
When is Christmas?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler**

When is Christmas this year?

One answer I am accustomed to giving, every year, is that Christmas is whenever the Christmas Pageant happens! Every year, I delight in saying that Christmas is here when we participate in, or watch, the children's Christmas pageant.

And it's true again this year! A few weeks ago, Christmas came to the Cathedral community on Saturday, December 5. That was the day our splendid staff and spectacular volunteers arranged for almost 120 children to come to church, safely masked and in groups of twenty at a time, to film their roles in our Children's Christmas Pageant.

I was there, simply to cheer people on, and to provide what meager support I could. But I was overjoyed to see so many friends and familiar faces and parishioners. With masks on, we talked. We caught up with each other. We watched children enjoy each other. The day was warm and bright, and our hearts were warm and bright.

And creativity erupted! Dan Murphy and Brant McCaskill were envisioning the script as we went along. Sara Chapman, Mary Sorrell, and Haven Long were dressing children, herding sheep, and gathering angels. Lisa McNamara and Ciara Castenell were fantastic! Caroline Robinson had the choristers arranged. What fun! The Roman soldiers got to walk out on the roof of the Cathedral. Safely! Safety was the order throughout the day.

It was simply fun. It was Christmas. Christmas is being with people.

I felt the same energy a week or so later when I participated in the Preschool Christmas Pageant. Sadly, that pageant was not live either. We filmed it, and recorded it, in an empty Child Hall, with eager and masked children. But we still had fun. And I loved narrating, again, those wonderful words: "Mary and Joseph were travelling to Bethlehem. Mary was going to have a baby!"

Obviously, I realize that we cannot be with each other this Christmas, in our usual ways. But many of us are acting heroically. Here at the Cathedral, we are having to develop more outdoor services than we anticipated, limited to fifty people at a time; and we simply do not want to turn anyone away.

Please do touch someone this December. I do not mean, necessarily, physically touching them. Call someone. Or invite someone to watch the Cathedral online services. The children's pageant will be on at 4:00 pm on Christmas Eve, and I am eager to see the finished product!

My own Christmas sermon this year is titled, "You Are Not Alone!" When is Christmas? Well, I have already written and recorded the sermon! But it will be viewed at 8:30 and 11:30 on Christmas Eve, and on WSB-TV. Please tune in! Get someone to watch it with you. We celebrate God touching us by touching each other.

Please make a financial contribution to the Cathedral, too! That financial support is surely a critical way of touching each other, and even touching the work of God here. We need your financial support, especially this year when a few people have been unable to fulfill their pledges. We need you, each and every one of you!

Thank you!

Thank you for touching each other. I don't mean unsafe or unwise touching. I mean connecting and loving and being in relationship. Thank you for touching the Cathedral this year. We sure want to touch you, too. At

Christmas, God touches all of humanity, in Jesus Christ; and we celebrate by sharing that touch. You are not alone.

Yes, Christmas is happening throughout this December, and it will happen again. No matter what actual day it is, Christmas is when we touch each other.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Sam Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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