FEATURED STORIES

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A COVID CHRISTMAS

What does a Covid-19 Christmas look like?

If 2020 has taught us anything, there are no easy answers short of what little we might know in the moment. Not only are there no easy answers, the very question itself can quite literally change "in an instant".

Uncertainty, ambiguity, loss, isolation, and aloneness ... of these, a collective consensus reverberates deep within the hearts of most.

For some, these descriptors are all too familiar during the Christmas season amidst the seeming mockery of celebratory tomes like "Joy to the World" and "Angels We Have Heard on High."

Almost unbearable is the tension captured by the heirloom angel adorning the family Christmas tree heralding, "Behold I bring you great joy" to a dimly lit apartment shuttered with grief-filled absence.

For many, the question, "What does a Covid-19 Christmas look like?" decries more than curiousity. It expresses our collective existential angst in which the hopes and fears of all the years are starkly contrasted, quite the opposite of Phillip Brooks' comforting score, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" in which hope and fear find their culmination in the birth of a Sovereign.

For most, a pervasive and not so subtle hypervigilance has emerged amidst the heightening awareness of Covid-19 and it's expanding influence. Norms have evaporated.

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Lives and families have been disrupted. The sense of community curved to flatline proportions. Our capacity to choreograph our lives imminently frustrated. Security and stability have given way to accentuated stress and mental health challenges for even the healthiest among us.

Too much is changing too rapidly. The language of 'trauma' captures our collective overwhelm.

In times like these our tendancy might be to tighten down, turn inward, and try harder by any means to restore some semblance of stability and control to our otherwise fragmented lives.

As we enter Advent and the Christmas season, a spiritual narrative plays out that offers perhaps another path to inner peace and joy in response to this pandemic Grinch.

During Advent we embark on a spiriitual pilgrimage visiting if you will the inner hamlets of hope, love, joy, and peace with quiet repose. This journey finds its resolve in the invitation to celebrate afresh Jesus as the Light shining ever so brightly into the darkness of our world.

In 2 Corinthians 5:15-20, the Apostle Paul articulates his version of the birth narrative ... In Christ Jesus, God was *reconciling* the world to himself (vs. 19). John's gospel similarly conflates the cradle and the cross in the sure and certain conviction that God so loved the world that he *gave* his only begotten son.

So, how does this answer the question, "What does a Covid-19 Christmas look like?"

Different, for sure. But perhaps for the Christ follower, that difference is defined less by the reality of Covid, and more by a remembered spiritual narrative that resonates deep within our hearts. That God gave, that Jesus is the Light of the World, that we have been reconciled to a Heavenly Father who now invites us to open ourselves, to focus outward, and rather than strive, to trustingly abandon ourselves to his purposes of *reconciling* the world to himself.

Perhaps Phillip Brooks' "O Little Town of Bethlehem" can be experienced as a contemporary angelic proclamation lighting up the sky of pandemic darkness. Imagine, waking up on Christmas morning, amidst the difference it might hold this year, our hearts enlarged such that the pandemic's anticipated requiem is drowned out with Whoville-like joyous celebration.

UPDATES FROM THE YEAR

Having connected with Dr. Charles and Colleen Shepson and the good folks at Fairhaven Tennessee in the Fall of 2019, Gwen and I came into the New Year with much excitement. The launch of our next capital expansion was on the horizon and there was much anticipation around the annual Spring Tour.

Little did any of us know what was 'lurking around the corner.' Life since then has changed significantly. For you and your loved ones, for your family and friends, and for Fairhaven.

Here on the mountain, the formal launch of the capital campaign was paused. Spring Tour was cancelled and budget implications necessitated the challenging decision of laying off one staff family.

In contrast, guests continued to encounter Jesus and find rest and renewal in the midst of the pandemic disarray. Reservations rose significantly through the spring, summer and into the fall.

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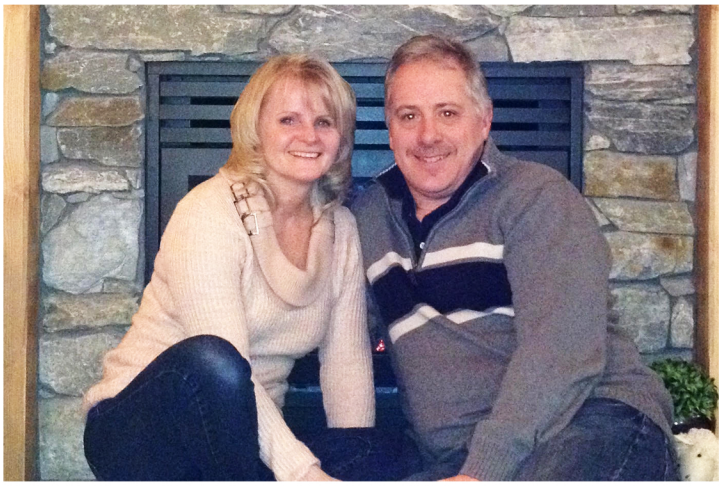
Appropriately distanced in-person and virtual counselling, encouragement, and consultations have increased as well. Fairhaven is a sought after oasis of silence and solitude in this current reality.

In addition to focusing on guest care, renovations on the Orchard Cottage were completed in the Spring. Time-saving underground sprinklers and drip systems were also added contributing to the beauty of our facilities and guest experience.

This Fall, Dwayne and Donna Boyd have joined us on the hill in a volunteer capacity.

They will be with us through the winter and into the Spring of 2021.



MOVING FORWARD

SIGNIFICANT NEEDS INVITING PRAYER & PARTICIPATION

- Many of our current supporters have been impacted by the pandemic. Sacrificial giving even more of a sacrifice. As a result, expanding our financial support base and engaging those whose hearts resonate with the mission will be a priority in this next season.

- In this period of staff shortage, we are looking for volunteers who would be willing to spend a couple weeks or months at Fairhaven assisting with grounds and maintenance in exchange for accomodations.

- A replacement for our Skid Steer would be a welcomed blessing to the ministry. Leads?

- As a Board and leadership we continue to discern God's timing and design on our next expansion. Donations to the group cottage are welcome and gratefully received during this pre-launch phase of the compaign.

A FAIRHAVEN CHRISTMAS

Tuesday, December 15 @ 6:30pm PST | Live online from the Charles Shepson Lodge

Join us via Zoom from the comfort of your home while enjoying a cup of hot cider or hot chocolate. A fun evening of Christmas Carols, reading of the Christmas story, a year-end update, guest testimonials, and an opportunity to partner with us!

Zoom Meeting ID: 820 1945 8504 | Passcode: 756797

IN CONCLUSION

We are grateful for God's continued blessing upon Fairhaven. Volunteers, those who pray for us regularly, and those who give sacrificially to the mission. Thank you for responding to the Spirit's nudging and for partnering with us in this work! Your partnership with this ministry is making a profound difference in the hearts and lives of those called to kingdom purposes.

As we enter the Advent season, may I encourage those of you who are able to prayerfully consider a year-end gift to further the ministry of Fairhaven in this challenging season.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Reimers, and our team of volunteers, Gwen and I wish you and yours a wonderful Christ-centered season.

Blessings,

Tony Schnare, Executive Director

Donations are welcomed through e-transfer to donation@fairhavencanada.com. For additional giving options, please visit our website at fairhavencanada.com/donate

TESTIMONIALS

"Dear Fairhaven Staff. Thank you so much for your kind words of welcome and blessing for our stay. Together [we] read Eph.2:11-22 after settling in, receiving these words of God with gratitude. We have been truly blessed by our stay here. The cleanliness, peacefulness and attention to detail in providing all that was necessary meanth very much to us. May the Lord continue to bless you and the ministry of Fairhaven."

"We want to express our thanks to all of you for providing an awesome place of peace, rest, and refreshment! It has been a very anointed week for us. We appreciate you sharing that you were praying Ps.27 over us. We studied this psalm individually and together as a couple and the words touched us both. God also spoke other words of encouragement to us through our devotions and studies in His word. We feel He gave us direction and planning for the rest of this year and next. Thank you again for your prayers. May God continue to bless and anoint this holy place. We look forwad to a return visit."

WE'RE ONLINE

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