

# The Pastor's Report

## Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!

Jolly (somewhat) Old Rev. Mike here wishing you all a very Merry Christmas as we begin the Season of Advent.

Advent (from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming") is the period of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus; in other words, the period immediately before Christmas. The Latin word *adventus* is the translation of the Greek word *parousia*, commonly used in reference to the Second Coming. As Christians we believe that the season of Advent serves as a dual reminder of the original waiting which was done by the Hebrews for the birth of their Messiah, as well as the waiting that Christians today endure for the second coming of Christ.

I know they never told me this at seminary, and I'm sure that none of you read the small print when you signed on as a follower of Christ, but one of the most significant aspects of being a Christian is the need to become one who abides well.

The definition of the word "abide" actually has two different nuances which really serve to capture the spirit of discipleship (i.e., what it actually means to "do" or "be" your faith). First, to "abide" means to accept or act in accord with the wishes or demands of another. Step number one in the faith journey is the acceptance of the fact that this path we are on is one which has been laid out before us by God. We, of course, may

decide whether we will follow it (enter our old friend *free will*) but the direction, pace and terrain of the path is clearly not of our own design or control.

Due to my own sometimes tumultuous faith journey, I recognize and must constantly challenge myself to accept that there is a very real and pervasive mystical rhythm and spiritual flow to discipleship. The key is to dance (live one's life) to the tune God is actually laying down. As a former musician, I greatly appreciate people who get into whatever song is being played, rather than wishing for a song that has not yet been played or won't be played. I think the same is true with abiding in whatever reality God is currently laying down. It is what it is; let us bide in it.

Second, we can also speak about "abiding" as a feeling or a memory which we do not allow to fade or become lost. For me, Christmas is the one time of year (whether I like it or not) that I get a vibrant sense of the actual "**feeling of faith.**" We get it watching children take in the tree and presents on Christmas morning. We get it when you drop off a loaf of holiday bread to our neighbor. We also get it when we realize that Christmas isn't about what we *get*, but rather, what we can *give* to others. This feeling of faith is what it means to have God's son come into our world at Christmas, and into our lives every day.

In God's abiding presence, Rev. Mike