



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

ORDINARY...EXTRAORDINARY...SACRED

By Nancy E. Azar
Associate Conference Minister

On any ordinary calendar, Sunday June 7 was just another ordinary day in print. But for me, Sunday, June 7 was extraordinary as I was installed as the PNEC Associate Conference Minister for Christian Education and Youth Empowerment.

As I spent time reflecting on the events of the day a phrase from the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem" ran through my mind. Absurd as that may seem, "the hope and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight" came to the forefront of my thoughts. After further reflection and prayer it came to me...serendipitously, that those words could be applied to what had occurred for me at my installation service.

The hopes and fears, the desires and doubts of all of my years of life and in my spiritual journey were "met" - had reached a juncture in an extraordinary way. Although you and I know that hopes and fear, desires and doubts are always present on our journey, my installation represented an even deeper knowing of the presence of the Word of God, the Living Christ in my life. It felt like a "coming together" of what I have always longed for and sought after in my journey ... a fullness of meaning, of grace and a joy that can only be experienced when deeper intimacy with God occurs.

The spiritual energy of the day is too big for my human words!

Perhaps these thoughts from the sermon which was preached by Alan Miller, Conference Minister, can speak to that which I cannot find words.

Using the texts which I had chosen, Alan laid their meanings side by side and revealed to us the following teaching points:

Psalm 139 is a description of an intimate relationship with God that grows as one consciously journeys with God and looks for God in the present moment. **Philippians 2: 1-11** is a description of knowing God by emptying oneself of self and walking and living with the people – being more Christ-like to ordinary people so that they might be more open to the extraordinary love of God and then following that call to take this message of love to all the people everywhere as written in **Matthew 28: 16-20**. Alan summed this up by saying... "*H'mmm Nancy this sounds pretty much like the story of your life.*"

Indeed it has been and still is!

Through my ordinary experiences of life, joy filled and painful ones, God's reassuring presence has been made known to me again and again! My desire, "my call" has been and will continue to be to help others discover the love and healing of God, made known to us in our Savior Jesus Christ; to teach, encourage, share stories, mentor, model and disciple those "on the way" as we all seek to be "followers of the way" of Jesus.

"I am willing and I promise to serve the Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ faithfully, teaching and preaching the word of God, administering the rites and sacrament, and fulfilling the call of Associate Conference Minister for Christian Education and Youth Empowerment, according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ."

Your servant in Christ,
Nancy

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