

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6 (NRSV)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy.... ⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

My father loved Christmas and Christmas lights. I think his love of Christmas lights fostered my love of Christmas lights. When I was growing up, he loved driving our family around Tampa, my hometown, to look at Christmas lights. There was one very well decorated house on Braddock Street that we had to go to each year, and you could even get out of your car and look into a window of the house to see a Christmas scene complete with a train. For a while, there was what was called “Christmas Card Lane” which was giant sized Christmas cards lit up with Christmas lights that lined the drive along the bay in Tampa. We drove down the lane each year. Later, there was a street called South Boulevard on which all of the neighbors got together and coordinated their lights so that the whole street was lit up and the lights in the trees that arched over the street made it so you were driving through a magical Christmas light tunnel. At our house, my dad decorated a certain bushy tree in our front yard every year with big multi-colored Christmas lights and even put out a Rudolph with a blinking red Christmas bulb for a nose.

At church he and I also loved looking at the lights of the Chrismon tree, and Christmas Eve was especially full of wonder as we all lit our candles and lifted them high in the dark sanctuary singing loudly “He rules the world with truth and grace.....” What a beautiful sight - all of those Christmas candles along with the lights of the Advent candles and the Christmas lights on the tree all proclaiming that Jesus, the light of the world, rules the world.

My dad and I had a special tradition of squinting our eyes to look at the Christmas lights in the sanctuary. When you squint, they become even more beautiful. Squinting makes that kind of halo effect around the lights and it compacts all of the light together somehow. In more recent years before his death, when my dad was in the congregation and I was helping lead worship, we would ask each other after the service, “Did you squint to look at the lights?”

I still love Christmas lights. I love seeing them as we drive down Union Street and all over Concord and Charlotte. Every light I see points me to the joy that my dad and I found in knowing Jesus Christ. May all the lights of Christmas this year point you to the child who is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace - Jesus Christ.

~ Rev. Suzanne E. Dornsmith