

Christmas Morning



The Song of the Angels Lives in You

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*An Open-Spirited Community
of Faith and Action*

December 25 , 2011

So this is what Christmas the morning after looks like. I like it.

Always wondered what it would feel like if we could get United Methodists out for Christmas morning worship.

Sorry about roping off the back rows. Some really do feel more comfortable in the back third of the room. We're not trying to get you out of your comfort zone. It is fun for me to sit near the back of the room and see the beauty of the whole room. Big picture.

Thanks for moving forward a little today.

It's just that Christmas morning is, I think, a time to gather close together. To be close to the manger. In our hearts. And in our lives.

Christmas Eve is a time for processions and bells and candles
Christmas morning is a time to look right in the eyes of the Baby Jesus and sing a lullaby:

Yea, Lord we greet thee, born this happy morning

Before we focus on what Christmas Morning means, let's take a moment to find out what we learned last night.

We found out a lot about us last night. Tom and I were taking a moment to recount all the people who came in late and who they were. Usher counts for the day were a little under 700. With those who came late, (some very late) and adding in children whose heads are very hard to see from the back of the room, we had a lot of people here.

It's not the numbers that impress me. It's the reach of this congregation. We will have to stretch ourselves to reach the ones who are within our reach.

- Couples that were married here.
- Family members of our beloved member who died.
- Families who have had babies baptized here.
- Folks who have been curious and just wander in on Christmas.
- People who have been here for a community event or concert.
- Graduates who were here on an important day in their lives.
- Yesterday I saw two brothers that are having a hard time talking with each other were here on opposite sides of the room. After worship out of the corner of my eye I saw them shake hands.

The big lesson for us is this: there are a lot of people our lives touch.

It takes a while, but some of the people on the edges of the church, some who come only for Christmas, Easter, All Saints, Graduation Days and other big celebration days can and will become heart and soul of our Church's life.

It takes a lot of work. We have to think like entrepreneurs for that to happen. People are drawn by the sacramental, the mystical. We connect with them in those sacred moments, be they Christmas or a funeral, Easter or a baptism, Graduation or a wedding. They want to be here.

Some will get comfortable by coming a few times.

Some will never become regulars but they will say things about our church that will make others want to be regulars.

**Some are really asking us to get to know them.
They want to be in our hearts.
They want to know they matter here.
They want to know God better. And they like us.**

All that is beautiful.

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God...
All things were made by him;
In him was life; and the life was the light of all people.
And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
From Christ's fullness we gave all received Grace upon Grace.**

So is being here with you on Christmas Morning.
This is what Christmas the morning after looks like. Kind of sweet, isn't it. The more I think about it, the more I like it. Last night angels sang:

**Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,
which shall be to all people.**

**For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.**

**The song they sang is now living on in us. Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Glory to God in the highest and peace to all people on earth.**

Now, in the broad daylight of Christmas morning, God is gently asking us to join in and make Divine love, an every-day reality.

We are partners with God in the new creation--here and now, in this time and in this place. The song of the angels comes to life in us.

Howard Thurman's poem "The Work of Christmas" tells us how:

**When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,**

**To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace to all people,
To make music in the heart.**

The words of the Gospel are coming true.
The Word is made flesh and lives among us.
Logos, the Greek word for the Word
means ultimate meaning and purpose.
You know that. You know the ultimate meaning
has grabbed hold of you.
The Word made flesh vibrates in your very soul.
That is because the song of the Angels comes and lives in you.
Now and always.

BLESSING

May Christ who by this Incarnation gathered into one
all things earthly and heavenly,
grant you the fullness of inward peace and goodwill.
May you live in joy, knowing that God is claiming you
as a full and beloved partner
in the Divine work of bringing God's New Creation
to life.

The blessing of God Almighty,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit,
is with you and will remain with you always.

Amen.

GOSPEL John, Chapter 1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by him;
and without him was not any thing made that was made.
In him was life; and the life was the light of all people.
And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it
not.
There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light,
that all through him might believe.
He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.
That was the true light,
which lighteth everyone that cometh into the world.
He was in the world, and the world was made by him,
and the world knew him not.
He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
But as many as received him,
to them gave he power to become the children of God,
even to them that believe on his name:
who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,
nor of the will of human beings, but of God.
And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we beheld the Word's glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the
Creator, full of grace and truth.
From Christ's fullness we gave all received Grace upon Grace.