

CHRISTMAS EVE THOUGHTS 2015

Christmas Eve, A Magical Time!

Each year on Christmas Eve I think back to the Christmas Eves I have celebrated during my lifetime. A few stand out but most blend into a pleasant blur of memories. I remember the Candlelight Services in the Methodist Church where I grew up, with the choir singing and all the Christmas Carols! I remember drives after church to see Christmas Lights. I remember special parts of the season when I started working for churches as I was heading for ministry. As I recall, the Christmas pageant usually happened a few days before Christmas in most of the churches. I sang with the Children's choir starting in 3rd Grade, but I don't remember exactly when as a teenager I started singing with the adult choir. I have sung in the choir with every church I have served, they couldn't exactly say no to the minister!

In my first Methodist church out of Seminary, in Walden, Colorado, it snowed 20 inches on Christmas Eve, but we still had pretty good attendance! I remember one of the years I served as Associate Minister in Havre, Montana and Pastor in Kremlin, after our services I went to the Midnight Mass with a friend and walked around town under just about the brightest Moon and Starlit night I can remember on Crunchy Icy Snow! I have always liked snow for Christmas, even now--if I don't have to shovel it or drive in it!

The snow and the Christmas Lights make Christmas Eve such a magical time and this year we get a rare full moon for Christmas which hasn't happened since 1977 and won't happen again until 2034. On snowy Christmas Eves I do worry that Santa Claus will have trouble finding all the houses and I hope that there won't be too many people traveling. Over the years, I discovered that Christmas Day is a good time to fly, for the crowds have dissipated. But Christmas Eve is a magical time!

As we sing the Christmas Carols and share in the magical energy of this time, I encourage us to think of and send good thoughts to those who have even more difficult lives than ours. Around the world there are millions and millions of people who are struggling to live and have little time or energy to even think about higher levels of meaning. In this congregation, most of us have thought carefully about what we believe, have worked to make a difference in the world, and have come here to share in a community of love and blessing and acceptance. As we gather this night, we share with each other the blessing of acceptance, the good will and good spirit of the season, the comfort of being in a community that cares and understands. For all of this, we give thanks!

As we prepare to go back out into the world, refreshed and re-energized by our time together, we commit ourselves again to the work of shaping a better, healthier, more loving, peaceful and accepting world. This night especially, we celebrate the unifying love of a child and man who blessed the world with a holy and divine love. Whatever we each believe about Jesus, he was at least a religious exemplar who challenged people to see things differently, stirred up a complacent world, and invited people into a more fulfilling life. Into our own complacent and distracted world, we invite again the energy that may stir things up, the Force that may awaken, the hope that there can be more meaning in our lives!

On this bright and holy night, we open ourselves again to the mystery of a child who could change the world. We let ourselves feel the magic of this time, the hope and wonder and excitement. We let our depleted stores of energy be restored by love and good will and good music! Tonight, we experience hope and joy and love and peace! Whatever worries you carry, whatever burdens have weighed you down, I invite you to let them go at least for this night and let yourself be filled by the spirit of love!

May we each be blessed by the love of this season! May we each share this love with friends and family and all that we meet. May we live with courage in love and hope and blessing! Merry Christmas! Amen!