

So Here Is Another Christmas  
Chaplain Richard J. Lehman

(This is a statement I wrote for the UCC parish I was serving in Farmingville, NY in the 1989 Christmas season. Priscilla, my first wife, had died in January of 1989)

Most of you who are reading these words have experienced a sizeable number of Christmases already. That is certainly true of myself. Our reaction to Christmas therefore may be to dismiss it with a wave of the hand, as if to say, "They are all the same - Count me out - The Spirit of Christmas has passed me by."

It is true that in spite of all the excitement we associate with Christmas, we do not have to look far to see quite a different scene. For those with eyes to see, there is a lot of depression at Christmas, including some that try to cover it up with alcohol and/or drugs. Likewise, there are some who try to avoid the holidays by using denial and not varying their routine one iota.

Some would say to us that their life experiences have led them to regard Christmas as a sad or unhappy time. I suppose that I have credentials that would make it possible for me to be included in this group. Over thirty years ago, I lost my mother to cancer on Christmas Eve, and just this past year, my wife died of cancer also while we were still in the Christmas Season. What has this done to me? I would not for a moment say that it has left me unscathed. This will be a very different Christmas without Priscilla. My children and I have already acknowledged that. Yet we are also aware that we do not want to miss Christmas for her sake as well as our own.

Christmas has always had, and will have for us this year a profoundly religious dimension. The advent of the new-born Christ means a great deal to us. We'll remember others with our gifts, and Christmas cards. We'll have our tree and arrange our favorite Christmas decorations. We'll attend our beloved midnight church service. Yet we'll do all the familiar things in a strange way almost as if for the first time. It will be the first time without her, even as we've

been doing a lot of other things this year as if for the first time. For you see, we have no reason to hide our grief, anymore than we have any reason to parade it.

So here is another Christmas. It carries a lot of potential for blessing you and me and all of us, if we allow It to happen. On that first Christmas, some people missed out on a lot of joy “because there was no room for them in the inn.” Mary and Joseph and the Christ-Child were relegated to the stable. I don’t want that to happen this year and neither do you. May the potential for blessing be realized. Merry Christmas.