

# ***First United Methodist Church***

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Happy New Year!! I hope the year has started out well for each of you. It is off to a good start for me! Have you picked your word yet?? If you're not sure what I'm referring to, see last week's Pastor's Reflection.

Before Christmas slips away any further, there are a couple thoughts I want to share with you. First of all, wow...what a great series of services we had on Christmas Weekend. It all started with the Friday evening "early" Christmas Eve Service. Nothing like that had been done at Mitchell First before. We weren't sure how it would be received. We were hoping for 30-50 people. 95 showed up that evening!! In fact, the first person that arrived was someone not from our church family, but they came because they were invited by a co-worker who happens to be one of our church members. WAY TO GO...on inviting. I'm guessing there are many other stories like that...this is just the only one specifically that I heard about.

There was something special and unique about each service we had that entire weekend. But there was one moment in particular, that truly took my breath away. It was during the 4:30 Christmas Eve service, specifically during the candle-light portion of the service. All the candles were lit, so there was a warm glow in the darkened sanctuary. We had just started singing the last verse of Silent Night. As is my custom, I raised my candle, and all in attendance did the same thing. I can't fully explain what it was about that moment, but seeing all those candles in our sanctuary slowly being lifted, it was absolutely stunning! It truly took my breath away and I had to stop singing for a moment as emotion filled my heart and soul.

I couldn't see faces, but what I could see was everybody's candle light – I could see the light of the Christ Candle shining in every person's candle. Now stop and think about that for a moment. From where I stood, I could see the light of Christ held by every person there!! That was and is a powerful image. What if we looked for or recognized that same light in every person we meet each day? What if we truly thought about and tried to live in such a way that we realized that every day we bear the light of Christ into the world?

Besides "Silent Night," my other favorite Christmas Eve song is one that we never sing. It's not even on the radar of most pastors or churches. I actually had my son sing it at a Christmas Eve service a number of years back. What's the song?? Kathy Troccoli's, "Go Light Your World." (You can find it on Youtube if you're not familiar with it.) My favorite line in the song is, "Carry your candle...run to the darkness...seek out the hopeless, confused and torn...hold out your candle...for all to see it ...take your candle...go light your world...take your candle...go light your world."

My friends, that is the message and the challenge of every Christmas Eve service...take your candle – go light your world. You might also say that this is the incredible mission for our church and for each of us as followers of Jesus...carry your candle - run to the darkness - hold out your candle - for all to see it - take your candle - go light your world. In 2017...let's run to the darkness...lets light up our world!

Serving Together,

***Pastor Keith***