

## *From Pastor Karen's Desk*

December 2009

Our two new staff members, Susan Hamilton and Leo Jacoby, both started work in the past week and have had to hit the ground running. See, it's mid-November and we aren't ready for Christmas yet. And for a church, mid-November is when we should be thinking about Easter; Christmas should be already put to bed and ready to go.

So we are scrambling to finalize our annual "Lessons and Carols" Sunday, when Susan is still learning the names of all our musicians. And Leo is getting a crash course in the Children's Christmas Program, when he has not yet been shown where the costumes are kept. And Jerry and I are trying to show them all of this and make sure that your Christmas Eve services will be powerful celebrations of God's gift to us in Christ.

If you are like me, you know this sense of being behind in your preparations at home, too. It's December 1 – shouldn't you have some cookies in the freezer, a closet stuffed with gifts, the lights on your shrubbery, and all your cards addressed by now? I always hope that I will achieve this lofty goal someday. This year isn't going to be the year, though.

But I have a quote tucked away (source, alas, long-forgotten) that puts a different spin on Christmas - efficiency:

*If you plan too much for Christmas,  
you may find yourself with a room inside the inn,  
safely away from the cows and the angel song and the shepherds' commotion,  
and you may sleep right through the miracle,  
and miss it altogether.*

What if our frantic activity aimed at baking/decorating/ mailing/wrapping/worshipping/singing/sentimentalizing our way toward the perfect Christmas is actually just making us a reservation for a room in the Inn, when the best part of Christmas happens out back? What if over-planning for Christmas causes us to miss it altogether?

Advent is the Christian season for preparing the way – but don't let that fool you into over-planning. Leave some gaps in the itinerary. Allow for distraction by unexpected stars and visiting angels. Leave some room reservations unmade. And watch to see what surprising stable you will be led to; what amazing, unexpected news you will hear; and in what unplanned way Jesus will be born for you this year.

This year, don't get caught inside the lobby, with every detail checked off your list, wondering why you can't find the miracle of Christmas. Linger outside and listen for God.