

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

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The Matter of Faith

By the Rev. Jacqui Van Vliet

Madeleine L'engle was an author for adults and children, a prolific writer of plays, poetry, stories, commentary and theological reflections and meditations. L'engle's obituary in



The New York Times (she died in September 2007) chose to print one of her self-answered questions: "Why does anybody tell a story?" It does indeed have something to do with faith, faith that the universe has meaning, that our little human lives are not irrelevant, that what we choose or say or do matters, matters cosmically."

It would seem that God's storytelling that first starry night, of the birthing of flesh and bones, the one we repeat come Christmas Eve, risks the matter of faith every time maybe all the time. What was the Divine thinking? L'engle has an idea about that too.

*This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.*

*That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn ----
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.*

*When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn ---
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.*

~The Risk of Birth, Christmas, 1973

Love come to be with us. Of course, not the treacly kind that passes as such on Madison Avenue, Wall Street, Walnut Street or on some other main thoroughfare of our human making this time of year. But it does have something to do with love (and faith) that is neither manufactured nor purchased but comes out of a deep, cosmic hunger for meaning with the ultimate source that is Love.

What will we risk for that this year?