

Good morning and Malo elei lei,

This week's article is an excerpt from *Hope is Found*. I pray these daily devotions are enriching your experience of this Advent season!

-Pastor Daniel

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*"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish." John 1:14 The Message*

One of the most powerful moments of every Advent season comes at the end of the Christmas Eve Service. The lights dim. We light our candles. The light of Christ is lifted high, and all as one we sing "Silent Night, Holy Night. All is calm. All is bright."

In this moment Advent meets Christmas. Christ has moved into the neighborhood. Our hope in and longing for the coming of Christ turn into celebration that on this night Christ is being reborn in our hearts, lives and world. It is beautiful. It is holy. It is moving, and it is profoundly peaceful. In this moment, Emmanuel has come. God is with us.

In 2014, Adam Hamilton, a noted United Methodist pastor and author, wrote a book called *Not a Silent Night*. Part of what Hamilton invites us to do in this book is reimagine our idealized image of that very first Christmas Eve.

With this invitation, Hamilton got me thinking about and reflecting on the birth of my oldest daughter, Abby. Her birth was a moment in my life that I'll never forget. She made me a father. It was beautiful, moving and holy... but even in a great hospital with the best medical care available, it was not as peaceful, idyllic or calm as we often depict the birth of Jesus.

Jesus was born in a first century barn. There were no attending physicians, no nurses and no pain meds. There wasn't even good air conditioning to keep Mary comfortable. They were surrounded by beasts of burden, and after he was born he was wrapped in a blanket and placed in a feed trough. The night was sweaty, painful, loud and likely a little scary. I don't want this to discourage you.

I don't want it to be a holy buzzkill. Rather, I hope what you read is a profound word of hope. Hope is found in the beauty of Silent Night, but also in the truth that lies just below the surface. In the messiness of the first Christmas, there is great good news! Just as Emmanuel has come in our holy, beautiful and powerful experiences of worship, Emmanuel has come in our messiness. The good news of Christmas is that Christ is not just reborn into our moments of perfection, but also into our moments of deep imperfection.

Where in your life is Christ trying to "move into the neighborhood" and offer rebirth?

