**The Fish Net**

**Boston Presbyterian Church**

**Christmas 2012**

Dear Friends,

 It was the second week of November and Susan had just got home from doing some shopping at Walmart. She mentioned that while she was there they had been playing Christmas music and amongst all of the other songs played, she had heard “Silent Night.” My first reaction was negative; “They’re playing Christmas music this early?” My second objection was equally negative; “They were playing ‘Silent Night’? In Walmart? The words of ‘Silent Night’ to the sounds of the cash registers? How hopelessly inappropriate! That wonderful Christmas hymn was not written and composed to put people in a festive mood to spend more money!” Afterwards though, I started to have second thoughts.

 As we all well know we live in an ever increasingly secular and multi-faith society where Christianity is now but one faith of many. For this reason when schools have Christmas concerts they are almost exclusively secular in content with no reference to the birth of Jesus. For the same reason it seems as if every year there is an uproar on whether or not a Christmas tree should be displayed in a public institution; is the tree a religious symbol or not? Crèches or manger scenes have pretty well disappeared from view in all public areas and yet…there is still the music.

 Stores and other places that would never ever dream of placing a manger scene on display and thereby acknowledging what Christmas is all about, will quite happily play Christmas music including the religious songs. It is the same with the radio stations as well; at Christmas they will quite happily play songs with religious content while they would never ever dream of playing religious music at other times of the year. Now some people deplore this use, or perceived misuse, of Christmas music; indeed it can be rather jarring to be shopping or working to the sound of Christmas music and especially so if we really pay attention to what the words are saying. Perhaps we should hesitate to criticize this though for the religious music of the season is one of the last and best ways we have of proclaiming the true meaning of Christmas to people who would never otherwise hear it. In the wonderful words of “Silent Night”…..

Silent night! Holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight:

Glories stream from heaven a-far,

Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!

Christ, the Saviour is born!

Christ, the Saviour is born!

 Wishing you a most blessed Christmas!

Shawn