

# The Divine Comedy:

## *Notes from Pastor Darryl*

December 2019

This is our EIGHTH (8<sup>th</sup>) Christmas together, and more than any other year, I cannot tell you how excited I am for Christmas Eve. Growing up, every year, my mom worked so hard to make sure her children (and then her grandchildren) had the merriest of Christmases. One of the indelible burned into my memory is waking ever so slowly on Christmas morning, and my sisters and I making our way to see what magic transpired under the tree. Santa always thought we were NICE – even when we'd been especially naughty during the year! And with my mom passing this past month, I am shockingly looking forward to Christmas as a way to remember and honor her.

The other reason why I am so looking forward to Christmas is because of our Christmas Eve services. There is nothing like singing “Silent Night, Holy Night,” as the lights are slowly turned down and the candles are lit in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve night. Nothing. It touches me like no other ritual in the church.

I know that Easter is supposed to be the big day. Singing “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” with the throngs and the organ and the beautiful flowers around our sanctuary and the spring air at Easter is special. And we all know that Christmas is wrought with commercialism, consumerism, and a secularity that some mourn. This year even more so because of the “short” shopping season, sales and pressure to buy stuff got started even earlier.

Maybe that is why that candle light moment is so special to me. It is so needed. It is that moment where nothing matters but joy. I can block out the noise and the fear and the distractions. Sure, “Silent Night,” has helped contribute to a falsely idyllic understanding of Christmas, but I'm okay with that. It is a song that can end war, even if only for a moment.

I get a pretty special view for Christmas Eve. I get to stand up front and look out at the faces of those gathered. I can close my eyes and see it through the years. I can picture each of the congregations I've had the awesome honor to serve. I can see the faces of those who have supported me, shaped me, challenged me, and molded me into the person and pastor that I am today.

I can see the faces of people lit by the glow of a small candle as we sing those holy words, and I'm very much looking forward to singing it with you.

Incarnation - that is what Christmas is all about. It is the coming of light in a world of darkness. It is God breaking through all of our barriers. It is grace and courage and fragility defined in the form of a newborn baby. Christmas is peace, love, joy, and hope. And just as that candle spreads from the Christ Candle in the sanctuary to those that are singing in the pews, Christmas is the light of Christ spreading into the hearts of the faithful, and being carried out into the world. It is not about "happily ever after." It is about the presence of God in the midst of real life.

It is a reminder that right here in the world is a promise that God is with us. God is with us through it all and everything and anything!

So, I'm excited for Christmas Eve in a way that I haven't been in a number of years. I'm waiting to wish you all a Merry Christmas, and to see your face lit by the glow of a candle. And then to take the light of Christ's love out into the world!

Peace. Love. Understanding.

Pastor Darryl