

# WESTWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH/CHRISTMAS EVE 2009

## FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD...

REV. DR. LYNN CHEYNEY

### I. THE THINGS WE DO FOR LOVE

My parents moved into a wonderful retirement community in Florida just a few years ago. As the only daughter, the bulk of the “making the move happen” fell to me, and so, that October, I flew to their home in Grand Junction, Colorado for an exciting week of packing and sorting. We went through every drawer, every closet, every cupboard in the house making those tedious decisions about 52 years worth of treasures – often it was a tug of war. I was intent on enlarging the garage sale pile – they were intent on filling up the truck. “Mom, do you really need this old reel to reel tape recorder? Dad, I’m not sure taking 3 snow brooms to Jacksonville, Florida is a great idea!” By week’s end, 52 years of accumulated “stuff” was either taped up in a box bound for Florida, donated to the thrift shop, relegated to the garage sale, or hauled to the Grand Junction dump – and I was exhausted and beyond ready to get home.

As we were living in Chicago then, my plane landed at snowy O’Hare Airport late that Friday evening. I walked from the gate down concourse F dreading both the tram ride to the outer parking lot where I’d left my car a week earlier, and the long drive home to Flossmoor. After two flights – one of them delayed – I was tired, lonely and quite frankly, a little cranky. At baggage claim, I positioned myself at the carousel in the open space right next to a rather intriguing looking woman – somehow, she had managed to combine a Dolly Parton hair style with a Cher sense of fashion – and all across baggage claim carousel #6 heads were turning to take in this marvelous example of *what not to wear*.

The suitcases finally embarked on their journey around the carousel when my cell phone rang. From the caller ID, I saw it was my husband Gary on the other end. “Hi sweetheart, I’m almost home!” I nearly shouted it into the phone.

“Hi Rev,” he said, “can you believe what that woman standing next to you is wearing?”

“Wait, how do you know about Dolly in the skin-tight leopard-skin and the go-go boots?” I demanded. “Where are you?”

“Well just turn around – I came to meet you so we could go home together.” I wheeled around and there he was, a wonderful sight for my sore eyes – walking right toward me – cell phone held to his ear. Gary had taken the train from Flossmoor downtown and the train from downtown to the airport to surprise me and drive me home...all to let me know how much he loved me. Let me tell you, right there at baggage claim #6 my heart melted.

The things we do for love...

### II. THE THING GOD DID FOR LOVE

Which, of course, is what tonight is all about. It is about the things we do for love – putting special thought into a gift, traveling to be with family, remembering to be kind – but more than the things **we** do, tonight is especially, dramatically, tenderly about what **God** has done for love. You remember how the whole thing began – God breathed into us the breath

of life and gave us this extraordinary planet as a birthday present – all because of love. But it wasn't long before we'd pushed God aside like yesterday's newspaper... we decided that with this great place and all this great stuff, we could do whatever we want with it. And, of course, we humans pretty much botched things up – we got lost and tired and cranky, we started to hurt one another – we stopped being honest and kind. Finally, evidence to the contrary, thinking we could handle everything just fine on our own, we just stopped listening to God at all.

But God, in relentless, indefatigable love, would not give up on us. Over the millennia, like the parent everyone should be fortunate enough to have, the creator of the universe has been eager, even desperate to let us know just how precious we are – that we are the apple of the divine eye – that we matter. And so in every way imaginable God whispered and spoke and shouted from the heavens... *“life would be so much better if we could be close! I love you as much as the day I gave you life and freedom.”* But God's declarations of love fell on deaf ears. Still, God refused to give up – the supreme lover of our souls could not, would not let us go. And when miracles and prophets and struggles and triumphs didn't seem enough, finally, God did the most remarkable thing for love – the Lord of the universe slipped out of the glory of heaven into the darkness of earth. On this holy night some 2000 years ago a baby came to live among us. On this silent night the God of the universe took off the robes of heaven and put on human skin. God took the train, so to speak, to meet us here... to our tired and lonely and cranky world God showed up as a tiny baby. “I came to meet you... so that we can go on together from here. You, me, sisters and brothers, companions on the way.” Traveling to us, and with us – it is what God did for love... when we pause to take it in, how can our hearts not melt?

**AMEN AND AMEN.**