

A Covid Christmas Eve

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Community Presbyterian Church - Rochester, MN

December 24, 2020 - Christmas Eve

Texts: Luke 2: 1-20, John 1:1-4, 14

As of this very morning, we weren't sure where tonight's service would be - indoors, outdoors, a combination? When we planned in October, we didn't know what the weather would be. We didn't know how the story would turn out.

Isn't that what makes life interesting? There are always unexpected plot twists. The story we call our lives is predictably unpredictable.

The Christmas story didn't begin that night in Bethlehem. It was tucked into the larger story of Israel's oppression and foreign domination, into the story of good king David, which was enfolded in the older story of Abraham and Sarah, and floods, famines and migrations, all enveloped by and springing from the story of a mighty voice of love dividing light from darkness and calling it good. The story, too, is predictably unpredictable: people get lost and are found, lost again and found again.

If the story harks back to the deeper story of creation itself, this story also doesn't end with Jesus' birth; the story follows him along the hot and dusty roads of Palestine, where he heals and blesses; it unfolds through the tears in the garden and the pain of the cross - a dark tale of woe negated by the light of risen life. The story since has taken turns that would have left the shepherds' heads spinning. It has touched you - and me - and all of us - or we would not be here tonight.

Which means our stories are connected - all of them. No story is ever on its own, no person's story is ever just one person's story. No moment or act of love is isolated - we are connected.... And we are keepers of the story. Through you, God's story reaches into the world, to those who need it most, even to those with whom we may feel least connected.

Isn't that what keeps us coming back at Christmas, coming back to church, coming back to the old stories? We don't yet know exactly how this story will end, but we know Who will write the ending. And we know we want to be part of it. Please pray with me:

God, you are Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the source of all stories; you speak us into life - you invite us down twisting roads and into tales whose endings we cannot see. Tonight and always, we place our trust in you. All those whom we love, and those whose stories we have not yet heard, we place at the heart of your love - this whole sad and glorious world.

Use us to tell your story - a story better than we could ourselves devise or imagine. All this we ask in the name of Jesus, babe of Bethlehem, prophet of Jerusalem, king of glory, Savior and friend. Amen

From the gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word - the Story - and the Story was with God, and the Story was God. The Story was in the beginning with God. All stories came into being through this Story, and without it not one story has been told. What has come into being is life, and the life is the light of all people. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have heard his story and beheld his glory, the glory as of a parent's only child, full of grace and truth. Amen.