

We Need a Little Christmas

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor



It's the morning after Thanksgiving and I'm reflecting. Like many of you, we did it differently this year. Just our immediate family. It's hard to have a party with three people, but we gave it our all. FaceTime helped. And wine. Jeff got creative in the kitchen. (Cranberry Relish, anyone? Turkey Roulade?) We'll have leftovers through Christmas.

Speaking of which, we've decided to get our tree today. That's different, too. I've always loathed rushing the season; it tends to wear out its welcome too early. Normally, I insist on waiting 'til December. Preferably, *deep* December.

But nothing's normal in 2020. According to social media, I'm actually *behind* on my decorating. I have friends who put up their trees three weeks ago. Lots of folks have been listening to Christmas music since Halloween. There seems to be a general consensus that we need a little Christmas, right this very minute. Better yet, *a lot*. Yesterday.

And people are getting so creative about it! Press releases are flooding into my office, and for each one informing me of a sad cancellation – Night on the Town, the Beaufort Christmas Parade, Light Up the Night Boat Parade – there's another touting some new and delightful yuletide happening. [An old-timey "radio show" of *A Christmas Carol*](#) will stream live from USCB Center for the Arts this Saturday. Every Second Counts Escape Rooms will offer [private, Covid-safe visits with Santa](#), complete with hot cocoa, all month; First Presbyterian Church will feature [beautiful nativity displays from around the world through the lit windows](#) of its historic sanctuary, open for public viewing through Epiphany.

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Everywhere you look, people are joyfully rising to the challenge of Covid Christmas. My church – First Presbyterian, again – has been meeting outside, masked and socially distanced, since October. Our choir hasn't sung together since early March, but apparently, we're going to give it a whirl this month. Our choir director has ordered something called "singers' masks" – they stand way out from your face – and we hope to do some carols on December 20th. Outdoors. With no acoustics. Spaced six feet apart. After zero practice in nine months. Normally, I'd shudder at the thought – I like to sound *good* – but again, nothing's normal in 2020, and I can't wait.

In fact, I think we need a lot *more* singing this season! Maybe we can't sing shoulder to shoulder in sanctuaries, but we can surely raise our voices elsewhere. I want to see people singing in the streets. Singing in storefronts. Singing on their porches and decks and docks. This is no time for propriety, y'all. No time to be shy. Bring out your lutes and your lyres – okay, guitars will do – and make a joyful noise.

And string up those lights! I predict cities, towns and neighborhoods will be lit up like never before. And parents with no parties to throw or attend – no hustle to bustle – will pile their kids into the family wagon and drive around looking at lights, just like mine did back in the day. Let's give those families something to talk about. Full Griswold. No yard left unstrung!

With more singing and lights and family time, but less social and commercial hoopla, this Covid Christmas just *might* shape up to be singularly magical. And speaking of magic: be on the lookout for it this season, even as you're busy making it for others.

For inspiration, consider what happened to me *last* December:

A few days after Christmas, a package arrived on my doorstep. It was addressed to me, had shipped directly from the company, and there was no return address but theirs. Neither was there a card inside. A mystery.

The package contained two large, lovingly wrapped candles; and not just *any* candles, either. They were exquisite, handmade candles from a company called Crown & Crystal, where, according to the website, "Organic meets Luxury." My specialty candles are made of 100%

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organic soy wax, garnished with purple forget-me-not flowers, 24K gold flakes, and smoky quartz. They smell of orange and sage, with heart notes of amber and lavender. They are, somehow, both lavish and earthy. Almost otherworldly. The website informed me that C&C candles have names like Bliss, Comfort, Aura, and Valor. Mine are called Balance.

It's been almost a year, and I still have no idea who sent me these beautiful candles. I wrote to several "suspects," all of whom adamantly denied the good deed. I reached out to the Crown & Crystal company via email. No help. I even posted a query on Facebook. Nada. For weeks, the not knowing tortured me – especially the not being able to say "thank you" – until I finally just gave up and gave in to the spirit of the gesture. And lit a candle.

There is something uniquely magical about receiving a deeply personal gift from an anonymous giver. Why do I say *personal*? Not only was the gift addressed to me, not my family or business, and far too extravagant (i.e. expensive) to have come from a business associate – especially without a card – but I simply can't imagine the sender randomly chose the Balance candle out of all the others. For years, I've been writing – and yammering to anybody who will listen – about my centrist politics, my moderate nature, my obsession with bridge-building, my Libran craving for *balance* in a world of ever-widening extremes. Balance is my thing, and everybody knows it. Coincidentally (or not?), I love mysteries, too. It's possible the sender knew *that*, as well, and decided to add secrecy to the mix. Who knows? At this point, I suppose I'll never know who sent this gift *or* why.

But I've burned most of one Balance candle and will bring out the second this Christmas season. I will bask in its gold-flecked glow – and its delicious, lavender-sagey-orangey scent – and dream of balance, while dreaming up ways to make magic for somebody else.

O, Magical Mystery Giver of Light, I hope you're reading this column. I still long to thank you for your enchanting act of generosity. Even the timing was perfect – after Christmas, instead of before – as I often slip into a mild depression around January. (Did you know that, too?) You brought radiance and poetry to the cold gray prose of post-holiday winter. In a time of encroaching darkness, you made me feel seen, known, and cherished.

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And if I'm completely wrong about all this – say, perhaps, Crown & Crystal sent out a bunch of these packages to folks they deemed “influencers” (hey, I have a *lot* of Facebook friends) in hopes of getting some cheap publicity – well, I don't want to know.

But for the record, they do make really nice candles.

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