



spring garden church
A PLACE OF WORSHIP AND COMMUNITY

Delve

January 2024

Quick Calendar



WEEKLY

Sun	10am Sunday Worship in person or watch Online	pg 21
Tue	10am-12pm Pastoral Team Meeting	pg 21
Thur	10am Moms' Meet Up	pg 21
1st & 3rd Thur	12 - 2 pm Lunch - Prayer - Share	pg 21
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See more at www.springgardenchurch.ca/events

February 2024 Delve submissions are due Jan. 22nd. Delve submissions are due on the MONDAY before the LAST Sunday of each month but due to the holidays we are giving it another week. To submit for the next issue of Delve, e-mail: delve@springgardenchurch.ca



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Our Values (back page)

www.springgardenchurch.ca

The Never-ending Christmas: An Epiphany for the Ages

by Jeremy Ranasinghe

Christmas, (depending on your personal context), is a holiday uniquely participated in and celebrated around the world. It's a kaleidoscope of traditions, each carrying its own history. This is especially true as we consider family or cultural traditions, new and old alike, or even past traditions which continue to live with us in memory.

It shouldn't be a surprise that Christmas is perhaps the most eagerly awaited holiday around the world, uniting us in shared anticipation, yet allowing for different and diverse expressions and experiences. This is a kingdom image, and a powerful one, because who doesn't love receiving a gift!

Isn't it a bit of a shame when the day ends, though? As the 25th draws to a close, I've always felt that those around me shared a sense of sadness that Christmas is over and its return is another whole year away... especially when my wife's sadness in waiting quickly turns into another Christmas countdown!

But what if I told you Christmas isn't actually over on the 25th of December and that there may be some actual truth to what's sung in the '12 Days of Christmas'? Just don't get your hopes up with what I'm saying, because it might not be what you think!

The truth is, Christmas is actually a season that happens from Dec 25th to Jan 6th every year, which means it's still 'Christmas' even as I'm writing this!

As a faith community, whose traditions are very connected to this holiday, we may know that Christmas is not actually about Santa, hot chocolate, or that weird little elf running around people's houses spying on their kids!

Christmas is about Jesus and everything connected to this person, who becomes and IS our Saviour. But did you know that little sweet baby Jesus was not actually born on December 25th, 0000?

Jesus' actual birthday is not known or mentioned in the Bible, and there is also no historical evidence to confirm a specific date. The choice of December 25th is thought to be a symbolic or strategically chosen day by the early church. There are some who believe the day was chosen to align with or replace the pagan festivals that occurred around the winter solstice.

The ancient Romans celebrated a festival in honour of Saturn, their god of agriculture, in mid-December. Additionally, the Roman Empire also worshipped and celebrated the birth of their sun god, Mithras, on December 25. The early church may have chosen this date for Christmas to offer a Christian alternative to these other celebrations, or to adopt and absorb them as part of our own tradition.

This strategy of aligning Christian celebrations with already existing pagan festivals was not uncommon in the early years of Christianity and was seen as a pragmatic approach by the early church to help ease the transition for new converts and to make Christian worship more relatable to the new believers. But that's just my (hopefully neutral) spin on it.

What's really interesting for me (and more the focus of this article) is that Christmas originally wasn't one day like how we celebrate it now, and has always ended on January 6th with 'The Feast of Epiphany,' or Epiphany for short. Epiphany is observed differently depending on the Christian tradition. But for most western churches, the focus of Epiphany looks at the Magi who visit baby Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

The Magi are not mentioned outside of this early part in Matthew, and little is known about who they were. Some believe they were Zoroastrian priests from ancient Persia, who were skilled in astronomy and astrology. This meant they paid close attention to the patterns they observed in the stars, which is where their revered awareness of Jesus' significance would be from and ultimately what prompted their travels. Their journey was one they chose to embark on, purely from unassured faith and even that purpose alone can give us a lot to reflect on.

The Magi's presence in Matthew's Nativity story is important and often overlooked. The Magi who visited Jesus were believed to have no Jewish connections, nor would they be familiar with Hebrew traditions. What's happening in that story is God using what was part of the Magi's faith/religious traditions to help them encounter him through Jesus. This is why the Magi represent and are the focus (and part of the literal definition) of Epiphany!

The presence of Magi Gentiles in the narrative is significant, I think, and for a couple of reasons. 1 - Jesus came, and is for all humanity to know and follow; and 2 - God is bigger and moves in ways beyond the structures of our faith, and we should pay attention to that fact both in scripture and in real life. God is not confined by geographical, cultural, or religiously logical boundaries and, more than that, came as a gift in physical form as the Christ we worship and desire to serve.

December 25th as a celebration, regardless of whether we observe it for the full 12 days, commemorates that there is actual and real hope for our world and Jesus' birth and the celebrating of that has value.

This is true because the one who brings us freedom from what ultimately oppresses life was born one day long ago, and made a way for us to know God and experience true freedom through unconditional love and grace.

During the build-up to December 25th, I feel societally our culture tries to forget about and ignore the hard stuff in life as an attempt to not dampen the Christmas spirit; knowing that for some, the joy is hard to find in the season.

Our world is yearning for the sense of Christmas peace, but we don't have to wait all year or even limit Christmas to 12 days. If Jesus was born for us as a gift, and part of that gift involves sharing it with others we come to know and love, then in a way, we can celebrate Christmas all day every day! - so no more need for countdowns! 😊

All jokes aside, there's something to that reality that I think is important. Jesus was born for us to know we can have and be in a relationship with God and that God calls us to share forward what we experience in that gift continuously and equally unconditionally. But what that looks like (to me at least) is

elements of active Christmas Spirit that is naturally a part of us and not limited to significant dates on a calendar. I see that joy in faith fellowship and life as we navigate, encounter and discover the goodness of our existence as God originally designed, but in healthy growing/loving relationships as part of God's Church. Because again, Jesus came and is a gift for all to know.

So Happy Birthday Jesus! Thanks for being born!

Incarnation.

by Jen Chrystman

Jesus made it look so easy. Leave heaven. Be born as a baby in a feeding trough. Grow up. You'd think that it would get even easier as one gets older, right? Sigh. Not for me.

Edgar is our maintenance and outdoor garden guy here at the OMF Manila Center. He works from 7:30 till 10:30 a.m. most mornings but starts at the kitchen table with a hot cup of coffee. Then he sweeps leaves around the parking area for about 45 minutes and waters some plants and trees. In between my times outside with him, trying to hold him accountable for other jobs like cleaning the moss off the cement, I was reading a book on cross-cultural ministry. The stories were really interesting till the author said, "But If you think you understand the culture, you're even more of a hypocrite for not doing it well." ... or words to that effect. Having just read the part of Mark's gospel where Jesus castigates the Pharisees as hypocrites, I stand convicted too. Here I am holding onto cultural/family traditions and not following the law of love: the highest value of His kingdom.

Being born in a western family with a focus on time and task makes it hard to incarnate into a culture that values event and relationship. How do I hold someone accountable for work that's not done? The answer, I think is to pray for ways that I can empower Edgar, encourage him and build more trust into our relationship. "Can you show me? Can you help me understand?" needs to follow times of sitting together and sharing stories about our families. With food, of course. Sharing food is also a high value.

Along with the frustrations of incarnation are the joys of reaffirming that indeed, my superpower is weakness, where His

power can be made perfect. “Lord, use that power to change me into a Kingdom-focussed encourager. And thank you for the ever-present need to pray for wisdom and guidance.”



APPROVED!! ARRIVING February 6!!

Joyous news to end 2023, the RASO family has been approved for Permanent Residency in Canada and have now received a travel date of Feb.6 to travel to Canada. They are delirious with excitement and anticipation. We look forward to welcoming Soleman, Nesren, David (16), Abd (14), and Rama (13).

For Spring Garden this means that we need to transition from waiting to action. Since hearing this wonderful news in December the Refugee Action Group (RAG, for short) has been busy getting all of the basics sorted out. An apartment has been rented in the same building as Soleman’s brother Tarik. Furniture collected over the past 2 years is in storage. New mattresses have been purchased. Many of you have signed up to fill the pantry and utility closet.

Please consider how you can be involved—prayerfully, financially, and involvement with resettling the family.

- **Prayerfully**
 - transitioning to life in Canada is going to be stressful no matter what
 - that we would faithfully show God’s love to this family

- pray for health and safety in their remaining days in Lebanon
- **Financially**
 - If you are updating your computer or cellphone would you consider donating your used equipment?
 - The budget has not yet been met for the full year of expenses
- **Volunteering Time and Hospitality**
 - Prior to arrival, setting up the apartment (Available Feb.1)
 - Tutoring
 - Family time
 - Learning English
 - Orienting to the city
 - Transportation to appointments
 - Networking for jobs

A Message from Scott Moore:

Hi friends!

In past issues of Delve, I have from time to time shared some of my poetry (with accompanying illustrations from my friend Landon). We post regularly at thesemoments.ca but this Christmas, decided to publish our first collection in print!

We are really excited about how it all turned out. You can check out the book at <https://www.thesemoments.ca/shop> (we also printed some note cards as well).

If you’re interested in picking up a copy let me know at scottgmoore@mac.com. The books are \$21.50 and you can order online or e-transfer me directly at scottgmoore@mac.com. If cost is a barrier, please let me know, as our priority is to share this work with whoever is interested!

Thanks for your support!

Scott



Volunteering at Willowdale Manor

Are you interested in connecting and supporting seniors in our community? If so, Willowdale Manor and NeighbourLink North York are inviting us to participate in two upcoming dates, **Thursday January 18th from 4-6pm (volunteers are welcome to come at 3:30pm for set up if possible)** and **Thursday, February 1st from 1:30-3:30pm** at Willowdale Manor (175 Cummer Ave.).

Volunteers of all ages are welcome to come to the event where they will connect with and offer support to the seniors who will be there. If you are interested in receiving more information or you are available to volunteer at this event, please contact Emily at emilykielstra@springgardenchurch.ca.



SGC Gym Night

What: A night of sports including but not limited to Volleyball, Basketball, etc.

Date: Jan. 27

Time: 7pm-9pm

Location Westmount C.I. (1000 New Westminster Dr, Thornhill, ON L4J 8G3)

Cost: \$5 per person, per event

Go to tiny.cc/sgcgymnights to sign up.



New to Spring Garden Lunch

Are you new to Spring Garden Church? We invite you to join us for lunch after worship from 12-2PM on Sunday, Jan. 28 to meet others and learn more about our church community. Lunch will be provided. To let us know you would like to come, please fill out the form at <http://tiny.cc/newtospring>. If you have any questions related to the lunch, email Sam at samlee@springgardenchurch.ca.

Event Timing: Jan 28, 2024 (After worship & refreshments)

Event Address: East Lounge

Contact us at samlee@springgardenchurch.ca

Cost: Free!



2024 Church Wide Retreat

May 31 - June 2, 2024

We believe in a communal God who invites us into community. This year, our theme is abiding in Christ through prayer. One great way of doing this is to come to a retreat to unplug, get away from the city, and to enjoy God's creation in community. Come join us for a time of rest and renewal as we spend time together at Fair Havens! EARLY BIRD PRICING ON NOW.

Register at: <http://tiny.cc/springabide>





Saturday Feb 10: Visioning and Planning Meeting for our Community Garden.

Exploring how we can best share our resources to care for creation, our community, and each other. Details to come! Contact community garden email for more information or to share ideas: garden@springgardenchurch.ca

Financial Update as of January 2024

by Jeff McGee

Thank you everyone who donated for 2023! We have achieved our 2023 Revenue target

We are very thankful to have Kathy Webb take on the role of Donations Administrator, looking after the administration of donations given to Spring Garden.

springgardenchurch.ca/give

Home Groups As people who worship a triune God, we believe we are called to embrace spiritual growth as a collective, not simply as individuals. We also believe that we are all made in the image of God and are therefore created to belong in community. Home Groups are designed for us to pursue spiritual growth together and experience a deeper sense of belonging by creating opportunities to strengthen relationships with one another, engage in spiritual disciplines together, and participate in mission as a community. We have a number of Home Groups:

Wednesdays from 7:30 pm to 9 pm
At Spring Garden Church (in person)

Wednesdays from 8 pm to 9:30 pm
Online (Zoom)

Every second Sunday from 1 pm to 3 pm
At Spring Garden Church (in person)

If you are interested in joining a Home Group or you would like more information about Home Groups, please contact Emily at emilykielstra@springgardenchurch.ca

Do you want to share something God is doing in your life or that you see God working around you? Something that could be a positive influence for the readers? A poem, story, art, photos...? We want to hear from you!

Email delve@springgardenchurch.ca if interested.



Happy New Year!!

As we begin 2024, here's some info we want to share with you!

1. **Nursery:** We are looking for more adult volunteers to serve and help facilitate our Nursery room for babies under 18 months. If you're interested in being part of our Discipleship Team for this area, please contact Jeremy!

C&Y Registration Forms 2024: For us to provide our ministry to the children of our church, we require new registration forms to be filled by their families every year as part of our policy to protect.

If you have not already completed this out since Sept 2023, please fill out our form through this link <http://tiny.cc/SGCFamilyRegistration> or QR code:



Sunday Morning Registration:

On Sunday mornings, you'll be able to register children for worship at the child and youth check-in area. If you require assistance with this either Jeremy or Sam can help!

We will have sticker name tags printed out for our children to wear along with a security label displaying the unique code also printed on your child(ren)'s name tag.

Please keep your security labels each Sunday for pick-up to help our new volunteers get to know and be familiar with you.

Sunday Morning Kids' Worship

Here is what we will be talking about on Sundays!

What Can I Do?!? | A 4-Week Series About Jesus' Early Life & Ministry

- What's your dream job? Do you want to be a pilot or an astronaut? A teacher or musician? There are so many incredible jobs for us to pick from! God



has given each of us special talents and skills that can help us discover what we want to do. But God gives us another job, too. It's the chance for us to follow God right now! In this four-week series from the Gospels, we'll read about Jesus starting out his ministry and how he invited his followers – and us – to listen to God's voice, trust Jesus knows us, trust God's plans for us, and include people who aren't like us.



Online Resources For Home

To help serve your family better, we have uploaded all our SGC Kids' curricula online. The following link can be used to access our curriculum and use it at home, as well as find info pamphlets for following up with kids on what was discussed during their worship on Sunday mornings.

SGC Kids Curriculum Link: <http://tiny.cc/OnlineCurriculum>



Sunday Morning Worship Gatherings:

Sunday Morning Worship Gatherings:

January 7th and 14th: We will have regular worship gatherings for youth in grades 6-12. Following the children and youth's blessing, the youth will move to our lounge to continue in worship.

On the following Sundays, we encourage youth to participate in and/or to serve in another area of the church's ministry:

- **Jan 21st:** We will not have youth worship this Sunday due to our Jr High Winter Retreat.
- **Jan 28th:** On the last Sunday of each month, our youth join the upstairs worship gathering with the adult congregation as part of our discipleship rhythm.

For any youth interested in serving regularly, please speak with Jeremy and fill out the following form <http://tiny.cc/YouthLIT-Fall> or QR code:



Youth Home Groups:

Our Jr and Sr High Home Groups will resume next month in February 2024!!

Friday Youth Gatherings:

Jan 12th: Backpacks & Boardgames: Our church is sponsoring a refugee family arriving in Toronto in February! We'd like to support the youth in this family by purchasing and preparing school supplies in new backpacks for them. Following this, we'll enjoy some games together. To ensure enough food is prepared, please email Jeremy by 12:00 pm the Thursday before along with any allergies or dietary concerns we need to know!

Time: 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$5 per youth (Dinner included)

Donations: If your family would like to help support this initiative or the family directly, you can find more information here:

<https://www.springgardenchurch.ca/serve>

Jan 19th - 21st: Jr High Winter Retreat - We'll be away at Muskoka Woods for our winter retreat, Avalanche. Please see below for more information!

Cost: \$160 before January 5th, 2024; \$190 after January 6th, 2024 (Subsides available)

****This retreat is only available for youth in Grades 6-8****

Jan 26th: Artisan DIY Night We will meet at our building to work on personal crafts and art projects together. To ensure enough food is prepared, please email Jeremy by 12:00 pm the Thursday before along with any allergies or dietary concerns we need to know!

Time: 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Cost: \$5 per youth (Dinner included)

Winter Retreats:

This January and February, our youth can participate in our Avalanche (Jr High) or Blizzard (Sr High) Winter Retreats. This is a chance for youth to engage in conversations about life and faith, and can be a helpful reminder that our church is part of a larger community as we meet and worship with other youth from across the province. The retreats offers small group discussions, musical worship, and dynamic teaching, encouraging all students, Christian or not, to explore their faith. Additionally, there are plenty of games, activities, and unforgettable memories to be made during these weekends.

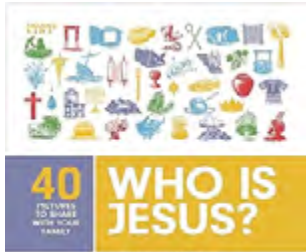
Avalanche 2024 (Gr 6-8) - January 19th-21st (<http://tiny.cc/SGCAvalanche>)

Blizzard 2024 (Gr 9-12) - February 9th-11th (<http://tiny.cc/SGCBlizzard>)

Cost: \$160 before January 5th, 2024; \$190 after January 6th, 2024 (Subsides available)

Staying Updated: To stay up to date on what is happening for your youth, please visit our google calendar which has all our planned events.

<http://tiny.cc/YouthCal>



Who is Jesus? 40 pictures to share with your family, by Kate Hox

The Bible is filled with stories and symbols that point us to Jesus as the Savior, the only One who can bring us back to God. God has the best plan, and the biggest and best story. Forty pictures of Jesus—twenty stories from the Old Testament and twenty stories from the New Testament—will guide family devotions and encourage rich conversations about who Jesus is, why he came to earth, and how we can get to know him now. The pictures tell stories about arks, rams caught in a thicket, snakes, sticks, rocks, shepherds, sheep, water, bread, and so much more. Each picture of Jesus includes a captivating illustration, a key verse to remember, Bible passages to discuss, a family devotion to read, reflection questions, and a song. Families will explore together the rich imagery of the Bible and learn about God's great love for his people through Jesus Christ his Son. Who is Jesus? can be used any time throughout the year. This book is especially helpful to guide families through the forty days of Lent leading up to Easter.



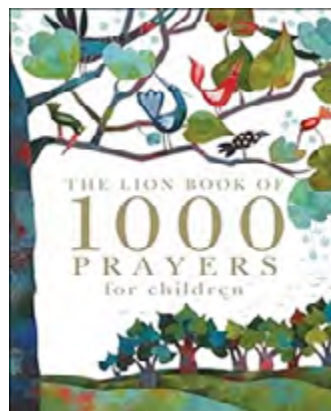
In the beginning: a creation story pop-up book, by Agostino Traini

The story of the creation of the earth is a timeless one, familiar to Christians around the world. In this captivating book, kid-friendly text, adapted from Genesis, is met with a colorful pop-up treatment by world-renowned paper artist Agostino Traini, whose work celebrates the earth and reminds kids of God's presence in it. Invite kids to experience the wonder of the creation story in a whole new way.



Our Father in Heaven: a Lord's prayer pop-up book, by Agostino Traini

Engage children in the prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples with this delightful pop-up book illustrating one of the most famous sacred texts in the world. World-renowned illustrator and paper artist Agostino Traini brings this timeless prayer to life in reverent yet surprising and whimsical ways. Sure to delight readers young and old, this keepsake artfully connects the ancient world and the teachings of Jesus to our lives today.



The lion book of 1000 prayers for children, by Lois Rock

Here is a timeless collection of prayers, dealing with every aspect of a child's life, faith, and delight in the world. Here you will find prayers from the Bible as well as from traditional and more modern anthologies. A great many have been specially written for this book. One section is devoted to prayers for babies and very young children. The others are more suitable for use with older children, whether for reading alone, at family prayers, in churches, or at school assemblies.

Leadership Directory



PASTORAL TEAM (alphabetical order by last names)

(Abby Davidson is on parental leave)

Dale Forder Ext. 221
Office & Communications Administrator
daleforder@springgardenchurch.ca

Emily Kielstra Ext. 226
Interim Pastor of Missional Discipleship
emilykielstra@springgardenchurch.ca

Greg Kay
Co-Lead Pastor
gregkay@springgardenchurch.ca

Sam Lee Ext. 227
Co-Lead Pastor
samlee@springgardenchurch.ca

Jeremy Ranasinghe Ext. 223
Pastor of Students
jeremy@springgardenchurch.ca

Spring Garden Church

112 Spring Garden Avenue, Toronto ON M2N 3G3
www.springgardenchurch.ca Tel 416.223.4593
office@springgardenchurch.ca Fax 416.223.6126
Prayer Line 416.223.4038

Giving is one of the ways in which we can respond to a generous God. We give because it is a part of our discipleship and an act of worship. Please give as you feel led. For more information please go to our website at: <https://www.springgardenchurch.ca/give>.

DEACONS (alphabetical order)

Darlene Boyd
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Marcy Scott
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What's Happening

Life in Spring Garden

Weekly

All Throughout the Week	HOME GROUPS Connect for Community Together through bible study, prayer and sharing, we meet online and in-person. Please email emilykielstra@springgardenchurch.ca for more information or if you are interested in joining a Home Group. See more on page 10.	
Sundays	SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP Join us Sunday mornings as we go through different series' (read more). Join us at: www.springgardenchurch.ca/live or come in-person.	10am
Tuesdays	PASTORAL TEAM MEETING We generally meet on Tuesday. Please pray for us, for wisdom and inspiration.	10am - 12pm
Thursdays	MOMS' MEET UP Moms and moms-to-be are invited to join us along with their little ones every Thursday morning for a time of conversation and play. We meet in the Toddler Room located in the church building's basement. Contact Emily at emilykielstra@springgardenchurch.ca	10am
1st and 3rd Thursdays	LUNCH-PRAYER-SHARE Call Faith: 416 805-7529 or Email: faith.holwyn@gmail.com EVERYONE IS WELCOME.	12pm

What's Happening

Life in Spring Garden

Upcoming

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If you would like to receive a weekly e-mail update on what's happening in Spring Garden, please visit the SGC website (www.springgardenchurch.ca) and add your email address at the bottom of our home page (scroll down).

Keep your eye on our Events page at:
www.springgardenchurch.ca/events.

Our Values

We believe in a humble God who came not to be served, but to serve. Therefore we engage in sacrificial and active service to those around us. We strive to be good stewards of God's gifts and talents by serving one another in humility. We aspire to regard others as higher than ourselves, which liberates us to creatively take risks in serving others for God's glory.

We believe in a God of grace who came to save the world, not to condemn it. Therefore, as we are continuously receiving the gift of God's grace, we seek to grow in that grace and extend it to others. We strive to define ourselves by what we are for, not what we are against.

We believe in a God who knows us, and who desires to be known. Therefore we embrace a journey of faith that requires us to constantly strive for a personal, intimate and transformative knowledge of God. We strive to be led by God's Spirit in supporting and encouraging one another in working out our faith.

We believe in a creative God. Therefore we are open to expressing our faith in new and creative ways that reflect the beauty and complexity of our creator. We are called to use our creative gifts in worship and service as we engage with our world. We take joy in the diversity of gifts that allow us to delight God and participate in His ongoing story.

We believe in a triune, relational God who calls us to come together as a diverse community of believers. Therefore, we want to walk together, supporting one another physically, emotionally and spiritually. We strive to be a welcoming, inclusive family that goes through the joys and the trials of life together, acknowledging that God uses this community to deepen and mature our faith.

We believe in a God who loves this broken world and wants to reconcile us to Himself. Therefore we are commissioned by Christ to go out into the world, meeting the holistic needs of the local and global community. God calls us to participate in a redemptive work that he has already initiated; in humility, we will partner with others to work alongside and chase after Him.

We believe in a God who is our centre. Therefore where we are on the journey is less important than that we are moving towards a deeper relationship with Christ. We believe and participate in God's redemptive work in all people, which gives us the freedom to come as we are, and to accept others as they are. We each are on a unique journey to become who God has created us to be.

