

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Prayer for a New Heart

Thou who art over us,
Thou who art one of us,
Thou who art:

Give me a pure heart, that I may see thee
a humble heart, that I may hear thee
a heart of love, that I may serve thee
a heart of faith, that I may abide in thee

Amen

*Dag Hammarskjold, Sweden
The United Methodist Hymnal, No. 392*

May your heart be filled
anew with the love of God
and the promise of new life
in Christ.

Amen

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Advent 2006

Gold Canyon United Methodist
Church



*O come, O come Emmanuel
and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee
O Israel*

December 2006

December 25, 2006

The 2006 UMW *Missionary Prayer Calendar* printed the following:

Advent reminds us that we are all a pregnant people, because God calls each of us to bring forth the Christ. The conception and birthing of the holy do not depend on physical pregnancy. Birthing encompasses the wide range of all our creative abilities, enabling us to bring forth not only children but also other gifts such as dreams, hopes, and relationships; art, music, dance and poetry; justice and peace; and new ways of living, new aspects of ourselves. In choosing to receive God and bring forth new life, we can find amazing strength and renewal.

Christine Erb-Kanzleiter
—Munich, Germany-Missionary Pastor

Contributed by Gen Garneski

**O Come, All Ye Faithful
(Verse 1)**

Adeste, fideles, laeti triumphantes;
venite, venite in Bethlehem.
Natum videte Regem angelorum.
Venite adoremus,
venite adoremus,
venite adoremus,
Dominum.

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him,
O Come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.





December 24, 2006

What Really Happened on that First Christmas?

Fourth Sunday in Advent

It has become a tradition in our family to worship together each year on Christmas Eve. The carols, the nativity scene, and the worship service help put the right focus on the Christmas season.

Last year a carol was playing softly as we slid into the pew, maybe "What Child is This," or possibly "Away in a Manger." Suddenly a wisp of thought flashed through my brain. It was so unexpected and quick; the thought was gone almost before it fully registered. I had to stop for a few moments, trying to recapture it.

As the thought reemerged, its essence was that Christmas is about more than just the birth of Jesus. While the birth of the Christ Child is at the center of our faith, what happened that first Christmas goes beyond the birth of Christ. At its core, Christmas is about God choosing to descend to Earth and live among us, embodied in a human being—becoming "incarnate" in the baby Jesus.

Over the years, I had never really thought about the definition of incarnate (i.e., to exist in bodily form) until that moment. Now, it seemed clear that God's action that night, His willingness to humble himself and embody himself in a human being, should be at the center of what we celebrate each Christmas. God's action is what sets Jesus apart from the great leaders and prophets that He inspired and directed over the centuries—people like Abraham, Moses and Isaiah. In embodying His wisdom, His being in a human, God transformed Jesus from a wise man into the Messiah we worship today.

Biblical scholars may have deeper theological interpretations of the events of that first Christmas. But, for me that wisp of a thought was one of those transforming moments that deepened my faith and lifted my Christian experience to a higher level.

Barry Peebles

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The children's artwork distributed throughout this booklet were lovingly drawn by the young people of the Midweek Mountaineers Children's Group, led by Katharine Keller.



First Sunday in Advent

December 3, 2006

As I reflect upon the Christmas season I am reminded of my childhood. The Christmas season meant a visit from my grandmother who resided in Saint Paul, Minnesota which is 800 miles from where I was raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. We only saw her twice a year, in the summer when we visited her and in the winter when she visited our family.

My grandmother was the closest human being that I knew that fully exhibited the attributes of Jesus Christ on a daily basis. She was a deeply committed Christian.

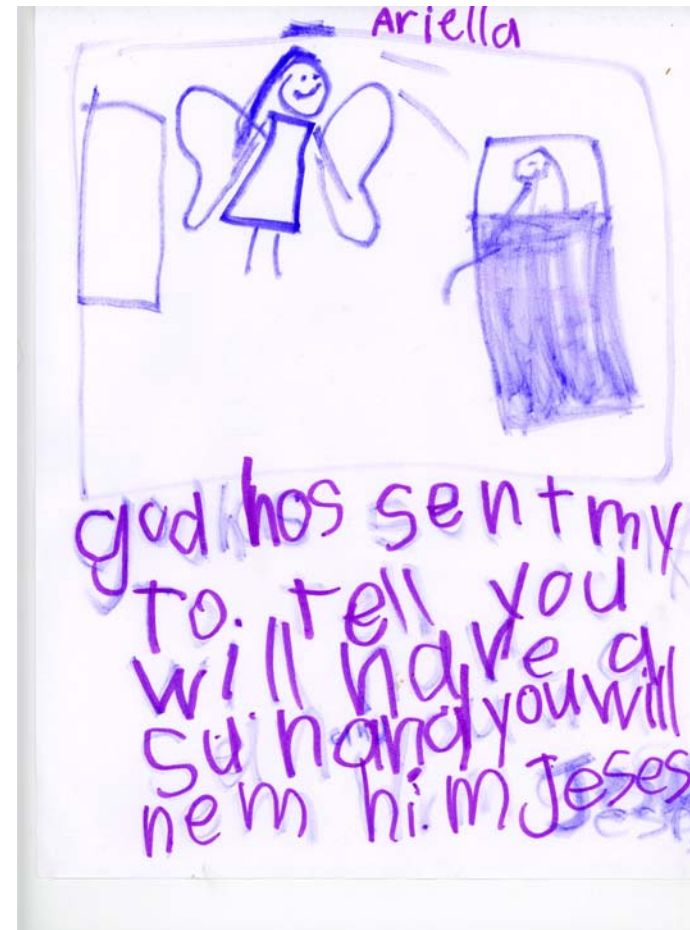
One of the exciting traditions of our family was to attend the 11 p.m. Christmas candlelight service at our United Methodist Church. It always set the tone for me as to how I viewed Christmas Day. I still get "goosebumps" thinking of how the coming of Jesus Christ, the Christmas event, reflects the goodness and the loving kindness of God. It is the profound love of God that still amazes and humbles me. I look forward to sharing that joy this Christmas Eve at the candlelight service at Gold Canyon UMC.

Blessings to You,
Julius Keller

December 23, 2006

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore. ~ Psalm 131:3

Suggested by Diana Linton



December 4, 2006

December 22, 2006

THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE

*Valdimir Soloviev once wrote;
"It is madness not to believe in God;
it is the greater madness to believe in Him only in part."*

Consider the nature of belief.

Some would argue that our inability or unwillingness to embrace God more fully in our affairs betrays our innate unbelief.

Or is it rather that our stronger inclination to assert that we are fully self-reliant is that which keeps us at a casual distance?

Any way you look at it, to include God in some aspects of your life, while refusing Him full access to its entirety, is nothing short of self-protective.

And is it any wonder?

To get right down to it, we often fail to give God full reign in our lives because we are not quite certain of His motives,

His reliability, and more to the point, His interest in our affairs, our welfare, our happiness.

To be blunt, we have never been told (at least convincingly) that we are of any value to Him, that we have any appeal to Him,

that we have characteristics or traits that are of meaning to Him. We live in a time and culture where what we do is who we are,

where what we contribute dictates our status, where our achievements signify our worth.

This is not the yardstick of God.

To ponder, if even superficially, the first few verses of the Psalm is to wrestle

with a word picture far different than that which the world offers up.

To imagine for only a moment a God who is intimately interested in your well-being,

a God who takes pride in you as a unique achievement in creation, is to reconsider the very nature and intention of existence.

Which version do you want to believe?

Steve Holec

I have often wondered the significance of Frankincense and Myrrh, two of the gifts the Magi brought to baby Jesus, as spoken about in the scriptures. I recently started getting the Biblical Health Daily emails by Jordan RUBIN, the Author of the Maker's Diet. To my surprise he sent one out on Frankincense -Healing Herbs and Oils. Myrrh, I located in a book, The Healing Power of Herbs.

The Frankincense tree sheds its resin in dime sized drops or "tears" and then the essential oil can be drawn from the resin of those scrubby trees that grow across the Middle East. Frankincense essential oil has had its place throughout history and is mentioned many times in the Bible. Used in ancient times to enhance meditation, for embalming, and in perfume, it was also the oil of choice for anointing newborn sons of kings and priests. This may have been why it was brought as a gift to the baby Jesus.

Today it is utilized to help maintain normal cellular regeneration, to stimulate the body's immune system, and as an aid for people suffering from cancer, depression, allergies, headaches, herpes, bronchitis and brain damage resulting from head injuries. It's also deeply camphoraceous, meaning that a whiff or two of its scent will help soothe a cold or bronchitis.

MYRRH is another prized ingredient used in incense and perfume in biblical times. The Middle Eastern air was heavy with its sweet warm scent. Since antiquity, myrrh has also been known as an all purpose healer. Myrrh is a blend of volatile oils, gums, and resin. The liquid is exuded by thick, bushy shrubs native to Northeastern Africa and southwestern Asia. Today, it is considered by herbalists to be a potent antiseptic and can be used on canker sores or other inflammations of the mouth, such as gingivitis.

These were precious, costly gifts brought by the Magi to signify Our Savior's royalty and priesthood.

Praise HIS NAME!!

Susan Malloy

December 5, 2006

This was written as I looked to the new year, desiring to be
more faithful in my journey with Christ.

- Katharine Keller

New Wineskin

Lord, fashion me into
a wineskin that's new
Elastic and giving to
allow room for You.

And as you fill this skin
with new wine,
Create, in me, Lord,
a spirit that's fine.

Christ, pour out Your wine
upon me and all others
That the good news be shared
with our sisters and brothers.

And, then, help me to yield
to You day by day
Remove my desire that
things be my way.

I don't wish to be that
cracked, dry old skin
But one that expands
to let You come in.

December 21, 2006

A Yule Blessing

At Christmas time
And all the year
God's Wisdom brings
The greatest cheer
It's wise to love
And wise to care;
Peace is Truth
Beyond compare
God lights the path
That you should go
And Love is Love
For even so
The light above
Is the light within
Only there
Will Peace begin
When that, and Love
And Wisdom rule
Will come the Spirit
Of the Yule
I wish you these
And more beside;
These and the Star
Of Christmastide

© 21 December 1989
Suzanne Jacobson



December 20, 2006

December 6, 2006

Candied Rose Petals

Ingredients:

1/3 cup water

1 cup granulated sugar

rose petals

powdered or fine granulated sugar

Directions:

Add water to granulated sugar. Boil slowly until the syrup hardens when dropped into [cold](#) water. Remove from the fire: stir carefully for a moment until it begins to granulate; place the saucepan in a pan of hot water, and with small pincers dip the petals. one at a time, putting them on a china platter to harden. When partially dry, dip them in powdered or fine granulated sugar and let stand in a dry place for twenty-four hours.

Submitted by Heidi Jacobson



Shout Alleluia!

This is by far, the best Christmas ever,
Because we now know Jesus as Savior.

Times don't get easier, the way is quite rough,
But with Jesus we'll make it; His Spirit's enough.

Let's learn to rejoice together this year.
As we sing, pray and praise, it will banish all fear.

God tells us to practice this new life we live;
One secret is learning just how to give...

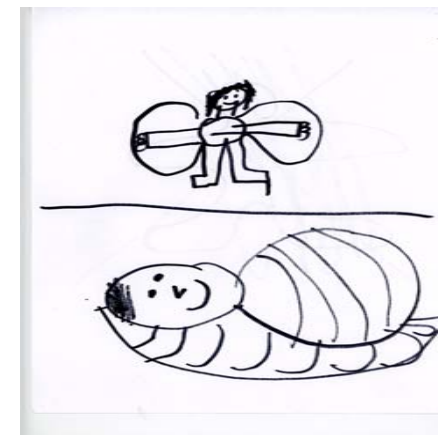
Give up our foolishness, passion and pride;
Clean up the dwelling for Him to abide.

Give up our will surrendered to him.
He'll fill us with love and keep us from sin.

Oh, praise the Lord, my eyes glimpse His pure light;
All the glory of His love is worth all the fight.

Praise God for bringing Jesus our way.
Let's **shout Alleluiah** this bright Christmas day!

By Bella Rossiter



December 7, 2006

Pearl Harbor Day

This is a season of the year in which we often focus on the Prince of Peace – Jesus, the Christ. I wrote this song in honor of Peace Sunday, May 1988, however it was also at a time in my life when my personal world was turbulent. As I grapple with today’s issues like the war in Iraq, domestic violence and broken relationships, these reflections still hold true for me today. – *Katharine Keller*

“Peace Found”

*With the sin of selfish pride
The wars and strife abound
Hatred will destroy us all
Unless true peace is found*

*Chorus: The search, my friends,
For peace begins,
The search begins within.
And when you know
Christ in your heart
His peace will calm the din.*

*Broken homes will be the norm,
Weeping the only sound,
Dignity and love denied,
Unless true peace is found.*

*Hearts, they rage in conflict still
As Satan wants more ground;
Restlessness will always be
Unless true peace is found.*

*When we each decide inside
That Christ is daily crowned,
Prince of Peace forevermore
Then true peace is found.*

December 19, 2006

Why did Mary go to Bethlehem? It made no sense at all. Did Joseph and Mary get into a little argument about it?

Did Joseph the practical, logical carpenter say, “Now look, Mary, this just doesn’t make sense. It’s a long trip ~ a couple of days each way ~ and it’s a bad time of year with this weather, and because of this decree it’s going to be crowded, and you’re due any day now. For heaven’s sake, the only sensible thing is for you to stay here with your relatives while I take care of this”?

Did Mary say, “I know. I know it makes no sense. But, I’m going with you”? She wanted to be with Joseph. And by going, she affected the way God is with us in this world.

Just as my actions can affect the way God is with this world.

Rosemary Anderson



December 8, 2006

Watch In Prayer

December 18, 2006

Caesar Augustus

On September 23, 63 B.C.E., Gaius Octavius was born. Nineteen years later his great uncle, Julius Caesar, was assassinated on the Ides of March. This set in motion the chain of events that would cause the Roman Senate in 27 B.C.E. to declare Gaius Octavius the sole ruler of the Roman Empire with the title "Caesar Augustus".

Augustus would rule for 41 years until his death in 14 C.E. He was referred to as the "Prince of Peace," called a god, a savior, and inscriptions refer to his rule as "good news."

Three times during his reign, the doors of the Temple of Janus (god of war) were closed because the Roman world was at peace ~ a peace bought by the sword. A great altar, the Ara Pacis, was built in Rome (it still stands today) and is dedicated to the Pax Augusta ~ the Peace of Augustus.

By pointing out that Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus, Luke draws a subtle contrast between the good news brought by the gods of this world, and the good news brought by the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, and the Savior of the human race.

Scripture: Luke 2: 1-5

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Why did Mary go to Bethlehem? At first, the answer might seem obvious: Because Caesar Augustus published the decree ordering a census, and she had to go. But that's not exactly true. Joseph had to go, but Mary didn't. Only men had to register. The normal, practical thing would have been for Joseph to make the 85 mile trip to Bethlehem, register, and then come home.

Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, I humbly believe with all my belief our Savior is coming.

Fill us with joy and happiness as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Through all our hopes and prayers, help us to be a faithful church during this Advent Season, a Holy Season, filling our hearts with wonder and praise.

Help us to accept our responsibility of helping to prepare the world for your coming by:

--Celebrating Christmas with all it's meaning

--By being faithful stewards

--By stretching out our hand to those who feel broken or wounded

--By befriending the poor, and feed them and clothe them

--By praying throughout Advent

Our prayer of Advent remains:

O Come, O Come, Emanuel

And Ransom captive Israel!

We ask this through him whose coming is certain,

Whose day draws near

Your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Diana Linton



December 8, 2006

Dear Santa Claus

You have a golden opportunity
To touch the innocent hearts of our land.
If only you had more than material gifts
To make their greedy hearts yearn.

If only you could give them
In a "fortune cookie,"
A hunger and a quest for
Much more than hollow happiness.

To know that it's not what you have
In your hand or in your home.
But the precious "gift"
To fill the starving heart of man.

If only you would use your influence wisely,
And, as the wise men of old, search for the treasure;
The missing part within man's heart,
The Christ-child,
Whose birthday we celebrate.

If it's not too late, dear Santa,
To answer my request,
Please, guide them to the answer
To find their peace on earth.

By Bella Rossiter



December 17, 2006



A PRAYER FOR PILGRIMS AND PRODIGALS

I have called you by name from the very beginning.
You are mine and I am yours.

You are my beloved. On you my favor rests.
I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted
you together in your mother's womb.
See...I have carved an image of you in the palms of my very
own hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace.
I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with
a care more intimate than that of a mother for her only
child.

You are my beloved. On you my favor rests.
I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at
every step.

Wherever you go, I go with you.
Whenever you lie down to rest I keep watch.
I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and
drink that will quench all your thirst.
I will not hide my face from you.

You know me as your own as I know you as my own.
You belong to me.

I am your father, your mother, your sister, your brother,
your friend, your lover and your spouse...yes, even your
child.

Wherever you are I will be.
Nothing will ever, ever separate us.
We are one.

Steve Holec

December 16, 2006

WHY DO YOU WORRY SO?

Why do you worry so?
I will not cause the wind to cease its gentle blowing.

Why do you worry so?
I have plans to raise the curtain of darkness so that you
may see the sun.

Why do you worry so?
Tomorrow, the songbird will sit upon the limb and chant
its familiar song. Again.

Why do you worry so?
Do you not remember that I love you...and that you are
mine?

Steve Holec



December 10, 2006



As we prepare for the Christmas season, I realize I need to hear a word of hope and to find joy in this crazy hectic world of ours. There are so many awful, violent, hate-filled incidences occurring around us. There are worries and anxiety that can mentally crush us. Incurable illnesses that affect us and our loved ones. This hits home especially for me as I see the ravages of Alzheimer's take its toll on my dad. He is such a loving kind man whose gentle spirit and strong faith have had a profound influence on me and so many other people. The disease is taking him away bit by bit. Recently, I attended my niece's baptism in Tucson. My dad assisted in the baptism as my younger brother, also a Methodist minister, guided my dad's hands and repeated the words of the liturgy for him. It was a very special moment for all of us as we watched Grandpa baptize his baby granddaughter. His life here is fading away as a new life is just beginning. It saddens me to see what is happening to his mind and body and knowing that eventually he won't be able to recognize us. I find comfort in knowing the God knows who my dad is and won't ever forget him. I find hope in the gift of Jesus and his sacrifice for us. Because of this blessed gift, my dad will eventually go on to a better place where he will be made whole again. Talk about JOY!!

When I struggle with despair, anxiety, depression, sadness or grief, I remind myself that this is only temporary. I need to put my faith and trust in God to get me through my darkest hours. I heard a pastor say, "Instead of focusing on our misery, focus on the mystery of God! If we can do that, we will find great joy and feel a sense of thankfulness."

So this Christmas season, let's focus on the mystery and awe of God, the gift of Jesus to this world; and I pray that we will find hope, peace and great joy!

Beth Steinberg

December 11, 2006



ISN'T IT STRANGE?

Isn't it strange?
A candle both
consumes itself
and in so doing,
gives light to the
world!

Steve Holec

December 15, 2006



By Heidi Jacobson

Surrender

In silent meditation
I have risen
If Thou art a lie
As they say
I have no mediation
But I know,
Ever so quietly
Of Thy truth
If I need a day to prove this
It is the coming day
Of Your Birth
I will walk in the
Snow-covered streets of the city
Rendering myself helpless
In the face of Your Love.

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Suzanne Jacobson

December 12, 2006

December 14, 2006

THE CENTER OF THINGS

The true nature of being...just what is that to you? How often we fail to see the important issues of life; the reality, meaning. Too frequently we perceive the spiritual life as the life at the margins, those aspects of existence that are for the other, for somebody else, and not about us. Painfully, we all too often recognize its centrality only as a result of loss, or grief, or...numbness.

When meaning is vacant, or when values are challenged, we awaken to the absence of the things of the Spirit. Possibly the twentieth century's most intuitive and influential spiritual writer, the late Henri Nouwen wrote; "The spiritual life has to do with the heart of existence."

The inner life is for everyone; for you, and for me. We ought never think of the life of the spirit as something to simply embellish our existence with, a means to add to the routine of life some extra qualities, some dimension of the sacred, a religious bauble, some pretense of the divine. It ought to reside at life's very center, its core. Only from its rightful position in our lives can we begin to see how very much we held it at the periphery beforehand. Only by standing shoulder-to-shoulder with it at the center of life do we manage to see it's transformative nature. Only from this unique vantage point can we appreciate it's all-encompassing implications, it's challenges, and it's limitless rewards.

From this vantage point we begin to see the life of the spirit as something very real, something of true substance rather than the obsessive weaknesses of a few, or the overly indulged luxury of somebody else. Those who dare to risk the cultivation of the inner life will never be found wanting in clarity, or purpose, or meaning.

Steve Holec

OUR DAILY BREAD

ANGEL BISCUITS

2 pkg. dry yeast
1 tsp. soda
1 c. lukewarm water
¼ c. cooking oil
2 Tbsp. sugar
2 c. buttermilk
1 tsp. salt
5 c. flour

Dissolve yeast in water; add sugar to yeast. Add remaining ingredients. Pinch off amount needed. Bake at 375 degrees about 20 minutes. Will keep in refrigerator for one week.

Diana Linton



*“For Unto Us is Born This Day in the City of David a Savior,
Who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11*

December 13, 2006



REV. JATHO

On December 19, 2004, Pastor Fred gave a sermon titled, “DOES YOUR GOD LEAP FOR JOY?” I immediately said to myself—YES—I believe in a God who absolutely does jump for joy. Pastor Fred’s next words were, “what gets you off the ground and into the air-heaven bound?” I have thought about that for a long time, two years. What I have come to the conclusion is that, just being a Christian and living with the love of God throughout a lifetime is what keeps me heaven bound.

The person who first taught me that a Christian life should be joy-filled was Reverend Canon Charles Jatho. He was the

wonderful jolly pastor I grew up under in the small city of Royal Oak, Michigan, north of Detroit. Canon Jatho in his youth left the seminary to become an ambulance driver during World War I. He spent the winter of 1917 in Rhemes, France. He and some of his fellow soldiers played Santa for the children of Rhemes. He said they went over half of France trying to buy presents for the children and even had a Christmas tree.

Captured, by the Germans in June, 1918, Canon Jatho was elected Chaplain of the prison camp by the other soldiers. He was in the camp until the war ended. He felt he was saved from death by a German officer to whom he taught English. After the war he finished his theological studies and came to Michigan, where shortly afterwards the 1929 depression set in. During the depression, the combined clergy of Royal Oak, joined together and led by Canon Jatho, set up soup kitchens which delivered hot meals to hundreds of families. Each child received a pint of milk each day. Canon Jatho said most people today have no idea what it is

like to have no money at all.

My best memory of this extraordinary man was when he baptized an infant. He would say, “We receive this child into the congregation of Christ’s flock,” and at that very minute, he would kiss the small head and Canon Jatho would be heaven bound. He would beam with light and laughter. Canon Jatho retired in 1960, more than 1,600 Sundays after he came to grace three generations of parishioners. He became the first Chaplain of Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, which today is one of the great medical training centers in the country. Canon Jatho was active in many charity organizations and did not retire again until he was ninety.

Canon Jatho was a wonderful role model for me. Pastor Fred also has the wonderful quality of the love of a joyful God as did Canon Jatho. I expect some 50 years from now, one of the children who are in the GCUMC Sunday School will write about the amazing pastor of his youth whose life was led by a joyful God and taught this child to also leap for joy because of the way he sees God. For me, it is and has been a great privilege to have learned from both of these holy men.

How do you see God? Do you see him as joy-filled? Do you live your life for others because it is joy-filled? I feel a sense of joy throughout this congregation, and I am joyful to be a part of it. It is people like Canon Jatho and Pastor Fred that keep Christianity going, generation after generation, century after century. Blessings, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Carolyn Burch Riley

Psalm 100 ~ Jubilate Deo

O Be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands: serve the Lord with
²gladness, and come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord his is God; it is he that hath
made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people and the
sheep of his pasture.

³O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into
his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and speak
good of his Name.

⁴For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting; and his
truth endureth from generation to generation.