

# *The Newsletter*

*Saugatuck United Methodist Church*

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Dear Friends,

A few days ago one of our grandchildren asked, "Grandma, where are your Christmas decorations?" Mary tried to explain we were preparing to celebrate Thanksgiving. After Thanksgiving we would start to think more about Christmas. That is a tradition at our house. I understand not everyone agrees. But it seems many tend to skip over Thanksgiving to get a head start on Christmas preparations. Perhaps in doing so we cheapen both celebrations?

But the season is now upon us. In the church year we are about to enter Advent, a time to prepare ourselves spiritually for the celebration of our Lord's coming as a baby to live among us. One of the great themes of the Advent/Christmas season is how so many did not recognize His coming and the few who were able to celebrate His birth. The old spiritual says it so well:

Sweet little Jesus boy  
They made you be born in a manger  
Sweet little holy child  
We didn't know who you were  
Didn't know you'd come to save us Lord  
To take our sins away  
Our eyes were blind, we could not see  
We didn't know who you were

That was true long ago and sadly is still true today. But with all my heart I believe the Christ still comes to us today. Yes, not everyone recognizes his coming. He is disguised in such a way the natural eye does not always see him. But to those who anticipate and are given the gift of spiritual insight His coming is very real.

In Edwin Markham's story-poem, Conrad, the godly cobbler it told in a dream that Christ would come to his shop the following day. In anticipation he prepared but was interrupted by needy strangers. Near the end of the day and no coming of the Lord, Conrad cried:

Why is it, Lord, that your feet delay?  
Did You forget that this is the day?  
Then soft in the silence a Voice he heard:  
Lift up your heart, for I kept my word.  
Three times I came to your friendly door;  
Three times my shadow was on your floor.  
I was the beggar with bruised feet;  
I was the woman you gave to eat;  
I was the child on the homeless street!

How can we see the Christ of Christmas this Christmas but all year long? Charles Allen in a little book on Christmas gives this answer: "Loving service to others is part of the answer."

My prayer is that each of might see and receive Christ anew this Christmas and experience the joy and peace of his coming throughout the coming year. Merry Christmas!!

Pastor Emmett & Mary