

“Sent: A Road Trip”

Being SENT by God is like taking a Road Trip with a **very limited itinerary**. In the small group study for Advent, “Sent: Delivering the gift of hope at Christmas”, I was struck with one phrase that kept playing over and over in my head (it isn’t a quote, because it has changed during the waiting): **When you go where you don’t normally go, you see what you don’t normally see.** As a church family, we have taken the love of God a lot of places during December. This is what do I know about:

1. The youth went caroling.
2. Many if not most of you rang the Salvation Army bell
3. You sorted and delivered Toys for Tots
4. Gifts were taken to Jubilee Center
5. Gifts were taken to Crusader Clinic, during donuts with Santa
6. Hats, mittens, and scarves were taken to share
7. Socks were delivered
8. A worship group went to the Rescue Mission
9. A worship group went to Independence Village and to Cor Mariae, and to Grand Victorian, right next door
10. Food was delivered.
11. Our baby grand piano from the Gathering Space was given away
12. Some of you went to the Grove on Wednesdays

Luke, chapter 1: His kingdom will never end, “⁷⁸ Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” Luke 1:78-9 When the angels came to sing in this story, they told us to share peace with others and to praise God for it. Today, we do the praising.

I invite you to share about your experience of *being sent* to share hope with others. You might have **been invited into a dark place** in the world that you hadn’t experienced before. You might have entered into a living situation very different than your own... not wrong, just different. I don’t have much planned for today – just **your stories of how you were blessed.**

I know that many of you **experienced God in a fresh way** as you reached out to others in the last month. I know that some of you have been pushed right out of your comfort zone, as you were **called in to help out**.

I have been asking you to be ready to tell where you saw God as you were sent. I'm not asking you to tell anyone else's story ... just your own. What new insight into yourself did you uncover? How did you do, just sitting with someone ... a ministry of presence – even when you couldn't "fix a problem?"

Sharing Stories

Walter Brueggemann, Devotion for Advent, "Celebrating Abundance" pp 77

On this third day of Christmas we remember the inn-keeper declaring, "No room." His wife heard him and grimaced. She knew better. She knew that after "business":

There is hospitality.

There is welcome to the stranger.

There is respect for those unlike us.

She blurted out, "We must do something!" He grudgingly opened his barn and provided straw.

We resonate with the wife of the innkeeper, because we also know there is more than "business." We remember your word, dear Christ Child:

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

As you did it to the least..."

We are invited to know better like the wife; to act, even if grudgingly, like her husband. We resolve on this holy day that we must do something to welcome the stranger in our midst. *Then another day, this prayer...*

Break into our staid lives with the power of your holiness. Break up our old patterns and expectations, and transform us through the good news brought by the singing of angels: 'to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.' Amen (pp 55)

I ask you, how did your choices during Advent, break into your old patterns and take you on a whole new Road...invite you on a Road Trip you hadn't planned?

Space for Stories

A disciple is someone who has moved from being the recipient of the Church's mission to being responsible for the church's mission. The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the

transformation of the world. The **work of Christmas begins today** and as we respond to the Holy Spirit inviting us into that work, we grow as disciples.

About a year and a half ago, I met Debbie. She just needed a little help to buy some food. A couple of months later ... a couple of dollars to get some minutes on her cell phone. This year as the weather started to turn cold, our time together became more frequent...weekly, then twice a week. A couple of weeks ago, we **met on her porch** and she held in her hand this **gold coin**...her guardian angel that got her through her son's tragic death in the fall. She wanted me to have it. She was so grateful for our friendship - for everything and this was her most **prized possession**. I didn't want to take it. And I knew that I couldn't 'not' take it. That day, she also asked me about me. "Does anyone ever ask you how you are doing?" I have **carried this gold angel coin every day** since that day. It reminds me to be grateful ... and is teaching me what Brene Brown meant when she wrote, **"When you are grateful for what you have, I know you understand the magnitude of what I have lost."** (Braving the Wilderness, pp 156) This experience has reminded me how important it is to be **able to give** – but it also reminds me of how **important it is to receive** and acknowledge the graciousness and love of the giver. Debbie has more to teach me. Reread the passage from II Chronicles and let it's truth settle in. I imagine new understandings of God and God's grace as you **have traveled outside your comfort zone** – on your holy Road Trip? For me as well!

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen