

Christmas Eve Message

It is hard to believe that it has been almost five years since our sanctuary underwent a refurbishing. Besides fresh paint, new carpet, and new pew cushions we also changed our pulpit area to hardwood. In addition during the Advent and Christmas season we made a decision to hang our garland differently and added some beautiful candles in our stained glass windows. While all of these cosmetic changes have helped improve the appearance of our sanctuary perhaps they pale in comparison to our Advent Star that was made back in 2014. In August of 2014, over 30 members of our congregation ventured out to construct our 110-point Star under the instruction and guidance of Max Brady, a member of Home Moravian Church. Max offers these workshops to churches at no cost to the congregation. The only contribution members of Christ Moravian Church made was the gift of our time to construct this star and it was a labor of love and devotion to create this beautiful Advent Star.

From the pulpit I have always had a unique viewing area of the congregation. Not only can I notice how many people are snoozing through my message but also I often notice people's eyes look up towards our Advent star. This star helps serve as a reminder of the account from the gospel of Matthew that following the birth of Jesus, the wise men follow a bright star in the sky to where Jesus and his family were to present their gifts and pay their respects to God's son.

As we think of the world that Jesus first came into, he was born in one of the least inviting places for a family to celebrate such a joyous occasion. He was born not in palace fit for a King but a lowly manger with all the sights, sounds and smells. That first Christmas involved a family that had Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus. Soon, this little family became larger as people of all walks of life were brought together around Jesus. First there were angels, shepherds and those wise men. As Jesus became older, others were brought into his family, tax collectors, fisherman, those suffering from leprosy, and other outcasts of society. More people became a part of this family.

As we speak on the subject of family, today we cannot ignore the fact that many families this Christmas season are struggling in some manner all around us. Financial struggles will make Christmas celebrations a little less merry for some. Many loved ones and friends are continuing to protect our freedom by serving in the military and they will be unable to spend Christmas together with their loved ones. Still others are struggling with grief facing their first Christmas celebration without a special someone in their life.

Some say we live in a dark world and that our country is in need of a shining light, a light that gives us hope and provide guidance and strength to us. We do have such a light available to each of us through the life of Jesus. Whatever our struggles might be, Christmas comes to remind us that we are all connected, that God's desire for us is that there be peace and good will among us. Amidst our struggles and those of the world, Christmas is a time for connection with God. Our connection with God and our potential to have peace and good will is possible through a tiny child born in a manger. This tiny child born in a manger came not only to bring peace but to also save us.

While our Christmas story begins in the cradle, we must never forget that it ends upon the cross. God gave his only Son as a gift to us. God gave us Jesus to provide an everlasting light and eternal life for those who accept that He is the way, the truth and the life. As we remember this first family of Christmas, as we enjoy our celebrations with our family, know that you are a part of God's family too. We at Christ Moravian Church hope that the Lord will richly bless your family through Christmas day and the upcoming year.

Amen.

The Rev. Dr. David A. Marcus, Jr.

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