

# ***First United Methodist Church***

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So here we are, Christmas is less than a week away. This has been a really busy / full week for me. There have been so many ministry needs to care for, and even a few unexpected situations that had to be added to the schedule. I'm sure we've all had busy weeks. It seems that's the way it always is when it's getting close to the end of the year.

In the midst of all the hustle and bustle of life and checking things off my "To Do" list, someone asked me a simple and thought provoking question. They asked, "So, do you feel like it's Christmas yet?" I get what they're asking. You know, that sense of wonder and excitement about the season. Wondering what gifts you'll receive. Anticipating the reaction of those to whom you give gifts. Experiencing the joy that seems to bubble out of the Christmas music, lights, and decorations. Looking forward to time set aside from the busyness of life to simply be with family. Yes, there is just something unique and special about this season that often creates a "special feeling" within a person.

My answer to the individual asking the question, "So, do you feel like it's Christmas yet?" was simply.... "No." Whether they were anticipating that answer, I don't know, but it was my honest answer in the moment. Of course, then I had all the usual feelings; feeling guilty because I didn't or couldn't say "yes." Feeling unsure, I mean what kind of a pastor am I...not feeling the Christmas Spirit yet?! Feeling hopeful...I've still got time "to get" the feeling. And so it goes...

Later on I had an intriguing thought; "Christmas is not dependent upon how I feel about it." You see, Christmas comes whether I'm ready or not. And that's a **GOOD** thing. No, that's a **GOD** thing! You see, Christmas is really about God putting in motion a plan to redeem the world, a path for all humanity to reconnect with the creator. Christmas really isn't about anything we can or should do...Christmas is about what God has done and is doing in our world to repair the brokenness all around us.

Yes, the Christmas lights and the music, the baked goodies and the gifts, the celebrations and the decorations are all fun and wonderful things about this season. But they are all just a response, from a Christian perspective, to what God has already done. John 3:16 speaks of the very first Christmas gift; "For God so loved the world that he **gave** his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Christmas is almost here! No, Christmas, the yearly observance, is almost here. But Christmas, the presence (and present) of God is always here. It truly is a gift that continues to touch our world. It is a gift that is simply waiting to be acknowledged, accepted, unwrapped and allowed to touch each and every person, each and every community, each and every life with the true love of God. So, do I feel like it's Christmas yet?" It doesn't matter...but the answer is "YES," because God's incredible gift continues to shine light into the darkness of this world...and into the darkness in my life! Thank you, God, for your light! Thank you, God, for your love! Merry Christmas to All! God is with us...God is at work!!!

Serving Together,

*Pastor Keith*

Our **first Christmas Eve service** is this evening, December 21 at 5:30 in the chapel. There's **no Sunday School** this Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>. However, Nancy and I will be showing the video "**The True Christmas Story**" at 9:45 on Sunday morning in the chapel. Come learn about the two kings in the Bethlehem area, so many years ago. Finally, on Sunday, **December 30<sup>th</sup>, there will be just one worship service at 9:30 am.**