and the answers to all our questions are supposed to be at our fingertips, loneliness and isolation is present in epidemic proportion. The internet is not able to provide the answers to our questions and too often hope is lost to despair. It is dark and tragic yes, but in this darkness there is light and opportunity. Jesus is present; he came into the world to save it, not condemn it. While it is important to note that amidst it all he promised life, he did not promise that all the challenges of life would disappear. Instead he simply provided a way through it all; with the grace of God bringing salvation for all people.

This is the good news! God's saving grace is available to any and all people. Grace is the way through it all. It provides the power of life through the here and now into eternity. It was not cheap— it cost Jesus a lot, but it is freely available. It was given in one all sufficient gift and it continues to be effective even in small doses. It was delivered in person through human weakness, even the frailty of a newborn child, but continues to be the most powerful gift ever and is sufficient for the multitudes. It comes with an eternal promise and an irreversible guarantee. It can also be shared because God's grace is available in unlimited quantities.

So, let us not lose heart. Let us not be discouraged. Let us hold on to the hope we have in Jesus Christ. And in these trying times let us use the opportunity to share the gospel, because our God is faithful, and His promises are true. He has not brought us this far to leave us. *cont'd on page 3*

#### Inside this issue:

[Prayer and Praise](#) [2](#)

[Rev. Richard Watsons message](#) [3](#)

[Tree Quiz](#) [4](#)

[Congregational Xmas story](#) [5](#)

[Cook's Corner](#) [6](#)

[Graham McCarthys Story](#) [7](#)

[Did you Know?](#) [8](#)

[Congregational Xmas](#) [9](#)

[Wisdom and Wit](#) [10](#)

# PRAYER AND PRAISE

## Praise For...

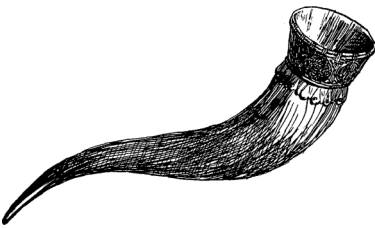
- The many varied and interesting guest ministers we've been blessed with
- The very successful soup luncheon served after church at the end of November. Thanks to generous donations and folks purchasing Jane's Christmas crafts we have raised over \$500! Stay tuned for another one in the New Year.
- For the beauty of families and stable marriages
- Our healthy relationship with our neighborhood around the church building
- All of the wonderful volunteers who make the community barbeque a success
- The goodness of God present in our lives

## Prayer For...

- An end to the crisis and strife between Israel and Hamas.
- An end to the war between Russia and Ukraine
- Good health to be restored to those battling serious conditions
- The Good News to be heard around the world this Christmas season
- Peace to the worried, food, and shelter for the homeless and community for the lonely
- For extra funds to be raised yet for our building fund (roof, elevator, etc.)
- Answered prayer and peace when our circumstances make us anxious

## Hear Ye, Hear Ye! Have You Heard the News?

As you may have heard, the search committee and session has approved of a candidate to be our minister!



But this candidate still needs to 'preach for the call' meaning that he needs to come Sunday, January 14 and preach for us! For those of us who have been here for a few years you'll remember this process when we first heard Pastor Gabriel. The new preacher will be introduced to us, he/she will preach and there will be a vote to accept him/her. Only members votes count but everyone is allowed to have their say. This will be an exciting day for everyone and we really

encourage you to come and hear the candidate on Sunday, January 14! Rev. Richard Watson, our interim moderator (literally our minister for the in-between time before we find a pastor) will be present that day to guide us through the process and introduce the candidate. So, mark your calendars, help pass the word along to others, and continue to pray for a suitable match.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." -Martin Luther King

## The Heart of The Gospel - cont'd from page 1

He is with us, He is for us not against us, and He will see us through. Finally, by His grace, Jesus will continue to make his salvation available to all through the body of Christ on Earth: that is us! So rejoice and celebrate this good news in your world this Christmas.

By the way, speaking of good news, God has just given the people of City Centre Church an opportunity to call another minister. This fall the search committee recommended a candidate to Session who subsequently invited him to preach for the call at the regular worship service on January 14th, 2024, and the candidate has accepted! I hope this good news will brighten your Christmas and give you hope for the future of City Centre Church. I am excited and hopeful as well. You will know more in the new year, including the name and more information about the candidate. In the meantime, please keep in mind that this candidate would appreciate remaining anonymous. This is a delicate and sensitive time in which they want to remain upbeat with his existing congregation especially over the Christmas season.

In preparation for the preaching of the Call, Session has called a congressional meeting to follow the worship service on January 14th. Please spread the word and plan to attend this important worship service and congregational meeting. I hope to see you there.

God bless you and Merry Christmas!

Rev. Richard Watson  
Interim Moderator, City Centre Church



Did you know that the chopping down of the Christmas tree represents the death of Christ and putting it back up represents the resurrection of Christ? Did you know that the wreaths we hang are never ending circles that represent eternity? Candy canes were made to look like shepherd hooks and the colours, red Jesus' blood, white for purity. The gifts represents the three gifts the wise men brought for baby Jesus. So when you are running around trying to find the 'perfect gift', stop yourself, take a deep breath and remember, we have been given the perfect gift. Jesus Christ was given to us to remove all our sins. Amen!

Merry Christmas!

Jeremiah 33:14-15 "The days are coming –oracle of the Lord-when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days, at that time, I will make a just shoot spring up for David; he shall do what is right and just in the land."

# All Things Christmas!

## The Tradition of the Tree Quiz

1. Which protestant reformer is associated with the concept of the Christmas tree?  
A. Dirk Williams B. John Calvin C. Thomas Cromwell D. Martin Luther
2. Which tree is the most popular Christmas tree in Canada?  
A. Christmas palm tree B. Ponderosa Pine C. Scots pine D. Norwegian Spruce
3. A German-American tradition involves an unusual decoration hung on the tree. What is the decoration?  
A. Hat with a feather. B. Star, in red, gold and black C. Pickle D. Pair of Skates
4. Which band, or comedy troupe is responsible for The Lumberjack Song?  
A. Beach Boys B. Monty Python C. Thompson Twins D. Wayne and Shuster
5. Where are the majority of Canadian Christmas Tree farms?  
A. Alberta & Saskatchewan. B. Northwest Territories C. Vancouver Island D. Ontario, Quebec & Nova Scotia
6. Which country has the greatest amount of forested land?  
A. Russia B. Canada C. China D. Brazil
7. In one form of racing, lights known as a Christmas tree are used to start the race. Which form of racing uses this starting system?  
A. Greyhound racing B. Horse racing C. Speed skating D. Automobile racing
8. In which holiday special is a character mocked for purchasing a tiny tree?  
A. A Charlie Brown Christmas B. How the Grinch Stole Christmas C. Santa Claus Conquers the Martians D. Star Wars Holiday Special

Answers on page 11.

6-8 correct~you are a star! 3-5 correct~thanks for trying!

\*printed from The Leader/Now newspaper



“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.” -Matthew 2:10-11

# Congregational Christmases

We are blessed to bring you three congregational Christmas stories this year.

“Stay home. Isolate. Don’t go out. Don’t celebrate Christmas?? Our parents live across the street. How could we leave them on their own? How could we have a Christmas dinner for only four?? We were used to sharing the entire day with the WHOLE family plus there were always a few extras to include. Our biggest was 32 around the Christmas table. A table for only four was unthinkable let alone a table for two! Sharon would have made an enormous pot of mashed potatoes large enough to feed the whole neighbourhood—purely out of muscle memory! And were we each supposed to cook our own turkey??

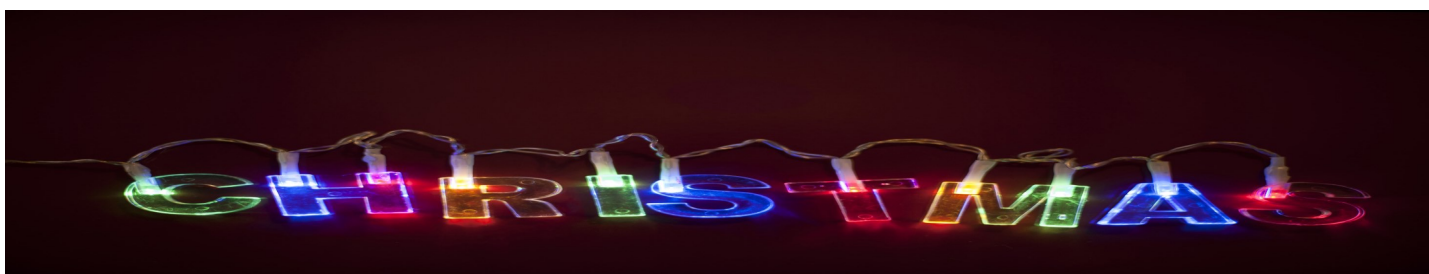
We had to get creative. We may be rule followers but there was no way we were leaving our parents on their own! We did the only thing any covid rule following person would do...we set up an outdoor Christmas of sorts. The garage was converted into a Christmas wonderland. Decorations hung on the walls, a Christmas tree was lit up in the centre, heaters were plugged in to warm the outdoors up, and two tables were set up on opposite sides of the garage for food to be served. TV trays took the place of our dining room table but at least there weren't any table cloths to wash!

Christmas specials like “A Year in Sports” and “Best Bloopers of the Year” were projected on to the back wall so that traditions were kept alive. Yes, we were missing the rest of the extended family and no extras could be included but dinner and sports bloopers were saved!

Masks were donned, food was dished up smorgasbord style—in family groupings, grace was said—without holding hands, but it was still Christmas. We weren't able to pull the Christmas crackers in the fully connected style we were so proud of, but we all wore out ridiculous Christmas crowns and showed off our cherished cracker gifts all the same! It was a different Christmas, but it was still Christmas.

Covid could have made it the worst Christmas, but Christ made it a Christmas we will never forget.”

—Stephanie Musgrove (more on page 7 with Graham’s story)



“I see him, but not now; I behold him but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.” -Numbers 24:17



# COOK'S CORNER

## The Better Butter Chicken

This is a delicious lower fat recipe without all the butter and heavy cream. Make sure you serve it with hot basmati rice and a vegetable.

2 T. butter

1 1/2 c. chopped onions

2 tsp minced garlic

1 T. grated gingerroot (keep your fresh ginger in the freezer-keeps well and grates easily)

1 1/2 tsp chili powder

1/4 tsp each of ground coriander and ground turmeric (or more)

1/2 tsp each of ground cinnamon and ground cumin (or more)

1 can 796ml no salt added, diced tomatoes, drained

1 1/2 c. low sodium chicken broth

1 T. brown sugar

1/4 tsp each of salt and pepper

1 whole cooked rotisserie chicken, skin removed and meat cut

1/3 c. light sour cream or plain yogurt

Fresh cut up cilantro

Chili flakes, or cayenne (optional)

Melt butter in a deep 10" skillet over medium heat. Add onions and garlic. Cook slowly, stirring often, until onions are tender, about 5 min. Add all the spices, adjusting to taste. Cook one more min. Add tomatoes, chicken broth, brown sugar, s/p. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 10-20 min, stirring a bit. To ensure there is no canned tomato taste, it may need to cook longer.

Add cut up chicken and sour cream. Simmer, uncovered for 5 more minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro. Serve over hot basmati rice and possible some hot naan. This recipe will have an improved taste the next day.

Turmeric in India is often added to food. The plant chemical, curcumin, which gives the spice its yellow tone, helps prevent plaque related blockages that can form in the brain and lead to Alzheimer's disease. Some researchers say that it explains the low prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in India's senior citizens.



If it weren't for Philo T. Farnsworth, inventor of the television, we'd still be eating frozen radio dinners.

-Johnny Carson.

## Congregational Christmases

“When I preach, I love to look out at the pews and see the people that fill them—people from all walks of life and all expressions. I see people who have been at this church since they were children, knowing it like the back of their hand, and newcomers who are anxiously looking around trying to sort out when to stand, sit or kneel. I see people paying attention and taking notes, and I see people taking the Sabbath so seriously that they fall asleep in the service on this holy day of rest. The thing is, I learn so much from the people sitting in the pews, and just as the congregants come in to hear the Word of God, I come to see Jesus in the people who have given two hours of their day to meet God in worship, prayer and fellowship. But when I look out on Christmas Eve, I see the faces of people I do not know. I see places in the pews that are usually empty, and are now filled with people on their annual visit to church.

In Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol,” we see a story of folks sitting in the pews—as the man Bob Cratchett returns from a Christmas Eve service with his son, Tiny Tim, a boy with polio who had to walk with a crutch when he wasn’t being carried. When he returns, his wife asks him about his evening.

“and how did little Tim behave?” asked Mrs. Cratchett, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart’s content. “As good as gold,” said Bob, “and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.”

I cry every time I hear those words, and it encourages me to see something more when I look out into the pews. Just as Tiny Tim felt understood his presence to be somewhat of a reminder to the parishioners that Jesus has come to offer healing to his people, I look out at the pews, and see people whom Jesus dearly loves, who speaks to all their joys and sorrows—to their health and to their sickness, and who has come to ensure that his people will receive healing forever.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:20, that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.” And, maybe, on Christmas Eve, where two or three more people than usual are sitting in the pews, we encounter Jesus in a different way than usual. And maybe, as we look out at the congregation and see people of all different walks of life, we can be reminded of the one who came to bring us healing, to set us free. The one who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.”

—Graham McCarthy (more on page 9 with Jane’s story)



“For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself.” -Charles Dickens

## 12 Days of Christmas Hidden Message

You may not have known, but the twelve days of Christmas refers to the days between Dec.25<sup>th</sup>, the western traditional Christmas Day and the eastern Orthodox Christmas Day of January 6. By the fourth century the churches had recognized each others dates and referred to the time in between as the Twelve Days of Christmas. The actual song may have been written to help young Roman Catholics remember their faith.

The partridge in a pear tree represents Jesus as it is a bird that will sacrifice its life to save its children. Two turtle doves refers to The Old and New Testament.

Three French hens refers to Faith, Hope and Charity.

Four calling birds refers to the four gospels.

Five golden rings are the first five books of the Bible.

Six geese a-laying are the six days of creation

Seven swans a-swimming refers to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Eight maids a-milking refers to the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Ten lords a-leaping are the ten commandments.

Eleven pipers piping refers to the eleven faithful disciples.

And twelve drummers drumming are the twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed.

# 12 days

-with thanks to Linda Littlejohn for the contribution

## DID YOU KNOW?

- That there is a Preacher coming Sunday January 14 to “preach for the call” ~meaning we all get to hear and see him/her in person? Further info on page 2.
- That there are some major church expenses coming up in the next couple years? The furnace is old, the roof is old and the elevator needs replacing. If you are able, please donate to the building fund, by specifying on your cheque on the memo-line.
- That on the inside of the

large cupboard door in the kitchen there is a measuring table for making coffee? Please use this when on coffee duty.

- Please use containers with lids when putting away sugar, tea bags, etc so as to not attract pests. And thoroughly clean up spills and messes..
- Sisters Closet is coming up and like last year it will be held on Monday, February 19. Start asking others for clothes!
- Sorry...We don't want your bags of extra clothing until the weekend just prior to Sister's Closet.

- Please do not leave boxes or bags of things in the closets downstairs without permission
- A few volunteers could be needed to help plant the garden and water it in the springtime...stay tuned



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

–C.S. Lewis



# Congregational Christmas Story

“As some of you may know, I volunteer with Girl Guides of Canada. This year I am a leader of a Spark unit working with girls aged five and six. Our meeting this December was about caring and sharing so we focused on the importance of giving to others this time of year and always.

For sharing, each girl was asked to bring a few items that we could pack into socks for the homeless and seniors in White Rock and South Surrey. We have twenty girls so it felt like we could fill our four socks with maybe a few things leftover. Well, as each girl arrived we soon realized we needed a much bigger table! In the end, we packed four stockings plus had four shopping bags of extras! The girls were so amazed on how the few things they brought all added up to be something great! For caring, we told them about a little girl in the community suffering with cancer. We then asked them if they would like to do some cards for the children who are sick and in the hospital over Christmas. Needless to say, there were lots of crayons being passed around with a fair number of stickers and glitter!

In the end, the leaders were swamped with girls so excited to show us their wonderful cards that were so full of love.

The Spark promise is “I promise to share and be a friend”. I think they are doing well in keeping their promise, which is what this time of year is all about; caring and sharing.”

—Jane Kyle

## Answers to Christmas Tree quiz from page 4

1. D. Martin Luther is said to have added lit candles to an evergreen tree, starting the tradition.
2. D. Scots pine. This tree is native to Europe and Asia and tends to hold needles well during the season.
3. C. Pickle. This pickle shaped green decoration is hidden in a tree and the person who finds it receives a reward or good fortune in the coming year.
4. C. Monty Python. The Lumberjack Song first was heard in Dec. 1969 in the ninth episode “Flying Circus”. The song does not mention trees exactly but the forests of British Columbia.
5. D. Roughly 80% of Christmas trees from Canada are grown in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.
6. D. Russia. With more than 815 312 000 hectares of forested land. Canada has 346 928 000 hectares, roughly a third of the world’s treed area.
7. D. In automobile drag racing, a column of lights is used for starting.
8. A. A Charlie Brown Christmas. The televised Christmas special was first shown in 1965.

“We consider Christmas as the encounter, the great encounter, the historical encounter, the decisive encounter, between God and mankind. He who as faith knows this truly; let him rejoice.”

-Pope Paul VI

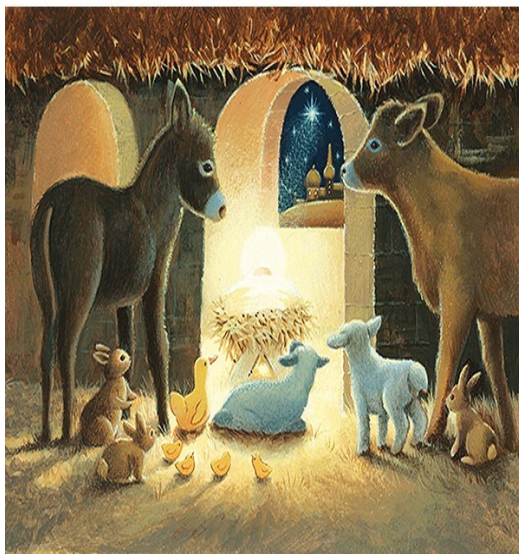
## WISDOM AND WIT

“Jesus never says to the poor ‘come find the church’ but he says to those of us in the church, ‘go into the world and find the poor, hungry, homeless, imprisoned.’”

-Tony Campolo

“He comes in the form of the beggar, of the dissolute human child in ragged clothes, asking for help. He confronts you in every person that you meet. As long as there are people, Christ will walk the earth as your neighbour...”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer



### COMING SOON

You don't want to miss this

Once in a lifetime

## Jesus Christ

DATE OF ARRIVAL

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:52

WHO CAN TAKE PART IN THIS EVENT?

“For whomever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Romans 10:13

Where else would a ‘lamb’ be born ~in a stable.

1 Chronicles 17:14 “I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.”