



Merry Christmas!

Dear First Community family & friends,

May the joyous spirit of Christmas fill your office, classroom, business, and home.

During Advent, our Wednesday Bible Study group had some fun with three Christmassy movies. *Little Women* (1994) was one of them. In addition to the critical lessons on different issues, such as education, poverty, and gender equality, this famous film, based on a classic novel of the same name, warms up the viewers' hearts by featuring the overflowing love in the March family. One of the highlights of it is at the end of the first part when the father of four girls comes back from the Civil War on Christmas Day. Once he steps into the house, his daughters scream and rush into his arms with excitement and happiness. For the family, his presence was a perfect gift for their Christmas of 1862.

I want us to remember that our presence, too, is a gift to one another. Your action of showing up and being with those who you care about will double their joy. If there is a barrier that blocks us from being with others physically, we utilize some technology to make it happen virtually—from traditional postcards to Skype chats. Regardless if it is in our hugs, on a letter, over the phone, or online, our presence matters because that is how we practice our love. We know it works because God has proved it by coming to us and being with us since the first Christmas.

If you choose to extend your presence beyond your biological family and direct neighborhood, I invite and encourage you to join our team who have made that step. With us, you may hand duffel bags to a local office so that children can carry what they need when they experience an unexpected transition. You may prepare some items from the list of Christmas gifts for the less privileged children and youths in the area. Your own children may visit and stock some winter hats and gloves at a daytime homeless shelter with a handcrafted card. By prolonging your presence, you can affirm that nobody deserves being alone or helplessness. By doing what we can do and what we are called to do, we confirm that God's love and presence are for everyone.

The newest film adaption of *Little Women* is set for release this Christmas. I am looking forward to seeing the happy faces of Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy when they see their father. I am looking forward to seeing how they strive for gender equality. It must be inspiring and beautiful. However, I guarantee that our smiles under the candlelight at our Christmas Eve services (6:30 & 11:00) will be more inspiring and more beautiful, as our presence to one another matters.

Merry Christmas,
Pastor Suji

