



Dear Friends in Christ,

The French writer Voltaire is quoted as saying, "God is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh." Garrison Keillor is quoted as saying, "God writes comedy. It's just that he's stuck with actors who don't know how to play for laughs."

Comedy is defined as a story in which good triumphs over evil resulting in a happy ending. In that sense, the Christmas story is classic comedy complete with very humorous surprises. We expect a king coming in power and we get a baby born to a peasant couple. We expect glory and splendor and we get a manger and shepherds. We expect a nation rejoicing and we get Magi from out of town. The only reason we don't laugh is because the story has become so familiar.

The tradition of having children present the Christmas story is one way to remind us of the utter humility and humor of the nativity story. This year our Sunday School children will retell the story of the birth of Jesus in a particularly humorous way. Feel free to laugh because the birth of Jesus is such shocking good news that if we don't laugh, we must have missed the point.

We have retired the guest book at the front door and replaced it with welcome cards in the pews. No longer will our greeters have to figure out who should sign the guest book and who shouldn't be asked to sign. And we hope we will get more useful information about our visitors through the welcome cards. If someone asks where the guest book is, please invite them to sign a welcome card.

Our greeters perform an important function. Church sociologists say that visitors form their impressions of a church within the first minute they enter the building. It is so important to have cheerful greeters at the front door to say, "Welcome to Peace. I am so glad you are here." Of course, we can all be unofficial greeters every Sunday also. According to Mark Vander Tuig churches have bulletin boards so that people who don't have anyone to talk to have a place to stand. Hopefully we don't have too many people standing and reading our bulletin boards.

For a long time we have been contemplating a projection system for our sanctuary. A congregational meeting a few years ago voted to investigate the possibilities. There are reasons to decide against a screen. But there are also good reasons to decide for a projection screen.

1. It would enable guests to more easily follow and participate in our liturgical worship.
2. It would encourage creativity in our liturgy.
3. It would save paper in our bulletins (although we would still print most information).
4. It would enable preachers to use visual reinforcement in sermons.
5. It would save time and energy used in setting up a projection system for special events like Christmas Eve, the Peder Eide concert, Mission Festival, etc.

Of all the reasons pro and con, I think reason number one is really the most important. Our decision should not be about what serves us. Our decision should be about what serves those whom God brings to our doors for worship.

You will find included in the newsletter a copy of the changes that the Church Council is recommending for our congregational constitution. These changes will be voted on at the annual meeting in January. They will not be final until they receive a second approval in 2013.

Yours in Christ,

Phil Nielsen