



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Pastor's Page –April 2016

“Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:2 CEB

When I think about the people who walk through our church doors, the above scripture comes to mind. Every person who walks through our doors – be they a new pastor or casual visitor - is both a **gift** and a **test**. The gift is that they provide us with a God-given opportunity to be the Body of Christ, to reach out to that person and surround them with God's love. The test is whether we are willing to do that. If we are, then all kinds of exciting possibilities open up. Finding out what we have to give these stranger-guests and what they have to give us is both a gift and a test.

An angel is a messenger sent from God. An angel may or may not be a miraculous being with wings, clothed in luminous white robes. It may be a homeless person in dirty blue jeans, a woman going through a messy divorce, or a child with autism. It takes opening our hearts to discover how he or she is one of God's angels and what divine message they have that is especially for us.

The more different the person who walks through our doors, the greater the possibility of them blessing us in new, here-to-fore unknown ways. On the downside, there is also a possibility that if they are different, we may find it difficult to know how to bless them. Perhaps it will be harder for us to open our hearts to one another. That makes the test more challenging. However, when we use God's strength to put forth effort and are successful in opening our hearts to our guests, it makes the gift we receive that much more valuable! It is always worth the effort to share God's love with others.

It was almost two years ago now that I showed up as the first woman pastor of First United Methodist Church of Ellwood City. At that time I was a stranger *and* I was different. You didn't know me and I didn't know you. It took time and effort on both sides, but in time we opened our hearts to one another. And because we did, we are now good friends who share both God's love and our gifts with each other. I will always treasure that about my time here in Ellwood.

I hope the memory of our getting to know one another and learning to appreciate one another's gifts encourages you as you receive your new minister and all the guest/strangers who walk through the doors.

Your one time guest and now good friend,

Pastor Pat