

December 28, 2008

A Celebration in music and readings

Our celebration this Sunday was a wonderful program of readings and music. Our music director, Karen Kincaid, put together a wonderful program of readings – some from members of our own congregation intertwined with music from around the world. Karen was even able to add some Epiphany music. Those of us who were able to attend (the roads were still a challenge in many areas) were deeply touched by the flow and the power of the music and the readings.

This week as there was no sermon – I want to share three of the readings, two by members of our congregation and one from a previous Advent Devotional that I wrote. One of the writers was present, Joyce Neff, and the other has earned her heavenly crown but her witness is still here through her poetry, Myrtle Rupp.

**“A Family Christmas” by Myrtle Rupp**

We gathered around the glittering Christmas tree  
And opened gifts while sitting on the floor.  
The walls resounded with peals of laughter  
As more friends and family came through the door.

The house had been cleaned from top to bottom,  
No nook nor cranny had a speck of dust.  
The kitchen gleamed and sparkled in anticipation  
Of the goodies, broiled and baked: perfection a “must”.

When dinner was over, a Holy hush descended  
As each guest looked toward the head of the table  
Where the Bible was opened to read the story  
Of the Christ-child born in that Bethlehem stable.

We all bowed our heads in humble thanksgiving  
That we, too, will feast in heaven some day.  
Our celebration on earth is just a reminder  
Because we KNOW that Jesus in the ONLY way.

Christmas is a day for happiness  
Christmas is a day for love and cheer  
Christmas is a day for humble worship  
A day to plan for every year.

**“Thoughts of Christmas” by Joyce Neff**

Did you ever think what Christmas really means to each of you?  
Although there are many answers, I would like to quote a few:  
I like to think of Christmas when first I was aware  
That families considered this a really glad affair.

The Christmas tree was laden with decorations bright,  
The air was filled with music and the house with colored lights.  
There were goodies, oh so fancy, to tempt the smallest bite,  
And the gifts were wrapped with paper and colored ribbon tight.

Then Christmas Eve, we children with eager eyes so bright,  
Could vision old St. Nicholas stealing through the night.  
I’m sure this is a favorite scene we like to think about,  
And part of childhood fantasy we couldn’t do without.

And next, the first impression of the “Babe of Bethlehem”  
And the story of the manger, of the shepherds and their lambs.  
The story of the wise men, the angels from above,  
Their heavenly voices ringing with songs of joy and love.

The winter scene around us helps make another thought,  
For nature’s full of wonder and secrets we have sought.  
The trees are bare one moment, then snowflakes linger there.  
And then, as if by magic, their beauty was so rare.

The fences and the houses no longer stood as such,  
For nature paints a picture no other hand can touch.  
So, all these thoughts make Christmas so very real to me,  
And may your thoughts of Christmas so very merry be.

**"Christmas Day, 2006" by Dennis Plourde**

AND GOD SAID, "Trust in a child born in Bethlehem's manger."

A child born of a young woman and a carpenter  
A child conceived not of man, but of the Holy Spirit  
A child crying in a stable, lying in a manger  
A child visited by magi and humble shepherds  
A child - small, helpless, human - and yet Divine.

AND GOD SAID, "Trust in a man, a carpenter, a rabbi."

A man whose voice makes demons shudder  
A man whose voice causes the winds and waves to obey  
A man whose voice gives life to dead bodies  
A man whose voice beckons children to his side  
A man whose voice speaks with clear authority.

AND GOD SAID, "Trust when the garden prayer is one of anguish."

When the sentence condemns an innocent one to death  
When hammer and nails bring judgment and darkness  
When eyes close, breathe ceases and spirit soars  
When a stone closes the entrance of a borrowed tomb  
When darkness falls, Sabbath's rest and hope fades.

AND GOD SAID, "Trust in an empty grave and impossible circumstance."

Believe when the only answer to prayer is silence  
Believe when the odds go against what you had hoped for  
Believe when the dawn lingers and light does not come  
Believe when those around you doubt, "Where is your God?"  
Believe and trust that God is able - infinitely able.

AND GOD SAID, "For unto you a child is born."

May these readings touch your heart this week as they touched ours in worship.