



let it shine

“And the Word Became Flesh...”

Christmas. A time of wonder and awe, of memory and anticipation, of candles and carols. For some, it is a time filled with family and friends, for others a time of loneliness and yearning. For all who understand themselves as Christians, it is a time of mystery, when God seems both especially present in this world and yet so powerful as to be utterly unintelligible to the human mind. Of course, that is a definition of God!

As the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith praises God: “In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.” We live in astonishment that God took on human form in Jesus, came to us as a baby, grew among us to adulthood and thus knows the human experience in all its depth, pain and joy.

At Christmas, we celebrate this incarnation, the embodiment of God among us in Jesus. Yet it is not just at Christmas that this teaching prevails among us. All year long, as Christ’s body in the midst of the world, we seek to embody his teaching in our daily lives. In our denomination, although we are deeply spiritual, we are not generally people of a disembodied spiritualism. Instead, our Church’s teaching encourages us to welcome Christ’s rebirth in us each day so that we may have the strength to live as people who care deeply about his gospel, about justice and peace, about healing and reconciliation.

Many of our ancestors in faith did not celebrate Christmas at all. They believed it was a pagan holiday and that it was unseemly to pursue such excess as decoration, gifts and singing. They had a point: the excess of the marketplace is still unseemly. Yet the joy that is Christmas deserves

Our Theological Roots

to be celebrated in many extravagant ways, and so we do. Our challenge is to keep our focus on the “reason for the season,” to kneel in worship before the Christ child as the magi did before they presented their gifts.

We are a church of many cultures: American Indian, Pacific Islander, German, Swedish, Hispanic, English, African American, Asian, and so many more. Each has gifted us with new and deeper understandings of this festive time of year, from Santa Lucia to Three Kings Day, from Advent calendars and services of lessons and carols to spirituals and gospel music. We weave them together, influencing one another and enriching our common life as together we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, God incarnate.

Reflections:

- In many ways, Christmas is a season of the child. How do you reach out to children? How do you make our world a place fit for children? How does “the little child” lead you today?
- In your personal devotional life, how do you experience Christ’s rebirth throughout the year within you?
- What family and cultural traditions do you observe that help you keep the focus of this season on Christ’s birth?

“Christmas and the Incarnation” was written by Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister of the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ.

The Connecticut Conference
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**
125 Sherman Street, Hartford, CT 06105
www.ctucc.org 866.367.2822

