

First United Methodist Church

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Children often help us understand the true meaning of Christmas. Their joy, their hope, their sense of wonder can help us adults experience dimensions of this incredible and holy season that we have long since forgotten or not yet realized. At least I know that has often been the case in my home. One example of this comes to mind this time of year for me.

Every year in early Advent out comes the nativity set; Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, etc. Our prized nativity is a Hummel set that I had purchased piece by piece, each year adding a new piece, because it was so costly. Of course, this particular nativity set gets a place of honor among our Christmas decorations. One year, when our children were very young, Nancy discovered our kids playing with the “Hummel” nativity set. She didn’t panic or scold. She joined in the play and was able to make sure the pieces were carefully put back in their place.

This experience made us realize that we should have a nativity set that our kids can play with. So, we looked through a catalogue, found a plastic nativity set and ordered it. Of course, this was long before Amazon’s 3-day delivery service, so we ordered the set and waited...and waited. Finally, the set arrived in the mail and we proceeded to let the kids open the box and take out the various pieces. Once all the pieces were unpacked, we told the kids to find a place for it and to set it up the way they wanted in the place they chose.

The honored spot was chosen, and we sat back while the kids told the Christmas story in their own way as they put the pieces in place. We also made sure the kids understood this was their set that they could play with. It wasn’t a “look with your eyes only” set. This was a “you can touch and play with” set. Once the scene was set up, we’d often find our kids playing with the pieces and telling the story of “God coming to us” in their own way and multiple times during the Advent season. We never knew for sure where Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus might show up in our home, but it was always an opportunity to hear the kids talk about God, Christmas, baby Jesus, etc. from their perspective.

One of the great spiritual insights our children provided for me was that the story of Christmas, the characters of the nativity scene are meant to be played with, interacted with, and even moved around in our lives. This is exactly why God “came among us.” God came to earth to “rub elbows” with us, to be a part of our lives, to be a part of the story of our lives in an up-close-and-personal way. God didn’t just have a “look only” approach with humanity or our world. God was, and is, very “hands on” with expressing Love to us.

So, in these remaining days of Advent and Christmas, my hope is that each of us will get down on our knees and play with the nativity scene. Look at each character, each piece, play with it, hold it, tell the story without reading it, and let God breath new life into how we each see and experience God’s Good News. After all, Christmas isn’t a spectator activity...it’s meant to be experienced up-close and personal. That’s why God came...in the form of a baby.

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

Tonight (**Friday December 14**) is our **Family Advent Gathering**. Soup at 5:15 pm and the movie, “The Fourth Wiseman” will be shown at 6:00 pm. There will be activities for children that don’t wish to watch the movie.

Our Children’s Noisy Bucket Project this Sunday is for CASA and purchasing Christmas Gifts for children they work with. See you Sunday! Worship is at 8:30 am and 11:00 am.