



St. Bernadette Elementary School  
13130 65B Ave. Surrey BC V3W 9M1

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December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Parents,

Last December, I had no inclination that 2020 would be any different than 2019. I was looking forward to the basketball season in January, the annual teachers conference in February and the Archbishop's visit in March. As those three months progressed, so did talk and a rising tension emerge about a new virus. We had no indication that the last time some of our students will have been inside of a Church was when the Archbishop came to say Mass with the school on the day before Spring Break.

Since that time, our school community has shone bright! I am so grateful to our community for their ongoing support over these past 9 months or so. The parent community has been very strong in its response and call to action. I also want to share my utmost appreciation for all the work our teachers have done to not only keep everyone safe and healthy, but to also respond to the needs for each child. As a staff we have spent close to 4 months learning about, understanding and putting into practice a trauma informed approach to learning and we are seeing remarkable benefits and positive results.

Please accept my gratitude for your ongoing generosity towards the school and the charities we support. I truly understand and empathize with many of our families have been financial impacted by the disruptions and restrictions. Every dollar that is donated through our many fundraisers and charity appeals is money that is earned through the work and labour you do each day. We fully respect how generous it is to give us a portion of your earnings and we will cherish and safeguard every donation we receive. Your donation is a tremendous gift to the school and its students.

Christmas is a time for hope, renewal, charity and rejoicing. That can seem like a tall order given that, for the first time in many of our lives, our Christmas celebrations have been disrupted. However, this is not something new. Throughout our modern history, people have had times where Christmas could not be celebrated as hoped. One just has to go back to the two World Wars to see how people found hope, renewal, charity, and rejoicing during very difficult and bleak times.

We have an opportunity to create a Christmas for our loved ones that will be unique, meaningful, and memorable. It will take creativity, energy, and collaboration. It can be a Christmas that one looks back on fondly and perhaps from it, new traditions and customs can be born. This is a gift wherein we have a choice to create a new style celebration or to take a pause and return to our traditions next year.



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I am reminded of the Dr. Suess story “How the Grinch Stole Christmas”, and can see many parallels to Christmas 2020. It is the end of the story that I cling to... “He HADN'T stopped Christmas from coming! IT CAME! Somehow or other, it came just the same!... "Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas... perhaps...means a little bit more!"

Christmas and the spirit of hope, faith, joy and love will come just the same. We, just like the Whos down in Whoville, have to allow our Christmas hearts to sing. God is with us. Let us be as God intended us to be, created in his image. God is love and we have a great opportunity to spread God’s love to all those we meet.

On behalf of the teachers and staff at St. Bernadette Elementary, I pray that you and your family may experience the joy, faith, love, and hope of the Nativity of our Lord this Christmas Season.

May you have a safe and blessed Christmas and a joyous New Year.

Yours in Christ,

Michael van der Pauw  
Principal

*“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the Angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’”*