

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; Serve the Lord with gladness; Come into His presence with singing... (Psalm 100:1-2)

Oh you had to be here, and Oh it was wonderful! There was joy! There was noise! There was gladness! There was singing (and ringing and cheering)... Jenn Hurd and family were here early to herd children, (get it?), or as we say in the church, “Wrangle Kids” and there were angel wings from paper plates and paper doilies, and halos from star shaped silver plates from the Dollar Tree, and all the costumes brought from upstairs were laid out on the two big white tables in the back: big and little: shepherds and angels and wise guys, and some for Mary and Joseph... Oh, you had to be here!

We began with no Zoom, for some reason (maybe we turned the wrong thing on first instead of last), then the speakers sounded like they were blowing up, and so I turned off the little sound dealy and the big power strip, and the noise went away, and so did any possibility of Zoom. So sorry!

But the joy! The gladness! The noise! Was LOVELY! The small choir (3 of 4) had begun to practice when the speakers sounded, and when the speakers got turned off, the Nancy and Danny Coker family came, the whole lovely bunch! Probably more than 20 people, with two or three kids to each grown child's family! And Amelia (the one getting baptized) came in a red plaid dress and she was Gladness personified! When Carolyn came with Becket, he was all dressed as a Shepherd already, and Tom and Teresa's grandkids became angels and the best! cheering section, and Chad wore Pastor Kent's Egyptian Pharaoh hat as a Wise Guy, and rode in on the horse on a stick, and we had lots of Shepherds with crooks and headscarfs... O it was Wonderful!

Nancy and Danny Coker and Logan and Ashley Burkhart (Amelia's family, including big brother), lit the Advent Candles: all four of the blue ones, and read from Micah 5:2-5a. Then the WHOLE Nancy and Danny Coker Family came forward for the Baptism. They and the rest of the congregation promised to live lives that Amelia could copy, to grow closer to God. Our congregation promised to provide “facilities and opportunities” for Christian growth and fellowship. Then we began the scripture readings, to tell the story of Jesus' birth, with the best part being the kids: angels and shepherds and the Big Wise Guy. We had no Mary and Joseph, nor even a Baby Jesus, so I told the people, “You are each Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus.” There were many who nodded their heads in agreement. The kids were so good and so happy and stood in front like they'd been rehearsed. And then we rang the hand bells. And the littlest kids just ran around ringing the jingle bells, and there was Joy, and Noise, and Gladness, and Singing (and Ringing), and it was the kind of noise and joy and gladness and singing that God LOVES!

We sang our Parting Song in a Big circle, with littles and bigs all mixed together. And it was SO Lovely! So Joyful! So Christmas-y! And I'm sorry you missed it. But those of us who were here may keep those memories in our hearts forever. Maybe Amelia will even remember some of it, maybe, the Joy, the Noise, the Music, the Story? Trusting for sure that she'll remember the Love.

Please know that you are missed in our midst! And that we don't mean to be so mean as to not have Zoom available for you, nor do we want our speakers to sound so un-soundingly. But please know that God is still in our midst: whether you are at home or in the sanctuary, and that we are a Body of Christ, a faith family, who love and care for one another; always have, always will. And that we celebrate together with those who've gone before and those who are coming after. We celebrate God made flesh. We celebrate Love overcoming all else, even poverty, violence, or death. We celebrate Christ's Birth! We celebrate God with us! O the joy of our love! Merry Christmas, all, and Blessings, Pastor Bethany