

# *“What Child is This?”*

*Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20*

Christmas Eve 7:30 p.m. Service

The Rev. Dr. Timothy Ahrens  
Senior Minister

*December 24, 2017*

From the Pulpit

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A Christmas Meditation delivered by The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister, The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, Christmas Eve, December 24, 2017, 7:30 p.m. service, dedicated to Wells Rigby Cook on her baptismal day and in celebration of her first birthday, to Rylan Ahrens on his first Christmas, to Benton Ahrens on his third Christmas, to Sammy Meyers and Jasmine Gray for their kindness and to all the kind children and adults at First Congregational Church UCC and always to the glory of God!

*“What Child is This?”*

*Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20*

In just a few minutes, we will once again experience the Drama of the Nativity. For over 80 years, this congregation has been blessed by this Christmas presentation of silent tableau, lights and music – all presenting the story of Jesus’ birth. How many of you in this room tonight have been in the Drama of the Nativity? Angels? Shepherds? Wise Men (and Wise Women – in recent years)? And the Holy Family? Joseph? Mary? Thank you for your part in the meaningful telling of this amazing story of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Tonight, you may see new twists and new touches in the story. Enjoy them. I might add, we are delighted to welcome back

Mr. Jamie Bobb as our organist for the Drama of the Nativity. As many of you know, Jamie was our Music Minister from 2009-2012 years before heading to St. Olaf College in MN to join their music faculty. Welcome home Jamie.

Before the drama begins, let me share a brief Christmas meditation – “What Child is This?” Please join me in prayer...

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*May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.*

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On a recent evening home visit with one of church’s families, I had a wonderful time catching up with mom and dad and their three daughters. Their 10-year-old daughter had on a t-shirt that simply read, “**Be Kind.**” Like a promotional advertisement for a classic car or an earlier generation Star Wars characters – like the Ewoks or Jar Jar Binks – this message echoed back to a simpler and kinder time – speaking clearly. “**Be Kind.**”

As she sat down next to me I asked, “*Are you kind?*” She quietly answered, “*Yes.*” I thanked her for being kind. I continued, “*Are others kind to you?*” “*Mostly...*” she replied. Although a hope for more, “mostly” was headed the right direction. I told her that her t-shirt was the best t-shirt I had seen in a long time. She smiled with delight.

**“Kind” is an ancient word.** It comes from the Old English “*gecynde*” “*natural*” or “*native.*” In Middle English the earliest definition means “*well born*” or “*Well bred,*” and “*well-disposed by nature, courteous, gentle, benevolent.*” To be kind used to be natural. To be kind once defined what it meant to be noble and well-bred. To be courteous, gentle, benevolent was thought to be the natural condition of humans.

Put-downs, bullying and nastiness did not used to be natural. It was not the way to be. Kindness was the way to be. Tweeting nasty comments, cruelty in word or deed was not natural. Kindness was the natural act of word and deed.

**Be Kind.** It seems like those two words were made for each other. Why then have they lost their power and presence in too much of life and too many interactions in our world today?

To “**be kind**” today almost seems counter-cultural in our world whose temperament is poisoned with sarcasm and whose comedy puts others down.

But, you know what - to “be kind” is to “be Christian.” In essence, to be a “Kind” Christian is to be counter-cultural.

Sammy Meyers (who is playing the role of Mary tonight) is kind. Three years ago, in her school she started “The Kindness Club.” The Kindness Club was a fifth-grade project that started when Sammy and a friend noticed someone sitting alone at lunch. They reached out to the girl. They were kind to her. In time, 20 fifth graders at Sammy’s school joined The Kindness Club. They practiced random acts of kindness for others in the school each day. Picking up their books when they fell, saying hello in the hallway, sitting with them when they were all alone, playing with them on the playground. Just being kind. Although the Kindness Club is no longer, Sammy gets up each morning with a hope, a prayer, and a plan to be kind at least once during the school day. Sammy is my role model for being kind.

But, Sammy is not the only one who is kind. I have witnessed the loving kindness of the children of First Church for years. I have watched our children care for one another and support and love one another. I have seen them do the same for others.

I have watched the adults in this congregation be kind as well as they ministered to those among us and those close by to us or far away from us who are forgotten, forsaken and left behind. In fact, I am blown away every day as your pastor when I watch so many of you interact with others in this world. You are countering the culture of meanness and unkindness. You are living the faith of Christ by being kind. Thank you – all!

Let us remember on this holy night that Jesus was born into a world of bullies and tyrants. He was born in a barn because none of the innkeepers of Bethlehem would make room for his family in their Inns. Within days after his birth, his life was threatened by King Herod and his family fled for their lives to Egypt. He was a refugee at 12 days old. He was a stranger in a strange land before he was a month old. So much unkindness and hatred met Jesus when he was born.

But, the angels of God, the shepherds of Palestine, the wise men from the East and his parents, Mary and Joseph were all kind to him. The creatures who gathered around him in the barn of his birth were kind to him. He grew up being kind to everyone – even and especially to his enemies and those with whom he shared no obvious values.

What child is this? This is God's beloved son. This is God's gift of Kindness to all of us. This is Jesus – our Lord and our Savior. So, follow him – and be kind. Amen.

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