
Is There Something We Can Celebrate?

Many of us are tired right now, not at all the right way to be entering a new year. Maybe that is because it does not yet feel like a new year! It doesn't feel like a new season at all. Rather, it feels like only the tedious continuation of a very old season, of pandemic and illness and anxiety and caution. As I write this, covid cases, though mostly relatively mild, are rising all around us.

Is there something we can celebrate? Well, I can certainly celebrate something. I celebrate that during a frantic and careful December, we at the Cathedral of St. Philip made it to Christmas! And we did so safely! Personally, I was determined not to risk exposure to illness, as I saw covid cases spiking all around us, and all the while persevering to prepare for glorious Christmas services. I stopped attending evening social events! I was trying to be fully present, along with other faithful members of the Cathedral staff and volunteers, for our Christmas celebrations.

And we made it! We had Christmas at the Cathedral in almost every way possible! From the outdoor labyrinth service at 11:00 a.m. on Christmas Eve, to the wonderful 3:00 Christmas Eve celebration in the Nave, to our 4:00 p.m. outdoor gathering to watch the pre-recorded Children's Christmas Pageant, to our grand choral celebrations at 8:30 and 11:30 in the Cathedral, and the livestreamed productions of those services, to the quiet and faithful 10:00 a.m. Christmas Day service. We made it!

Thank you for celebrating the Feast of the Incarnation with us the Cathedral. Thank you for being safe and patient. We had life and love to celebrate. We had Jesus to celebrate. We had each other to celebrate. And we did.

Now, in these next several weeks after Christmas, the early season of Epiphany, I realize that organizations and schools and gatherings and businesses and churches are having to adjust again to positive covid tests. Here at the Cathedral, we are doing the same.

In addition, however, we are implementing our old "Inclement Weather" policy as an "Inclement Health" policy. With bad weather, our policy has always been that we will be open, but that we want people to use good judgement, their best judgement, about whether to be present for activities. There is to be no judgement, either way.

The same now goes for "Inclement Health!" During the next two weeks, the Cathedral will reduce some of our offerings, but we will be open. Please be safe and healthy. In this season, please be fully vaccinated and please wear a mask indoors. Use your best judgement about what you can safely do and what you cannot. We have cancelled a few things, like the annual delightful Epiphany party, and Sunday School classes for the first three Sundays in January. We are tired, and some people deserve a good and non-judgemental rest. But our Sunday services will occur, both in person and online. And our Bible studies and weekday classes will occur. Join them as you are comfortable!

Well, okay, what about the future? Is there something in the future we can celebrate? Yes, I have my eyes on the Feast of the Presentation, always forty days after Christmas Day, February 2. At forty days old, Jesus was presented in the Temple that day, and it has become a Feast of Lights ever since. Candlemas, we call it. At the Cathedral, we plan to keep that feast on the Sunday following, on February 6.

What if we can plan to present Jesus in the Cathedral, in public, on that day? What if we can plan to present ourselves to Jesus in the Cathedral on that day? What if we can light candles and sing in a new season? I hope we can. I hope that covid cases will have swooned by then. I hope that, by then, most people will be healthy and able to gather safely together in community and in love.

Watch these notices for future details. We are not out of the cautious season yet; we are still being careful and safely wearing masks. We are in winter dormancy, resting our resources and developing new energy for the spring. Well, the Feast of the Presentation is the day to celebrate the spring light. I know there are many good things to celebrate right now, wherever we are; but I am beginning to look forward to more public and community-gathered celebrations. The Feast of the Presentation, and the Sunday following, are looking fun to me!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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