

NATIVITY NEWSLETTER



Pastoral Message

Христос Народився! Christ is Born!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you all with the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

Over the past few weeks, there have been many discussions between myself and the District Board, the sole focus being the safety of our parishioners when offering the Divine Services within our Church. We are continuing to monitor the restrictions and announcements from the Province and AHS and we are doing our best to make adjustments as they happen. So please, dear parishioners, I continue to ask for your patience with myself and the Presidents as we continue to navigate the restrictions to the best of our ability.

As some have been asking, there will be no house blessings occurring this year. It is unfortunate, as I truly value this time every year to see all of my parishioners and I always enjoy our visits. As such, it is my intention that following the Feast of Theophany I will be reaching out over the phone (or over Zoom for those that prefer) to touch base with all of you.

I pray that all of you continue to stay safe and stay healthy throughout the coming months. I continue to remain hopeful that the good Lord will see us through this pandemic and that we will see our Church life return to normalcy within the near future.

Today the heavens and the earth rejoice; the angels in heaven declare: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." (Luke 2:14). Let us share in that exclamation and prayer, that Christ will also bless us and fill us with His abundant grace and generosity, with peace and joy, and grant us to live with and for Him.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Peter Haugen

This edition's newsletter
Sponsor is:
John and Caroline Yewchin

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Nativity Epistle of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine

To the God-beloved Pastors, Venerable Monastics,
and all Faithful Children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora and in Ukraine

“Today Christ is born from a Virgin in Bethlehem, today the Eternal One is born and the Word is incarnated: the powers of heaven rejoice, the earth and all mankind rejoice” (Festal Stykhyra)

Christ is Born!

Today the Orthodox Church again celebrates the Nativity of Christ, commemorating the advent into the world of the Son of God. The entire Christian world glorifies and magnifies the New-born God-child, Christ the Lord.

St. Paul calls the Nativity of Christ “A mystery of great piety: God appeared in the Flesh. (I Tim. 3:16). The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is the greatest and deepest mystery of the Christian faith. The Pre-eternal God becomes man without ceasing to be God. The Holy Evangelist John the Theologian says “The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14).

In our contemporary anxious and confused world, where terror and uncertainty reign, the quiet and joyful angelic hymn rings out: “Glory to God in the highest, His peace is on earth, and His good-will among men” (Lk. 2:14).

Fr. Peter is continuing in his pastoral care of our parishioners to the best of my abilities in the following ways:

- Phone calls
- Online Pastoral sessions
- In person sessions within the St. Elias Parish
- In person sessions within a restaurant keeping social distance (when permitted)
- Text message support of our Parishioners

I will continue to make myself available when there is a need, but as always, ***please reach out to me*** if you yourself are in need of a pastoral visit, or know someone that may benefit from one, and I will do my best to reach out in an appropriate and safe manner.

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Today the entire world is anxious, just as the residents of Jerusalem were aforetime (Mt. 2:3), and so the angelic song about peace on earth and good-will among men Hills every Christian soul with peace and hope for a better future. For today the Saviour of the world lies in a manger, He who “does not break the bent reed and does not snuff out the smoldering flax” (Is. 42:3). “He is our peace, Who tore down the dividing wall” (Eph. 2:14) between heaven and earth, which had been erected by human unrighteousness.

Mankind has contemplated this Divine Infant for over two thousand years, and from Him many derive life-giving strength which transforms their life for the better. The Holy Fathers say that Christ came to the earth in order to raise us up to heaven, that he became man, that we might become sons of God, that He became poor

that we might be rich, and humble so that we might be glorified.

It is a great sorrow to us all, that this year during the celebration of the Nativity holidays we experience a great trial as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Today our temples are affected by particular restrictions which prevent our faithful from receiving necessary pastoral care. But the great feast which we celebrate, the Nativity of Christ, reminds us of God's immeasurable love for the human person. "God so loved the World, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16).

Out of His great love for His creation, He made this world beautiful. But people often break their unity with God through their sinful life and bring misfortune, sickness, and evil into the world. This pandemic, which has shaken the entire world, calls us as Christians to meditate upon our own personal lives. God would not have permitted this pandemic to attain such world-wide development if it were not a reminder to all the people of the earth.

It is precisely the feast of the Nativity of Christ which witnesses to the fact that God does not leave us without His care. God not only looks after the world as a whole, but after each person individually.

And so may the One born in Bethlehem, the Lord resting in the manger, spur each of us on to consider why we live and what path we are following - the straight path of God, or the crooked path of sin. Faith in God calls all of us to battle with all manner of evil and before anything else with our own personal sin.

During these holy days of the Nativity season let us prayerfully call upon the God-child Christ - our Saviour - so that He might protect all of us from this terrible sickness.

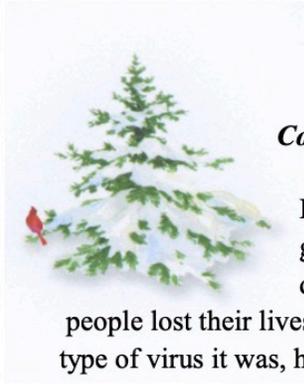
We greet all of you with a sincere heart, dear brothers and sisters, with the great and salvific feasts of the Nativity of Christ, the New Year, and the Holy Theophany. We especially greet our youth and children, and all of you God-beloved Christians in the diaspora and in Ukraine.

May the coming new year be for all of us a year of spiritual growth, peace, good health, familial good fortune, and a God-blessed year of good fortune for all people throughout the world.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With Archpastoral Blessings,

+YURIJ, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
+ANTONY, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and in the Diaspora
+JEREMIAH, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of Brazil and South America
+DANIEL, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA and Western Europe
+ILARION, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
+ANDRIY, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada



Coping with Grief During the Holidays...and During a Pandemic

- By Caroline Yewchin

In an old country cemetery, not too far from St. Paul, lie 5 small graves: children from one family who died within days of each other during the Spanish flu of 1918. It is estimated that over 50 million people lost their lives in that pandemic. Much is known about the Spanish flu ...what type of virus it was, how it was transmitted, and the numbers of people who died. But, little is known about how people *grieved* and coped with their losses. How did that family survive the death of their 5 children?

Fast forward to 2020: we are in the middle of another pandemic and, thankfully, we are having conversations about individual and “collective grief” from the many losses we are experiencing. The loss of feeling safe and secure, loss of familiar routines, loss of jobs, changes to our healthcare and education systems, and losses through death. These changes and uncertainties have all increased our anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation.

On top of everything else, we now add Christmas! This is usually a busy time of year, with decorating, baking and cooking, keeping traditions, going to Christmas services, school concerts, and extending kindness to others. This Christmas will look different, as many activities are cancelled or pared down, but it will arrive on the calendar as scheduled. The question iswhat to do? How to cope?

The first step in coping with grief during the holidays is to acknowledge that the first Christmas without your special person is difficult and often overwhelming. Here are some suggestions for coping. These are only suggestions: you have to decide what is comfortable for you and your family.

1. Despite the temptation, try to avoid “cancelling Christmas”

You may not feel ready or able to take on every aspect of Christmas, and that’s perfectly normal. But, it can be even harder to manage when you isolate yourself and try to avoid the holidays. Christmas will definitely be different this year, but you may find some comfort in keeping a few important traditions.

As widow Jennifer McIvor wrote in an article, “Making the decision to “do” Christmas was the most difficult part, but once the decision was made, the rest was easier. I decided that I wanted to have Christmas. In this time of turmoil and change, this was something familiar.”

2. Set Realistic Expectations for Yourself

Recognize that when you are grieving, your energy levels are lower and your ability to concentrate and focus is diminished. Be kind to yourself and don't attempt to "do it all." Decide what is important and meaningful to do this Christmas and be willing to say "no" and let some things go. Have a discussion with your family and choose activities that will bring you peace and joy; not pain and chaos. For example, you might have fewer people at the family meal this year and have a larger family gathering next summer (who says you can't have Christmas in July?). Remember to give yourself permission to accept helping hands from others to decorate, cook, or shop.

3. Plan How You Would Like to Remember Your Loved One

One of the biggest fears surrounding Christmas is what the day will be like without your loved one. You may be afraid that you will spend the whole day feeling sad or crying.... or you may be afraid that everyone will try to be happy and not even mention your person's name. It is helpful to discuss and plan how you and your family would like to honour and remember your loved one at Christmas.

Some ideas:

- ★ Light a Memorial Candle and set it on the dinner table.
- ★ Include your special person in the family prayer at mealtime.
- ★ Plan your meal to include one of your loved one's favourite dishes. If you have to be apart at Christmas, have family members in different locations make "Mom's recipes" and then compare/share the results with each other.
- ★ Buy or make a special ornament in memory of your person and hang it on the tree.
- ★ Set aside time for looking at pictures/videos. Share stories. Laugh and cry - both are "good medicine."
- ★ Hang a stocking in memory of your loved one. Have family members write a story or memory about the person and put it into the stocking. Later on, pull out the memories one by one and share them.
- ★ Make a decorated box. Ask everyone to bring or send a favourite photo to put inside the box. Children can make drawings as well. Take time during Christmas to share the photos/drawings and memories that are connected to the pictures. This can be shared by video.
- ★ Visit the cemetery and bring Christmas flowers to the memorial site.
- ★ Make a donation to a charity in memory of your loved one. Gifts such as a toy for a child; a gift for a mother who will be spending Christmas at a Women's Shelter, a gift of food for the Food Bank or Christmas Hamper Fund; audio books for a Senior's Lodge; a donation to your church; or other kindnesses.

- ★ Decide on a family project that can be done later such as making a memorial garden in the spring, making quilts or pillows with your loved one's clothing, or printing a family cookbook.
- ★ Your own ideas: _____

Remember: If your gathering this year needs to be smaller due to safety considerations, many of the suggestions can still be done and shared virtually, using technology such as Zoom and Skype.

4. Find Healthy Outlets for Your Emotions

As you think about navigating your first Christmas without your special person, feelings of grief may become more intense. You may experience heightened feelings of sadness, anger, loneliness, guilt, fear, confusion, fatigue and even relief. It is important not to bottle up these feelings inside, but rather find healthy ways to express them. You can express them:

Verbally - by talking to family and friends, writing in a journal, or connecting to a trusted on-line grief support program.

Physically - by getting a little exercise (going for a walk, getting fresh air), insuring that you have enough rest, eating in a way that nourishes your body, and avoiding alcohol and drugs.

Creatively - channelling emotions through creativity has proven to be very healing for both children and adults. Activities such as drawing/painting, music, making crafts, and writing are all healthy ways of coping.

Spiritually - praying, singing, reading, and having rituals (memorial feasts, visiting the cemetery) can provide sources of comfort and give you time and space to express emotions.

Not every activity may be right for every person. It helps to try different things until you find what feels right or is helpful for you.

Sometimes, anticipation of a holiday can be more difficult than the actual day itself. If you prepare for it by talking with family, making a plan for what you are able to do and not do this year, it will be less daunting. Taking action is better than waiting and fearing the worst. As author Pauline Kezer wrote:

“I believe hope enters our lives as a result of taking action. When we do nothing, we feel overwhelmed and helpless. But when we get involved, we feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing we are working to make things better.”

The Spanish flu lasted from the spring of 1918 to the summer of 1919, but eventually, the pandemic receded. The world healed. Life continued to go forward. We look to the future with hope and optimism that our world will rebound once again. In the meantime, be patient, be kind to one another, and let some rays of joy and goodwill shine into your life this Christmas.



Bonnyville & District Ukrainian Orthodox Parish
Council Society -
ALTERNATE COVID Schedule - 2021

Note: This is an accurate schedule as of December 2020, but please consider this a living document and subject to change. We will continue to monitor the announcements of the Provincial Health Authorities and make changes as necessary. The Sunday Collection each Sunday will be for the Volunteering Parish on the rotation listed below. Any questions or concerns should be raised with your Parish President or Fr. Peter.

JANUARY				
Date	Day	Time	Location	Volunteer Parish/Description
3	Sunday	NO SERVICE WITHIN DISTRICT		
7	Thursday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	*Nativity of Our Lord*
10	Sunday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	St. Paul
17	Sunday	10:00 AM	Bonnyville	Sandy Rapids
18	Monday	6:00 PM	Bonnyville	Eve of Theophany - Water Blessing
24	Sunday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	Glendon/Theophany Water Blessing
31	Sunday	10:00 AM	Bonnyville	Bonnyville/District AGM

FEBRUARY				
Date	Day	Time	Location	Volunteer Parish/Description
7	Sunday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	Nowa Bukowina
14	Sunday	10:00 AM	Bonnyville	Sandy Rapids
21	Sunday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	St. Paul/Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
28	Sunday	10:00 AM	Bonnyville	Bonnyville/Sunday of the Prodigal Son

MARCH				
Date	Day	Time	Location	Volunteer Parish/Description
7	Sunday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	Glendon/Meatfare Sunday
14	Sunday	10:00 AM	Bonnyville	Nowa Bukowina/Cheesefare Sunday
15	Monday	BEGINNING OF GREAT LENTEN FAST		
21	Sunday	10:00 AM	St. Paul	St. Paul/Sunday of Orthodoxy
28	Sunday	10:00 AM	Bonnyville	Sandy Rapids/Second Sunday of Great Lent