

“She Became Radiant”

A Reflection for TUMC’s Dec 27th Service

By Shannon Frank-Epp

Where have I seen God?

Well, there are the more obvious encounters, of course, where I expect Him to be: in nature, in church, in the smile of a friend. In the passages of Scripture and in the Breaking of the Bread. And these are precious, and real and powerful to be sure. But the real gems, at least for me, come when it’s least expected. When He comes wrapped in rags or addition or despair. When there is shouting and people cast glances and cross the street. For me, this is Jesus in his distressing disguise. And He calls me forth. And often, like Francis of Assisi, I hesitate at the sight, until my heart recognizes, and love leads the way.

There have been many such encounters in my life, and will be more, I’m sure, where Jesus shines through and in and with those whom we often pass by. I remember one such encounter:

A woman by the subway station. Hunkered down against the cold, head down, a bare hand cupped around a coffee cup, asking for change.

Love led the way and we got to talking and soon we were laughing. She had the most beautiful smile. I told her so and she became radiant. We spoke for a good while and she shared part of her life with me. Where was God then? In her and in me and in the laughter between us, I reckon. In the exchange of names and in both of us being seen and listened to. Loved and recognized. The barriers fell and we recognized each other as sisters in the human family.

It’s always unexpected, these glorious encounters.
Like a shock of recognition, a familiar face amid the crowd.
These moments of timelessness, when God reveals
Emmanuel: God-With-Us.