

SANCTUARY LONDON

FINDING HOME. TOGETHER.



*"In those days
Caesar Augustus
issued a decree
that a census
should be taken
of the entire
Roman world..."*

LUKE 2:1

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER!

This past Sunday was the third week of Advent. The candle that we light on this week represents Joy. As with Peace and Hope, Joy has been such a challenging thing for so many of our community members to grasp. Especially recently. As you can imagine, Christmas is already an extremely hard time of year for people who are experiencing homelessness. While much of society bombards us with images of festive family get-togethers, big holiday meals, and cozy campfires, people who are deprived of housing and relationships are left alone, reminded of all the things they just don't have.

As we dive deep into the Christmas story, it's also hard to imagine the Jewish people of the time experiencing any Peace, Hope, or Joy either. They were a oppressed people group. In the gospel of Luke, chapter 2 we read of a census being issued by the Roman Emperor Augustus, which is what forced Joseph and Mary, and so many more people to travel back to their hometowns, in this case, Bethlehem. The purpose of the census? So that the colonizers who had recently overtaken that area could maximize their taxation, thereby crushing the people further.

The journey itself would have been dangerous. For people already making only a subsistence level living, their jobs may have been forfeited, they would have had to make the journey on their own expense, and they would have risked robbers and thieves along the way. Furthermore, when Joseph and his very pregnant fiancée did finally arrive at their destination, none of their relatives would agree to have them stay with them, for fear of shaming the family name. The best they could find was an old smelly stable.



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BEST CHRISTMAS... EVER!

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I can't imagine being in such a vulnerable situation, and being outright rejected and shamed by relatives and other loved ones. Sure, there were rumours going around that a Roman Soldier may have been the baby's father. But if anything, this would make her a victim in need of love and protection, not a despicable and loathsome sinner or object to be ostracized.

Unfortunately, this is the story of too many of our community members. Imagine being rejected by your closest loved-ones after sharing about your non-heteronormative sexual identity, or being accused of lying when disclosing some sort of abuse by a caregiver. We hear these and many other painful stories all too often. Add on top of this the desperation brought on by the loneliness and isolation of the pandemic, and we have already recorded significantly more deaths in our community this year than any other year on record.

As a community, we have talked about these things over the last three weeks. And began to understand that Christmas is not about putting on your metaphorical Sunday best, and pretending you have a picture perfect life. Christmas is a story of pain, rejection, loneliness, discomfort, desperation, and oppression. And yet somehow, in the midst of all of that brokenness, a belief was planted that the world could be better.

Somehow, in sharing our strife with one another, some of us were able to experience a few moments of Peace. Somehow, in voicing our despair together, some of us were able to grasp on to Hope. And somehow, in sharing our grief, some of us sensed a glimmer of Joy rising up within us. I believe we need to find a way to balance these polarities.

So last week Sunday, after acknowledging our grief, we spent the rest of our time together acting out the Christmas story. With a few simple props, everyone was given a surprise character that they were encouraged to play. It was chaotic, and loud, and awkward at times, and it was perhaps, the best Christmas pageant ever! What better way to spread joy than that?

Join us!

This coming Sunday, December 19th, we invite you to join us for our Annual Christmas Carolling in the Park service. We will meet at 513 Talbot Street, and leave sharply at 6pm to walk to Victoria Park together. There we will sing for approximately half an hour before walking back to the church to light the fourth Advent candle representing Love. We'll also have hot chocolate, tea and cookies to share. We hope you will join us.

Christmas is hard. And the world is particularly hard right now too. So let's find ways of lifting one another up at this time of year. And let's find ways to especially welcome those who are often excluded among us.

Stay strong my friends, and love well. Thank you for supporting the Sanctuary London community.

On behalf of all of us at Sanctuary, and with much warmth and great love,

Darryl Reckman

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ART IS BACK!

We are so excited to be able to do art again with our community! Art is such an important way to build relationships through creativity and vulnerability, and it has been a very long time since we have been able to do this sort of thing. Even so, COVID distancing and masking protocols are in place, so our space is extremely limited at this time. If you would like to join us for an afternoon of art, please contact Mechele!



A Special Request

Every week, the realities of the pandemic continue to increase our operating costs substantially. With more people hurting and knocking on our doors, and general costs going through the roof, we could really use your support at this time.

As you finish up your Christmas shopping, please consider making a year-end gift to Sanctuary London, to help us continue caring for our community.

All financial donations will be issued a charitable receipt for income tax purposes in February



*Thank you so much
for supporting the
Sanctuary
Community through
2021.
Merry Christmas
from all of us!*

