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**To:** fccv@snet.net;  
**Date:** Fri, December 30, 2011 11:19:22 AM  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Pastor's Weekly Email

"To love people  
To be indispensable to someone, somewhere;  
That is the purpose of life.  
That's the secret to true happiness."

from "The Man Who Missed Christmas" by J. Edgar Parks  
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In homes across Vernon , Connecticut , the USA , and likely all the world, a long extended sigh was likely heard or expressed sometime last Sunday. Christmas 2011 was finally here.

For weeks, perhaps for some even months, many people and families have worked and focused on making preparations for this special day in our lives and throughout the world. And as the day finally arrived, many felt a great sense of relief and satisfaction that the busy days of anticipation and preparation were all worth it.

For the Minnicks, Christmas Day afternoon was especially satisfying and tiring. Between Maggie and me, we led five worship services in 19 hours, (with five of those 19 hours being while we slept) between 4 pm Christmas Eve and 10 am Christmas morning. Yes, nap time on Christmas afternoon was a long awaited and especially treasured time for us both.

The services at First Church were all spirited. At the 5:30 service on Christmas Eve, worshippers heard and sang and gloried in the children of the church recreating the birth of Jesus. The Transformers, Carolers and Little Bells all combined to make the special music of Christmas even sweeter for proud parents, grandparents and all other worshippers. At the 9 pm service, the Senior Choir sang the "songs of the season" with a renewed joy and reverence. We gloried in the presence of God in the low lights of candles and full blasts of the organ. And on Christmas morning, Pastor Cindy led a Children's Time for kids of all ages, Serena Volovski sang a solo of an especially timed carol, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" and I told one of my favorite Christmas stories, "The Man Who Missed Christmas." The moral of this story is quoted above.

This coming Sunday is New Year's Day. There is something special to me about starting the year with the church family in worship and sharing time at Christ's table. Just as the New Year is a new start, worship and Communion are the avenues of a new start with God, through the gift of grace. We'll be hearing a sermon on one of the very few stories we have about Jesus' early life. Luke 2 tells of when Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple for the ritual of purification (an act with parallels to our sacrament of infant baptism) and there met two mysterious people-Simeon and Anna. We will be blessed with Gretchen Fisher-Orr's solo in worship. I hope you all will be able to be with us as we start a new day, a new week, a new month, and a new year together.  
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A word of thanks to Al Newton who recently worked on getting our Steeple Carillon repaired. Keep your ears open when you are near by the church at noontime to hear the chiming of the hour and some hymns dear to the heart. Thanks Al!