



## S. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Regent Park

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Dear parishioners and friends of S. Bart's,

A few short weeks ago we might have dared to hope that the world was moving out of the COVID-19 pandemic and towards some semblance of the life we knew before March of 2020. The rise of the new Omicron variant, however, has reminded us that the pandemic is not yet over, but moving into a new phase. We don't know yet, of course, how long the present phase will last, whether this new strain of COVID virus is more or less virulent than the previous ones (although it seems clear at least that it is more transmissible): many questions and much uncertainty remain.

Of course, the Pandemic has only clarified for us what we have known, or ought to have known, all along: that "here we have no continuing city" (Hebrews 13:14), that here we have no real certainty, nothing that can ultimately satisfy us. Yet it is precisely into the midst of this uncertainty that God the Son came living a human life: Isn't it precisely to teach us this lesson that He willed to be born into the confusion of the taxation of Bethlehem, of a Virgin Mother who could find not room at an inn, so brought Him for in a stable and laid Him to sleep in the feeding trough of the beasts?

Just so, on this Holy Night Our Saviour consents to come to us in the midst of *this* confusion, in the midst of *this* pandemic, to live His divine Life in and through *us*. Jesus the Christ consents to be as it were circumscribed once more by a material garb; He enters time and space to give his Life to creatures of time and space. In that sacramental action He gathers up all our confusion, all our uncertainty, and renders it meaningful; He shows us that there is nothing that we undergo — nothing that we suffer (in the fullest sense of that word) — that is not ordered to our ultimate happiness. This is the true Gift of Christmas: Come, let us adore!

There will be four celebrations of Holy Mass on Christmas this year, all of which are open for in-person attendance: 6:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. tonight; 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. tomorrow. The 11 p.m. and 11 a.m. celebrations will also be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. There will also be in-person celebrations every day within the Christmas Octave at 11 a.m. If you wish to attend at 6:30 p.m., 11 p.m., or 11 a.m. on Christmas, please sign up using the Parish's Eventbrite page, which can be accessed via our website. Neither the 8 a.m. Mass on Christmas Day or the Masses within the Octave require pre-registration. It should be possible for all of our regular communicants to make their Christmas Communion either on Christmas Day, within the Octave, or, at the latest, by the Eve of the Epiphany (5 January), if they wish to do so. If you wish to receive your Christmas communion outside of Mass, either in the Church or at your home, please contact me to arrange that.

As we approach the end of our fiscal year, I wish you all to be aware that, as of 21 December, we have a **shortfall** in budgeted donations of **\$15,721**, which we must try to make up between now and the end of the year. If you have fallen behind in your intended givings, please consider trying to make up that difference in your Christmas offering. If you have already given what you intended, please prayerfully consider an extra one-time gift to get us to our budgeted goal of \$125,000 by the end of December. To ensure that we receive any donations before Saturday, 31 December, please send them by e-transfer, or mail any cheques or money orders early in Christmas week, or hand deliver them to the Vicarage.

May the peace of the Christ Child and the joy of his Blessed Mother be yours throughout this season and the coming year.

Your affectionate friend and Pastor,

The Rev'd Walter Hannam

Fr. Walter Hannam, Vicar T: 647-208-1645 E: fatherhannam@gmail.com

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