“Everyone should witness the story of our Savior’s birth through the eyes of a child at least once a year.”

These words were a rector’s invitation to his parish to show up for the Christmas pageant at church. Whether your congregation holds a pageant to commemorate the Holy Birth in Advent, Christmas or Epiphany, these words illustrate the importance of this commemorations happening in the context of many generations. And if your congregation doesn’t hold a children’s pageant during the season, the internet holds many options for viewing that range in staging simple home video style pageantry, to very professional and polished, yet humorous and poignant portrayals.

“All the children to come to me,” Jesus said. “Don’t forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children.” —Matthew 19:14 CEB

During Advent, Christmastide, and Epiphany our Christian tradition holds many elaborate rituals which may bring people in our doors who rarely attend or may be experiencing our worship for the first time. Some of our rituals even include more congregational involvement than the traditional liturgical party, like Hanging of the Greens, Lighting of the Advent Candles, singing the Lessons and Carols, ringing bells when the birth of Jesus is proclaimed. Be sure to help newcomers understand why we do what we do.
The Angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you – wonderful joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11 CEB

The season is ripe with opportunity for radical hospitality to welcome the stranger and all the neighbors. Think of all of those flights of angels, appearing and telling anyone who would listen. They were the first evangelists. They started the Jesus movement by spreading the word of this miraculous birth. And now, over two thousand years later, Christmas, intertwined with the Epiphany story of the royal gifts offered to the infant Jesus, has become the most commonly observed holiday the world over. Some lament the over-commercialization and materialistic secular activity and want to condemn folks who miss that “Jesus is the reason for the season.” But think about the joy and the wonder and the generosity that Jesus and his disciples have inspired over the millennia!

Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine; Love was born at Christmas: star and angels gave the sign. – Christmas Hymn 84, The Hymnal 1982

This is the season of invitation and sharing. This is the season of inviting the neighbors, all the neighbors, to share in the abundance with which we are blessed. This is the season of welcoming the refugee, comforting the prisoner, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and encouraging the children. This is the season to remember the words of our faithful Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry; “If it isn’t about love, it isn’t about God!”

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Photo: Bronwyn Clark Skov
Stained glass from All Saints Church, Pasadena

Copyright © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society | http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/