



Christmas 2021

Dear Friends,

I love light – the play of light on the forest floor, the undulating light on the waves of a lake, the soft light of late afternoon, the ethereal light of the moon, the intimate light of a crackling fire... And over the past ten years or so, that love of light and the colour it produces, has led me, much to my surprise, to take up photography.

Photography, I thought, was reserved for those with high end cameras and fancy lenses who were prepared to spend endless hours making incremental adjustments to get the perfect shot. My style is much more organic, random and unpracticed – I catch a glimpse of light, bold colour or an interesting angle, quickly pull out my camera, compose, frame and shoot in almost one motion. Lots of my photos don't turn out at all. And many of them delight me, offering encouragement to keep seeking the light.

In the midst of what seemed to be endless monochromatic days of restriction, accompanied by the tangled emotions of lockdown last winter, my camera gave me a new way of seeing the world. The above picture was a surprise, as I was sure that only a blur of colour may have been captured in the frame. The cardinal's striking pop of red makes the tangled branches become merely a background to its glory.

As we go into a second Christmas deeply affected on every level by the pandemic, it is easy to see and feel only the choking branches of despair, fear and loneliness. Mary and Joseph, tired from their journey and worried about finding shelter, would have experienced very similar feelings. Yet a light shone in the darkness as Jesus was born, bringing colour and life, joy and blessing to them and to the entire world.

Instead of focusing on the perfect Christmas, may we change lenses this year, allowing the tangled mess of the pandemic to fade into the background. May we seek the light of hope, the perspective of peace, the pop of joy, the surprise of love. And may God's glory shine on and through us, offering encouragement to all.

Blessings,

Beth

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