

Dear Friend of the Cathedral,

The last newsletter for 2019 brings you Christmas salutations from Christ Church Cathedral. May these holy days bring you peace and happiness.

If you are in Montreal we hope you'll come to the joyful carol service at 4:00 pm this Sunday. Refreshments including homemade cookies and mince pies are being served after the service. You can see the bulletin on the website.

You can also see the bulletins for the other Christmas services. To remind you, there is a family service on Christmas Eve at 4:00 pm. Children and the young in heart are invited to participate in the pageant. Admit it – you've always wanted to dress up as a sheep! Jonathan is looking for people to lead the singing of carols at this service. The French choral mass is at 7:00 pm and the bilingual "Midnight Mass" starts at 11:00 pm. Bertrand is preaching at these two services. Services on Christmas Day are at the usual times, but there won't be Evensong.

We are still collecting non-perishable food to be given to St Michael's mission. Please leave your donation in the basket at the back of the church. The end of the month lunch will be feeding over 100 needy people on Sunday December 29. Adrian will welcome help with serving the meal. Then in January there will be another appeal to your generosity – for socks. Wool Socks can make the difference between health and frostbite for our homeless neighbors. We will be collecting them each Sunday in January in the basket at the rear of the church.

The cathedral and diocesan offices will be closed between December 23 and January 2, but the cathedral itself will be open every day except December 26 and January 1.

The Sing Along Messiah was a resounding success. Thank you to Jonathan, Nicholas and all the musicians who led the singing. There are pictures and a video on the Cathedral's Facebook page. If you meant to donate but have forgotten – there's still time! The cathedral Facebook page has been posting daily in an Advent countdown to Christmas, well worth a look. There are some lovely photographs and thoughtful messages.

Most people enjoy Christmas music and there are some interesting stories behind some well-known carols and poems. Here's one:

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was filled with sorrow at the tragic death of his wife in a fire in 1861. The Civil War broke out the same year, and it seemed this was an additional punishment. Two years later, Longfellow was again saddened to learn that his own son had been seriously wounded in the Army of the Potomac. Sitting down to his desk, one Christmas Day, he heard the church bells ringing. It was in this setting that Longfellow wrote these lines:

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep.
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!"

May your hearts be filled with peace and love this Christmas and may the message of the bells to the world come true.

Ann Elbourne
December 20, 2019