



PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear Redeemer,

To quote that old, beautiful hymn *Joy to the World* which is based on Luke's gospel account of the birth of Jesus, we now begin to "let every heart prepare him room." Luke writes that there is no room anywhere in Bethlehem for a full-term, pregnant Mary and an anxious Joseph. "And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). Advent, as we move through the weeks of waiting and watching, is that time of preparation, the time when, we, with our whole lives make room for God's love to enter our hearts.

Love. It's a small word with big ramifications and can be, at times, difficult to pin down. Love is the fourth emphasis from National Bishop Susan Johnson this year through *Living our Faith* - as a church together we pray, read, worship, and love. As we prepare that room, that space for God's love to come again in Jesus, for love to enter our hearts and the world, how do we see and experience love, and more importantly, how do we live into and out of what that love means for us?

As people of faith we recognize that love, first and foremost, comes from God. Through God's gracious welcome we are invited to know it, experience it, feel it, make room for it for

ourselves. That God's love comes, not as some abstract theory, but comes very specifically *for you and for me*.

Love is communal, that is, *for and with others*, emitting like a lamp "on the lampstand" (Luke 11:33), because once you and I have gotten a vision of it, a taste of it, love becomes difficult to contain. As each heart opens to God's love made known in Jesus, this becomes a love to be shared in its abundance and grace. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Love is also cosmic. I'll stick with Luke's account. We hear of the archangel Gabriel's messages, the Holy Spirit active and moving, babies leaping in wombs for joy, we hear Mary's song of hope for God's justice, angels in the fields at night proclaiming to terrified shepherds "glory to God in the highest heaven," and a baby born, protected by nurturing parents amid the smell and warmth of animals on a cold night. This is *divine, enfolding* love where heaven is joined to earth.

You can reverse that order, if you want, mix it up. Start with the cosmic and go the personal. It doesn't matter, ultimately, and just maybe it's a good thing that we can't pin love down, box it in as we tend to want to do. Because Love is on the move and what matters most is that God first moves: through the vast expanses of time and space, moves into the peaks and valleys of the human heart, and moves into this world infusing it with all possibility and promise. God does this all for love.

This Advent may our hearts be open. May we prepare him room. May we know, experience, and share the wonders of his love. Let heaven and nature sing!

Pastor Katherine