

THOUGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE 2017

We really need the happy sounds of Christmas Carols and laughing children more this year than in many recent years. This has been a hard year for many of us and the coming year doesn't look like it will offer much relief. There are fires burning in our state and elsewhere and we may be entering another drought year after just one wet year. Temperatures are rising, ice is melting and seas are rising. The Grinches in Congress and the White House have been making changes in tax laws and health care that may hit many of us hard. These may not be the worst of times, but they are surely not the best. And these are the short cool days of winter, with long and even colder nights, which can add to depression and discouragement.

It was into a similarly troubled world that Christianity remembers a babe born in a manger, in the stable behind the inn that had no room for his poor or maybe even middle class parents on their way to register for the tax census. No historical notice, but Christianity remembers a star, angels, shepherds, cattle, sheep, and wise men. The people in that day needed the hope that that child could be the messiah who would change everything and bring relief from the Roman overlords. The story didn't work out quite the way they expected. Jesus never claimed the kingship, neither military nor political leadership, but Christianity still dominates the world religious spectrum even in the 21st Century.

In these troubled times, where do we find the hope for someone or something that will provide care for all the people, heal the earth, and put aside rumors and threats of war? Most of us have moved beyond magical ideas of religion, but it is out of communities of people like ours that hopes arise for a better day. The way we love and care for each other models the relationships that can shape a better world and a brighter future. The work that we do for justice with compassion, caring for people and advocating for a better way does make a difference. What we do here together, even in our little church, can help to send out ripples of change, glimmers of hope for a world harmonious, united, and at peace! As we celebrate with Christians this night, may we strive to keep hope and joy alive!

May it always be so! Amen and Amen!