



Anglican Church of Canada

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The VOX POP... Voice of the People

CHRISTMAS 2024

Unforgettable Christmas transports of delight

Do you have a favourite Christmas carol? I've always found that question very hard to answer.

I suppose it's because those I learned as a teenager or even earlier as a brand-new infant scholar back in 1948 have stayed with me down the years and I find that a simple tune from a previously long-forgotten moment can carry



me back down the years to the first time I heard it. Such a tune will tug at me at any unexpected moment and, there and then, all the others are almost forgotten.

“Away In A Manger,” is a case in point. Learning to sing that ancient melody surrounded by other five-year-olds in a dingy classroom festooned with gaily coloured paper chains that we had all learned to make with our own hands, never leaves my thoughts and its rendering transports me back in a heartbeat.

For many, many years it was known as “Luther’s Cradle Song,” but modern revisionist historians now “claim” that it may have been written by a couple of otherwise obscure Americans. Whatever may be the truth, I prefer to believe that the old German reformer had a hand in it and no one has yet managed to prove that he didn’t.

Just as strong in my memory is “In The Bleak Midwinter,” a carol that owes its origins to a poem written in 1872 by Christina Rossetti. The words were avidly seized upon by the English composer, Gustave Holst, who set it to music from a hymn-tune called Cranham in 1906. Its plaintive tones are unforgettable and are unequalled in conjuring-up allegorical scenes of snowy, unyielding landscapes eventually giving way to Christmas hope and joy.

I know I’m being very conservative in my taste for Christmas music and I make no apologies for including this third and last pick. “Once In Royal David’s City.” Of course, I could go on and on but I won’t. Let’s just say that this, again, was one from my schooldays and I have a recording of it on a long-playing record that I purchased in 1962 at the tender age of nineteen. It features the peerless voices of the choirboys of Guildford Cathedral and those beautiful tones have so

often resonated around the many homes that I have spent Christmas in with different family members and friends during the past 62 years. (My goodness, is it really that long?).

If anyone has a story to share of their own favourite carols, now is the time to drop a note in the Vox Pop box at the back of the church. Go on, I dare you. I'm sure there's many a tale waiting to be told..... D.H.

The real meaning of Christmas

Suddenly, there was a scuffling of tiny feet and several little figures began plonking themselves down near the Chancel steps. Just as suddenly, the robed figure of Father Lance appeared on the scene and brought this little gathering together on the first Sunday of Advent. "What are we celebrating at this time of year," asked Father Lance, apparently expecting to hear the word "Christmas" on every lip. But a shrill little voice stole the moment when, half serious and half giggling, she yelled: "Jesus's birthday." What a surprise. And luckily the moment was also captured for posterity as our Rector Lance went on to explain the magical details of Advent before his little audience eventually made its way off to Sunday School. Once again, we saw how children can captivate us all with little more than an innocent and unexpected remark. Out of the mouths of babes.....etc. D.H.



Rector's Reflection

When I reflect on Christmas' past, I cannot help but draw to mind the seasonal TV specials which constituted such a special and important part of the magic of this season when I was a child. I remember diligently flipping through the TV Guide (remember those) to make sure that the family would not miss out on those once a year, stop-motion animation portrayals of Frosty, Rudolph, Charlie Brown, the little Drummer Boy and of course, the island of mis-fit toys.



Each of those programs conveyed certain inspiring truths about the virtues of the Christmas season and I think can also help us with our own struggles and musings about this time of year. The wisdom of Charlie Brown for instance speaks to me when he wonders in his Christmas special, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" I myself am tempted to ask the same when it seems as though far too many folk are "wrapped up" in the trappings of this season instead of embracing its true meaning.

However, it seems to me that asking that question means that we may have adopted a less than helpful perspective. While it may be true that in this day and age fewer people engage in the Feast of Christmas from a religious perspective, we ought not to lose sight of those who do. The reality is that we are surrounded by "so great a cloud of witnesses" (BCP pg.81) that I am confident the true message of Christmas is still being proclaimed by those of good faith. The Christmas specials of yesteryear bear this out.

Take for example Linus' response to Charlie Brown's lamentation.

Linus (always the theologian of the Peanuts characters) bursts into a recitation of the Nativity narrative from St. Luke (Ch 2:8-14). He ends his soliloquy by reminding everyone that that is what Christmas is all about.

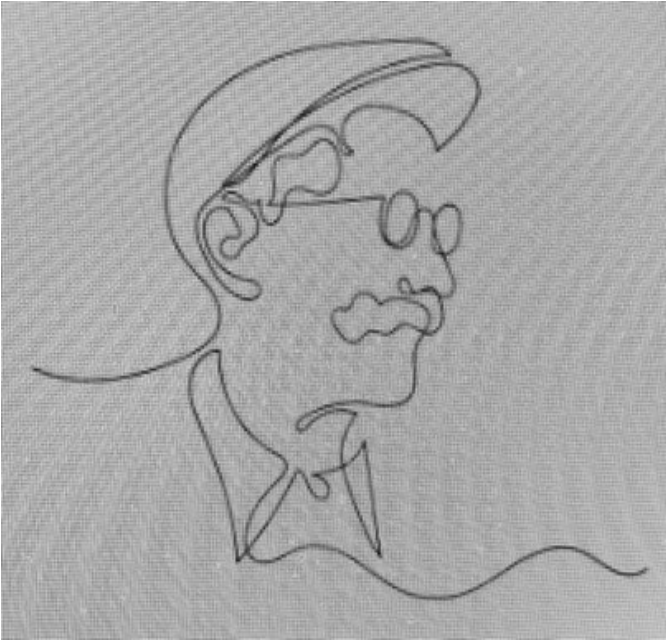
So as you go about your celebration of the Christ Child's birth this year, rejoice each time you see a sign on a lawn or car bumper inviting all to "Keep Christ in Christmas." Consider how you might follow the example of Linus and help others to remember what Christmas is all about. Take comfort knowing that Christians across the globe this Christmastide, brothers and sisters all, are each in their own way keeping the true Spirit of Christmas alive. May we each be inspired to do the same! Peace & Blessings. *Lance +*



Christmas tributes add their beauty to Advent

Poinsettias dedicated to the Glory of God and in loving memory of departed friends and family members of so many of the congregation who are no longer with us.

Dare to be a Daniel, even at Christmas!



“Christmas is all about children.” How often have you heard that old but largely true saying? Very often, I would think. And there is no doubt whatever that over the years the happy sounds of giggling, excited children unwrapping gifts around a glittering Christmas tree have added something warm and special to our misty memories of times gone by.

But my childhood memories of this “most wonderful time of the year” are more poignant and colourful than some, mostly due to the antics of my eccentric and harmlessly unpredictable old grandfather, Daniel.

Fiesty old Grandad Daniel, back in the early 1950s, was in his 84th year and due to some never-mentioned differences of opinion that had occurred between he and my mother during the war, was invited, but only by my father, to join the family for the Christmas celebrations.

Grandad lived in East London, less than a mile from where my family and I had lived until my father joined the Royal Navy in November 1939 and the German Luftwaffe proceeded to bomb us out and leave my mother, my sister and me homeless no fewer than three times.

Thankfully, no one was ever home when the bombs fell, we were all in the public shelters. And so, eight years after the hostilities, we moved 25 miles to the east of London but the old man stayed on, still domiciled half a mile from the Victoria and Albert docks. Home to him was one room in a large, grubby old house that reeked of neglect. It had somehow dodged the thousands of bombs that rained down on the docklands but, mercifully, it has since succumbed to the wrecker's ball.

There was no bathroom in grandad's crumbling abode and the "privy" was little more than a lean-to in the back yard, shared by the other four tenants, who could all have benefited from the "wash and brush up" advertised at the local public baths. Whenever I went to see him, he was always wearing the same clothes.

Needless to say, grandad always brought with him a previously unencountered, pervasive aroma. Distinctive and unforgettable it was, and, like the elephant in the room, everyone felt its presence but no one mentioned it. At certain times it grew stronger and my meticulously house-proud mother, feigning excessive warmth and disregarding a pained expression on my father's face as he visualized the heating costs, would throw open a window with a laboured and distinctly audible sigh of resignation that I can still recall all these years later.

By a strange coincidence, a butcher, who had befriended my grandad, owned two shops; one close by the V and A docks and another only a few yards from our new home. At Christmas that worthy purveyor of chops and chickens would bring my grandfather to our home on Christmas Eve and take him back the day after Boxing Day.

As the shadows of Christmas Eve lengthened and my mother switched on the lights of the tiny tree that graced our front room window, I would crouch down and stare at my favourite little purple bulb that sent its tiny gleams downwards onto an ancient nativity scene. There I'd sit, my breath misting the window, waiting patiently for the sound of the antique butcher's van that would bring Grandad Daniel in his threadbare suit, age-old ex-army boots and crumpled cloth cap wobbling unsteadily to our front door.

Suddenly, there he was, clutching a miniscule box of Cadbury's chocolates for my mother, a packet of five tiny cigars for my father and pressing a half-crown piece into my palm. "It's not Christmas yet," my mother would sternly admonish, but Daniel soon silenced her by offering a hug that she politely but firmly declined while stifling a scream and seeking sanctuary in the kitchen.

From this moment the fun began. Grandad noisily pulled the cork from the bottle of sherry that he'd brought for himself and insisted that I, all of ten years old, join him in a festive toast. Under the disapproving eyes of my parents, I'd savour it, keep smiling despite the horrible taste and pretend to love it.

Later, with everyone feeling content after a plentiful dinner, my mother would ask my father to once again tell the old man quite firmly that he was not going to sleep in any of her beds unless he agreed to wear pyjamas. So Daniel spent the night sleeping as usual in an armchair.

But on one unforgettable and momentous occasion he complied. He left the room, returned a few minutes later sporting red-stripped,

threadbare pyjamas stretched tightly over his other clothes and with a beaming smile on his face that eventually had us all convulsed with laughter, announced that he'd "earned a bed for the night." Even my mother gave way to a chuckle and I was happy (at least I gave that impression) to offer my bed. But the old man said he preferred the chair anyway.

"I haven't slept in a bed for years," he later confided to me. "But let's keep that to ourselves." DH

Dear Fr. Lance, Staff & Parishioners:

I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for your generous donation of socks and underwear to our ministry serving the homeless in Windsor. These essential items are often overlooked but deeply needed. Especially as we work to bring dignity and care to those living on the streets.

Your kindness clearly reflects the love of Christ and the Gospel's call to serve 'the least of these' (Matt. 25.40) Your thoughtful collection will make a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve, providing not only warmth and comfort but also a powerful reminder that they are not forgotten.

May God continue to bless your community as you shine God's light in the world. With gratitude and blessings,

The Rev'd. Glenda Fisher, Deacon
St. Matthew's Anglican Church

A Christmas cryptic crossword not just for fun

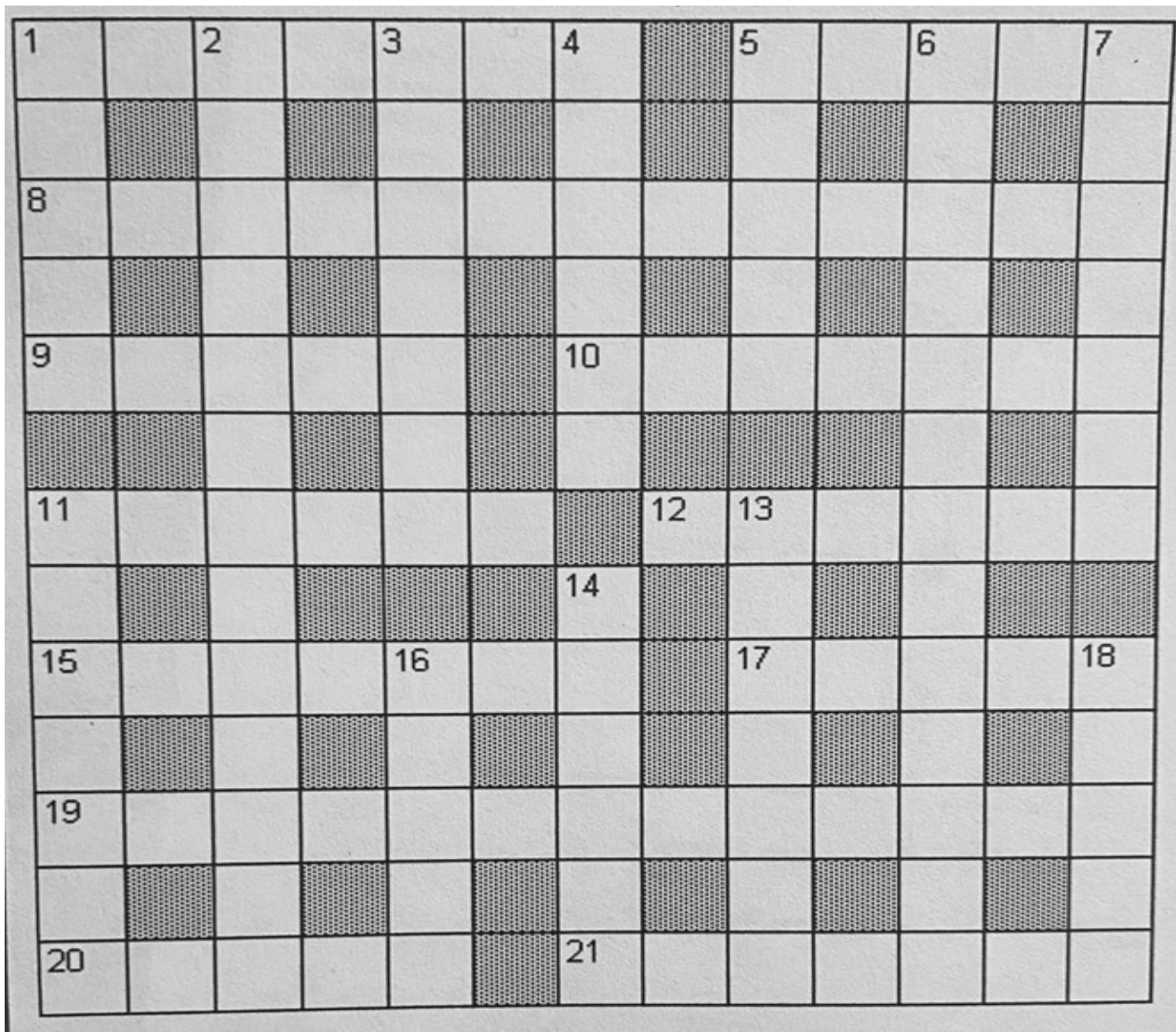
Across:

- 1 Follow the footsteps of our Lord (6)
- 5 Cast, say like a Roman, among thorns? (5)
- 8 "Son of parish" belonging to us (3,6,4)
- 9 Give yourself up to Christ (5)
- 11 (6) & 10 (3,4) From Master to Ministry
- 12 Havoc as Samson's hair grew back (6)
- 15 What Lot left behind (6)
- 17 Send it and forget the post (5)
- 19 Venerable and well-remembered (3,10)
- 20 He made more than a parting gesture (5)
- 21 Took an initial break, therefore gone (1,1,5)

Down:

- 1 They met here, it wasn't like this (5)
- 2 Adam's ales transmuted 6.2.5)
- 3 When the prayer ends (4,3)
- 4 The Ichthus was used this way (6)
- 5 His words beguiled the Trojans (5)
- 6 It's no way to get to Heaven (7,6)
- 7 Land known to Noah's family (3,4)
- 11 On which Christian faith pivots (7)
- 13 Grandson of Benjamin (7)
- 14 & 18 Officer & ancient weapon (6,5)
- 16 Not all these kings were terrible (5)

Drop completed crossword with your name in sealed envelope in the Vox Pop box at the back of the church. There's a prize for the first winner opened. Answers will be published in the next Vox Pop.



The Final Bazaar Report

Well all the deposits are calculated now, and the final amount of profit sits just over \$9,000.00.

A VERY HUGE THANK-YOU is extended to Debra Robinson, Jim Rigney and Terry Fink for taking on the arduous task of packing up the aftermath in the basement!

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24th

7:00pm Family Eucharist (BAS)

11:00pm Midnight Eucharist (BCP)



Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25th

10:00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

First Sunday After Christmas, December 29th

8:30 am & 10:30 am Holy Communion (BCP)

Wednesday, January 1st—New Year's Day

10:00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

The Church Office will be closed from Christmas Eve through to New Year's Day, reopening January 2nd.