



## First United Methodist

Become a part of God's family at First UMC

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*Vision: Hamilton First: a growing extended family sharing Christ's love  
in the heart of the city (A United Methodist Congregation)*

*Mission: To Know Christ and Make Him Known in the World*

August 26, 2010

Dear Friends,

Do you ever wonder if you can worship without attending church? It is something that I think about because I am always trying to get people to come back to church. The reason, I believe in the church. I believe that the church is the salvific arm of Christ. This means that it is the place where people come to learn about the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ. If people are not in church, how do they learn about Jesus?

Why do we belong to church? That is easy. We come for the five core aspects:  
to experience and offer the radical hospitality of Christ;  
to worship God, passionately (but passion comes in many different forms);  
to learn and be changed by what God is doing through nurturing one another;  
to be generous because God has been generous to us;  
and to be sent out into God's world on God's mission.

Worship is only one of the five core aspects, but it is very important. It is like the fuel for all the other parts. It is in worship that we experience God. There are actually two types of worship. One is corporate – in a group – and the other private. The private worship is the time we spend alone reading the Bible, praying, singing, or sitting in silence. Everyone can participate in private worship. This belief is why we have Home Touch or devotionals such as the "Upper Room."

The problem is in corporate worship. Corporate worship is when we come together as a congregation to sing, pray, read scripture, hear preaching, and participate in the sacraments. The idea behind corporate worship is that we are in a group who both corrects us when we stray too far and whom we correct when they get too single minded.

I worry that too many people in our culture believe that they can be a Christian by themselves. God never intended us to be by ourselves. For when we do, it is too easy to stray from God, it is too easy to create God in our image.

Luckily we live in an age when people can tune into worship on TV. While it is not the same as being in the community our faith blossomed in, it is a place to hear God's word. It is also the reason that I write to you each week. This is a small way for you to encounter thinking about God and your relationship with God.

So can we worship without going to church? Yes, we can privately worship anywhere and at any time. No, in that we cannot always see God clearly without others in

relationship with us. So worship as you can. I hope that as I write each week you see God a little more clearly and know or are reconnected with God's deep love for you.

Have a good walk with God this week.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent initial "P".

Rev. Peggy