

***Christmas at the Church of the Ascension 2015***

**Rev. Anne, Fr. Bob, Rev. Rhonda, Rev. Jeff,  
the wardens and Board members**

**wish you a**

***Happy and Blessed Christmas, and God's richest blessings in 2016.***

**We hope you will join us for our  
Christmas Eve Services on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015**



**'Family friendly' service with Holy Eucharist at 4pm**

**Holy Eucharist with choir at 8pm**

**'Christmas Offering' envelope is enclosed.**

**This will be used for Ascension Outreach purposes in 2016.**

Dear friends in Christ,

I think the Grinch said it best:

*And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,  
Stood puzzling and puzzling: "How could it be so?"  
"It came without ribbons! It came without tags!"  
"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"  
And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore.  
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!  
"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store."  
"Maybe Christmas. . . perhaps. . . means a little bit more!"*

Dr. Seuss

The 'buzz' of Christmas is already in the air in our homes, parish and community as preparations are underway for decorating, parties, feasts, and gift exchanges. Many of you are planning trips to visit loved ones, while others of you are looking forward to waking up to a house in which all the beds are full again, with children and grandchildren who have come home for the holidays. Some of you are starting your own traditions with your children, and know it will be a busy, exciting time as they wake up to find gifts under their own Christmas tree.

I know that for others of you this is a difficult time of the year. There is that empty chair at the table to deal with, that stocking that stays in the box. All the rituals and celebrations are different now that your loved one has died. For others of you this time of the year is a reminder of the way things should have been, but never were. Some wonder why they should bother with Christmas anymore.

Why celebrate Christmas? Because it matters. Because at Christmas we celebrate God's coming among us. His name is **Emmanuel** – the **God who is with us** – who is made out of 'matter' - the same stuff we are made of, but who is made out of the same stuff God is made of, and who loves us so much that He will never let us go.

That first Christmas wasn't easy for Mary and Joseph as they welcomed their first born Son. They were far from home, without the support of family and loved ones – much like the thousands of refugees fleeing from war torn Syria right now. It was cold in the cave, they were lonely and afraid, and there probably wasn't much to eat. But guess what? God was with them, right in midst of their hardship, and so was peace and joy and love. Today we still sing of it in that beautiful hymn:

*“Love came down at Christmas  
Love all lovely, love divine  
Love was born at Christmas  
Star and angels gave the sign.”*

Love is always present in the best of times, but also, and especially in the worst of times, when we believe that **God-Is-With-Us** through all times. I think that's what The Grinch may have discovered – it's all about love. God promises that we are never alone when we live in Him.

As you worship the newborn King – the *ever present* and *already here in our midst* Saviour of the World this Christmas, I pray that you will experience the Peace of Christ that passes all understanding during this wonderful season, and throughout the New Year.

Thank you for your tremendous support of the Church of the Ascension this year. We need you all to make us a healthy, vital congregation.

With blessings to you and your loved ones,

The Ven. Anne Germond (Rector)

One of my favorite comics is Family Circus. Back in 1988 they ran a strip where five-year old Billy was showing his Christmas presents to grandma. Over course she "oohed" and "ahhed" over them but then she asked, "Did you get everything you wanted for Christmas?"

Billy thought for a moment before he answered, "No, I didn't, Grandma. But that's O.K. It wasn't my birthday."