

# The Pastor's Report

Ho-Ho-Howdy folks! In this Season of Advent, please know that I'm wishing all of you the blessing of Good Cheer this Christmas.

I'm not sure if it is my age, my profession (and/or duration within), the ghosts of Christmases past, the overwhelming and saccharin commercialization of the season, or the creeping darkness and cloudy days at this time of year (probably a combination of all of the above) but I must confess to a certain lack of cheer regarding the Christmas towards which we are once again relentlessly racing.

Aware of the slippery slope upon which I find myself, I decided it is incumbent upon me, both as a person and a Pastor, to take a breath, create some space, and give myself over to remembering the BIG picture while looking beyond my own very small part in it.

I remember Christmas in my childhood; the magic, the mystery, and the meaning. I remember Christmas morning at my grandmother's house; seeing her filled with joy to be surrounded by family. I remember the grapefruit halves she set out on the breakfast table; with sections pre-cut, sugar sprinkled upon them, and a maraschino cherry on top (I've yet to find a better symbol for the sweet and sour of life, and the care required to savor both together).

I remember our own children, clad in footie pajamas coming down the stairs on Christmas morning, the delight in their eyes and the way they made Linda and me glow in our hearts.

I remember the almost three decades of Christmases spent here among this congregation: the Church School pageants, the pot-lucks, the caramel corn, and the many wonderful people who brought a belonging and fullness of life to our family. I remember singing "Silent Night" by candlelight on Christmas Eve in the sanctuary and, afterward, wishing each family "Merry Christmas" as they departed to celebrate their own traditions and loving relationships.

I remember delivering gifts and cards at Christmas time to hundreds of families over the decades on behalf of our church as a light in the darkness and as a way to say, "We remember *you*."

Looking back on my life at Christmas, I remember the beauty rather than the bustle. I remember the joy rather than the cloy. I remember the love rather than the labor.

This Christmas, as I look ahead to my life and whatever days are to be given to me as gifts, I remember that come what may, my hope resides in a world being overcome by grace. I remember there is a star to guide, a place in which to find shelter and rest, and the cheer of goodness to sustain me for the journey home.

This year at Christmas, may each of you remember that all is calm and all is bright; and that glories yet stream from heaven afar to all of us here on earth.

Merry Christmas, Rev. Mike

**These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**

**- John 16:33**

"And the angel said unto them, 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 Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:10-11

