
Thank You for Christmas in So Many Ways!

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by the Very Rev. Sam Candler

Wow! This Christmas, 2020, has taught us again that Christmas can be celebrated in many various ways. Thank you!

Thank you, thank you, thank you, for celebrating Christmas this year! Some of you were with us "online," praying with us, rejoicing with us, laughing with us, with your computers open and hearing again the story of incarnation: the birth of Jesus so long ago, and the birth of Jesus in our hearts today. Maybe you watched our usual celebration of Christmas Eve from the Cathedral (at 8:30 pm and 11:30 pm), recorded earlier this year, but filled with beauty and power, in music and in word. And, maybe you watched our traditional Children's Christmas Pageant this year (at 4:00 pm), also recorded earlier, and with over 120 children of the Cathedral Parish acting out their roles with simplicity and glory.

Maybe you gave thanks (with me!) for the amazing resources of the Cathedral parish which made these online occasions possible. We are blessed to have the volunteers, the staff, the campus, and equipment to make amazing things possible. Thank you!

Maybe you were able to attend our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day outdoor services of continuing Koinonia. They were fantastic this year! Were they cold? You can bet your Christmas presents they were! But they sure were fun! We had outdoor services on Christmas Eve at 10:00 am, 12 noon, 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 7:00 pm, and 10:00 pm – and then another beautiful service on Christmas Day at 10:00 am!

Yes, Christmas can be celebrated in many ways! Thank you for understanding that this year! Maybe you were with us at 10:00 am on Christmas Eve, when it rained steadily, and we wore ponchos and boots, and again at 12 noon and 2:00 pm. Maybe you were with us at 5:00 when the temperature began to drop quickly, and the rain turned to fluttering wet snow. Yes, it was a white Christmas Eve at the Cathedral! Maybe you were with us at 10:00 pm on Christmas Eve, when the wind turned blustery, one gust so powerful that it blew away one of our canopy tents, the one covering our altar area! Thanks to those of you who rose up for quick repairs!

Maybe you celebrated Christmas by yourself this year. Maybe there were some sad moments, too, as you regretted not being with friends at Christmas gatherings this year. Maybe you paused to cry, as you missed being with other family members so closely. Maybe you were just confused and bewildered this year, not knowing whether to lament or to hope. Not knowing whether to be angry or to love. Maybe you celebrated Christmas by serving somebody else, and by finding others to serve. Thank you for all these expressions of incarnation.

In all these ways, Christmas came to the world again this year, even in the year 2020. The incarnate word, Jesus, touched our hearts. I salute, not just Cathedral clergy and parish; but I salute the clergy and leaders in every Christian parish across the world this year, from large to small. I am hearing delightful stories about how people and parishes made do. Those with resources, and those without. Christian people and parishes celebrated Christmas again this year, no matter what the circumstance. And, believe me, every celebration worked – from the most ornate to the simplest. Every celebration worked, from the most polished to the most clumsy. And every one was fun! Thank you! Thank you to Christians all over the world!

In all these ways, Christmas in the year 2020 was a glorious one, and one to remember forever. Christmas can be celebrated in all sorts of ways, ALL SORTS OF WAYS! And I thank each of you for showing us that this

year.

Merry Christmas! You know, the season lasts twelve days, and then – who knows?—maybe we can celebrate the incarnation of love in the world every day in the new year, 2021. Love and peace to each of you!

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

*The Very Rev. Sam Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip*