

MM Fall Blue Sheet Number 5 — Thanksgiving

Morgan's Moment...

I recognized a lady coming in from the cold
where we were having coffee...
and remembered.
I've seen her along the streets
walking with groceries
or riding her 3 wheel bike.
She's a Christmas Eve regular...
another I needed to tell
that our 30 year tradition has ended.
She once played the Holy Child's mother...
recruited for the part
along with her blond grandchild.
I had overheard her on the phone in the hall
*"You aren't leaving your baby
with me on Christmas Eve are you?"*
She was not happy with her situation...
just perfect for Mary and Jesus...
so they were recruited.
Lights dimmed while voices sang
"Yet in thy dark streets shineth..."
while this lady came with the child.
I never learned her name
but I'll never forget her as Mary
that Christmas Eve.
*"I'm sorry you are ending that service...
I'm going to miss it,"* she said.
I'm sorry too and will also miss it.
Art Morgan

COULDN'T SOMEONE ELSE TAKE IT OVER?

"It" is the Christmas Eve event we've terminated. I am sure someone could "take it over." I've tried to think what it would take.

First, you'd have to decide on your target market. There are plenty enough churches putting on some variety of Christmas Eve service. They are well-planned and nicely done and popular. So the community doesn't need more of the same.

Our market was, as it has been with Moment Ministries, those people who are least likely to want a church experience, but are open to some Christmas tradition.

Next, you would have to locate an appropriate venue. We started in the Farm Home Chapel, a residential center for youth where I did services for a time. They let us use the chapel on Christmas Eve. But it was more church than stable. The Deli came available to us. It is home to the Oregon Trail Brewery and is a family friendly pub/grub eatery. Cobblestone floors. Perfect for us. Whether that venue would be available to others in the future is unknown.

Then one would have to decide whether to do a candle lighting service. The Fire Department has been lukewarm to candle lighting from the beginning. One night they pushed us out on to the street. I cringed every Christmas Eve that we used candles. They are scary and children all want to hold one. We had buckets of water with soaked towels all around the room. I had monitors designated to watch. We even took out insurance on each event. \$500! I feel great relief ending that worry.

Whoever offers a service directed toward "outsiders" must settle on some broad theology for the night. I favor an honest approach. When starting the forming of our impromptu pageant I explained that we were doing a story, not recreating a history. Jesus' birth probably didn't happen this way, so if we end up with three baby Jesus's, as we did one time, or girls as shepherds or wise people, that's fine. Each pageant was different and each was true that night. It's not a time for preaching. It's a time to get an old story out there and let the story do whatever it will do.

There were no announcements. We never announced the carols or songs. People can read. Words take time and Christmas Eve works better without many words. Only enough of the "Christmas Story" from the Bible to give the idea. No offering, of course. No urge to preach or convert. Most of the message was in the music and the people's pageant. Paul always sang a Christmas lullaby. There was a brief prayer of 4 or 5 lines, when the candles were all lit. Nobody was paid, not even Ted. Would any preacher take over a service like that?

Although the service itself started right at 6:30, Paul always had a carol time for those who came early to get a seat. We were on our way out the doors at 7:00. A half hour. Who would think it possible or worthwhile to do such an important event in so short a time?

I couldn't think of anyone willing to take on such a tradition as I have described. If someone can do it, I might cheer them on...but not with a candle in my hand.

— Art Morgan, Thursday before Thanksgiving, 2014

A MOMENT MINISTRIES PUBLICATION —

Art Morgan and Paul Pritchard, Colleagues and Collaborators

BOOK CORNER

I doubt that the book by my friend and owner of the Old World Deli and Pub where we did Christmas Eve will make the best seller list. It is called *"When British Honduras became Belize: A Peace Corp Memoir, 1971 - 1973"*.

It tracks Ted's significant accomplishments as a Peace Corps Volunteer. He has a great touch for history and a sensitivity for people. I found it hard to put down.

You can find an Amazon review when you Google the title of the book.

Ted's generous heart provided room in the inn for our Christmas Eve service for 30 years. And he makes the best brownies in the world and best sandwiches in Corvallis.