

Dear Friends,

Last Christmas Eve during the 9 p.m. service I looked at empty spaces in the pews and thought, "Where is everyone?" At the end of the service I looked outside and saw this incredible snowfall, cars blanketed in white, the parking lot so difficult to navigate that the Magnificart had to be shut down. I thought, "People are coming to church in this???" Somehow, with snow and cold and dark and ice, people still came to church for Christmas. Why? I don't think it was out of habit or routine. I think we came for more than songs we could listen to at home or a warm feeling that we might find in a good movie. People dared to risk the harsh weather to come to acknowledge a truth that is held deep within.

We know the value of faith in community. We hear the stories unfolding through the church year. When we gather at Easter we remind ourselves that we are forgiven, redeemed and have hope for eternal life – that this world is not the end. Then at Christmas, everyone finds time to gather in worship because the message we hear is so essential, transformational and needed: God loves us so much that God enters in as a child to open up a new relationship between humans and the divine. Oh yes, we are right to celebrate peace and joy and hope, family, tenderness and generosity and all the important values that we yearn for in our lives and in our world. But the constant whisper at Christmas, through the shopping and baking and even blizzards, is the still small voice of Love. No matter how rich our lives are or how broken we feel, we all need to hear the voice of Love. What a perfect time to stick our toes back in the church, if it has been a long time since we have been inside. Come for Love.

Let's hope the weather makes it safe for all to come to church this Christmas. What I hope for most, though, is that whoever comes, whether for the first time or for the umpteenth time, hears the word of Love that is born in Bethlehem. Maybe you will hear it in the greeting of a volunteer or in the scripture proclaimed or in song or sacrament. Maybe you will hear it as you drive down the hill just after midnight with the glow of the candles still warming your soul. Wherever you look I hope you will hear that God loves you and this world so much that God became Jesus so we might know Love more fully.

On the back of this letter is a list of all of our services this season. If you are ill and need us to bring communion to you, please call the church office. Also in this mailing is a Christmas envelope. Whatever extra donation you can make will help us to continue our ministry here at St. Peter's.

May God bless you this Christmas. May you find Love all around you and, whatever storms blow in, may you see God born in a barn as a gift of Love for you.

Canon Jennifer Reid