

## Message for Lessons & Carols, 12/27/09, Faith UCC

We live in a society today that positively worships the new. New technology trumps the old, as evidenced by the fact that children across the country, my 15 year-old included, asked this year for the newest Xbox 360, which seems to me to be only very slightly different than its predecessor.

Warranties cover fewer and fewer things as items once expected to endure for years and years are now practically disposable. Women of a certain age these days see no reason whatsoever not to treat themselves to a brand-new face, or other brand-new body parts, despite the risks associated with the surgery, not to mention the not-covered-by-insurance expense. New is in. Dare I say that new is the new black? New seems to be good for all things, in all times & places. New makes everything look better. New is even making steady progress into places long known for disliking change, places like the Church. Contemporary worship services, with cutting edge video technology and clips from popular films, are sprouting up from coast to coast. And this isn't necessarily a bad thing. I like improved technology, improved worship services and improved what-have-you as much as the next guy. In some cases, running with what is new is a very good idea indeed. For example, for someone who loves cooking as much as I do, a KitchenAid Mixmaster certainly beats, if you will pardon the pun, a wooden spoon.

However, newness simply for its own sake, with no rhyme or reason to it, leaves us feeling hungry for more nourishment. We are, in fact, a nation starving to death. We long for traditions, for connection, for the plain brown paper bag that is truth in the midst of glitzy bows and shiny paper masquerading as truth. But many of us have forgotten how even to get there. The television tells us that all we need to make the season magical is to buy him a Lexus and put it in the driveway with a giant red bow, to buy her diamonds from Kay and give them to her by the tree, using sign language, to pile the kids with toys and DVDs (did I say DVDs? Silly me, I'm so old-fashioned. Of course I meant Blu-Ray discs) and every single other item that has made its way onto their Christmas lists after they've watched all those holiday specials liberally cut with ads and more ads. We listen to Madison Avenue's messages. We jam parking lots and crowd stores and get nasty with one another and buy and buy and buy. And still we have that hollow, gnawing feeling, the feeling of our souls wanting more.

This is why we need services like today's. This is why churches around the world are following the lead of King's College Chapel at Cambridge and holding their own services of lessons and carols. For there is something in the simple intricacy of familiar scripture, in the joyous singing of carols, that feeds our souls in a way that no amount of consumerist frenzy can. Just as Christmas Eve's candlelight bathes us in a reminder of the true meaning of the season, the birth of Love in human form, the words and notes of today's service steep us in the rich broth of Christian tradition. Scripture, heard together, knits us into the Body of Christ. Music, like scripture, can be a powerful path back to our spiritual center. Music, sung together, weaves us into the kind of community God wishes us to be. Let's take today as a lesson in spiritual nourishment. As we return to church week after week in the coming year, let's take advantage of the opportunity to be fed and centered and grounded in the Love that is our God. Let's lose ourselves in this glorious gift that God offers us. Let's listen to the immortal words of scripture. Let's sing the beautiful music together. Let's be true community, church as church ought to be, and be filled. Filled with the Holy Spirit, who is good for all things, in all times and in all places.