



Monday Musing: December 23rd, 2024.
Friends...

Aren't these adorable? They are a gift from a dear friend and her daughter along with another two very special things. But these two...? Well, they are priceless.

That's what friendship is too. Priceless. We can't put a value on the caring, listening, walking, laughing, sharing, and helping, that friends do for and with each other. These baby dinosaur gifts are small and soft, and the love they bring is as gigantic and as real as the friendships are as well. And the time friends share is priceless, soft, warm, gigantic and real too wherever you share your time.

Gifts between and among friends never have to be the big expensive things marketed on billboards and radio and social media with captions or jingles that say you must have them. It is not true. What we all must have in our lives is close friends.

My Dad once said to me, "Have many friends, Deb, and keep them close. One day you will really need them." That sounded so heavy so long ago. Now that I'm older, and have had, through my life and recently, lost some family and friends, I understand Dad's words and hold them close to my heart. They are words of wisdom. They are words of love. And they too were, and are, a gift to me.

I hope for everyone that you have a lovely Christmas, with turkeys or toast and peanut butter. I hope you get to spend time with family and with friends, doing whatever it is that you and your family and your friends do together. And I hope that in the gifts you receive and that you give, you feel the soft, warm love they hold.

May we each also give the gift of welcome wherever and whenever we can. There are many Marys and Josephs, shepherds, and angels, and all their friends, sleeping in the cold, with growling tummies, and others with unheard, unanswered dreams and prayers too. And there are those who wait the passing of time with their loved one. Hold them in your hearts and hold them close with love.

May our hearts and our homes, in whatever way we can, give the gift of welcome and the space of the innkeeper's back stable. May we each have the acceptance of Mary, the

courage of Joseph, the wonder of the shepherds, and the sharing of the stable, in our hearts and in our homes.

May you know the hope and peace, joy and love, that Christmas can bring. As you have brought it, given it and shared it with me, may you also know the warmth of Christmas from me. And thank you all for the cards and the gifts, the merry Christmas wishes, hugs, and handshakes, lunches and teas, emails and texts that I have received this past week from you, my friends, and from my church family friends too. You all mean the world to me.

Peace always,
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Prayer

God of gifts, for the sharing of time,
And the listening ear,
For the walks in the forest, and the giddy laughter,
For the giving of gifts,
And the love parcels of love they really are,
We give thanks to each other.
May we each give to each other, and the stranger,
Our gifts of welcome and acceptance,
With every word and act we say, and we do.
With your Spirit, now and always,
may we answer those unheard dreams and prayers together.
And may Christmas be born into the mangers
Of our hearts now and forever. Amen.

Scripture for Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7	A child has been born.
Psalms 96	Sing to God a new song.
Titus 2:11-14	Live a godly, upright life.
Luke 2:1-20	Jesus' birth.

TR Question (theological reflection)

Where are you feeling the love of your family and friends this Christmas? Where is God in your Christmas this year? Where is God's love being born, or being offered in or for you this year?