

December 2020

To be distributed via all online channels to all parishes of the diocese of islands and inlets.

Dear friends,

A few decades ago, there was a button making the rounds at Christmas that read, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.” It was part of a somewhat clumsy salvo by Christians who felt that Christmas had been taken hostage by the Great Cathedral Mammon and was suffering under the implacable expectations of a culture pining after the perfect family, the best parties, the milk of human kindness, and the lost innocence of childhood. Of course, none of these things is bad in and of itself, but neither are they the essence of the Christmas message.

As people of faith, we have the capacity to disentangle our *celebrations* of Christmas from *what they celebrate*. We can take away the turkey dinner, the tinsel and glitter, charades after dinner, and the VISA bill, and still there will be the song of the angels, and God willing to enter our pain—even the pain of pandemic—as an infant, vulnerable as we are. I wonder what more the Church could hope to say just now? God is here, among us, “Emmanuel.”

So how shall we celebrate Christmas this year?

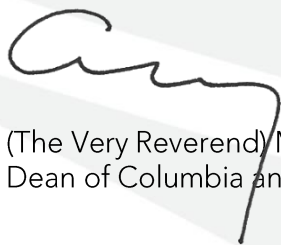
From coast-to-coast, Anglicans have devised creative ways of celebrating together—but apart: the Primate has invited all parishes and people to ring bells together at noon on Christmas day; there will be a national Lessons and Carols Service live-streamed on December 18; churches across our diocese are preparing to live-stream celebrations; and our Cathedral will be featured on CHEK-TV for three broadcasted services over the holidays. We encourage you to check-in with your parish, and to visit the diocesan website (www.bc.anglican.ca) where you can find more information on the events mentioned above and more.

We can celebrate quietly, too, in ways that are meaningful to us as individuals. Think about what elements of our usual celebrations have felt most significant to you. If it’s prayer, pray aloud or write your own prayers. If it’s song, sing joyfully with those in your household. Light candles in your home or get outdoors to marvel at the miracle of Creation, which is a reflection of the miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are days to be creative about how we know God and to remember that while we cannot gather, God still gathers with us.

Also, rest. On Sunday, December 27 we have encouraged parishes across the diocese to suspend worship services (including online) as a gift to parish leaders who have been working so hard this year to adapt to our ever-changing circumstances. This diocesan day of rest is also time for lay people to rest—you’ve been working hard, too! We hope that you gift yourself a quiet day to take care of yourself and renew your energy.

In the meantime, may God give you grace to seek the divine presence, as the shepherds did, in the least likely of places (COVID would count!); to find God in the cooing (and wailing) of something as tiny and fragile as the infant Jesus; and to recognize that only by your tenderness and care can this promise of salvation grow to its full stature and potential.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ansley', written over a light gray abstract background.

(The Very Reverend) M. Ansley Tucker
Dean of Columbia and diocesan administrator