



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens

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## “Kindness at Christmas: Good King Wenceslas”

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A sermon delivered on December 20, 2015

At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens, GA

### Centering Thoughts

*Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing.* Proverbs 28:27

*One would give generous alms if one had the eyes to see the beauty of a cupped receiving hand.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

*From home to home, and heart to heart, from one place to another*

*The warmth and joy of Christmas, brings us closer to each other.* Emily Matthews

### Extemporaneous reflection based on these notes

This reflection followed a mixed-ages skit presentation that was based on “Good King Wenceslas,” in *The Plays of the Songs of Christmas*, by L.E. McCullough.

#### King and Page trek thru snow

Do you wish for snow for Christmas?

#### Song and story never mention Christmas

The author of the song, John Mason Neale, first wrote a children’s Christmas book with the story of Wenceslas included; then in 1853 he published the song

St. Stephen’s Day is Dec. 26, or Boxing Day

In England, Neale had practice of giving to poor on Boxing Day

Giving and spirit of Jesus kept it in the Christmas carol canon

#### Wenceslas, or Vaclav the Good

Born in 907, ruled until 935 when jealous brother assassinated him

Actually a Duke of Bohemia, granted title of King after his death by Holy Roman Emperor Otto

Made a saint for Roman Catholic Church in 15<sup>th</sup> century, by Pope Pius II

Family mixed religion—indigenous/pagan and Christian

Buried in Prague, patron saint of Czech Republic (and Boy Scouts)

Soon after death, four biographies written with similar tales:

- People loved him for kindness
- Known to leave palace at night, alms at churches, goods at houses to help people avoid shame or embarrassment at their destitution
- Santa Claus leaves gifts at night; Jesus took care of poor too
- Nobles didn't like him—too religious, not independent enough, so they conspired with brother to get rid of him

**ASK: How does story relate to us today? Same/Different? Message?**

Obvious – Be kind, generous to those in need

Act on your beliefs, walk your talk

Boleslav – Wanted status quo, okay to be rich while others are poor

– Classist, wouldn't mix with poor serf in palace

Wenceslas – Helps those in need, as we do

– Tells Serfs not to bow down, they are all equals

– Seventh principle of connectedness

**Footstep verses**

'Mark my footsteps' — Thaddeus to follow in his tracks

Deeper message to do as I do, follow where my faith leads

**Whose footsteps to do we follow? What tracks do we leave for others to follow?**

Do we walk our talk? Greed

'Heat was in the very sod' — Legend behind the verse that Wenceslas was kept warm by his holiness and godly acts

**Wenceslas risked** the anger of his nobles and family to stand up for his beliefs. He died because he held firm. *What risks are we willing to take?*

Supporting LGBTQ people and issues; Black Lives Matter, Muslims in USA, etc

Be vocal about our liberal religious values in the public square

**Native American Proverb:**

"We will be known forever by the tracks we leave."

Let our tracks be those others should follow.

**Questions for Reflection & Discussion**

1. Share a time you received something unexpected during or for the holidays. How did you respond?
2. Do you give to charity during the winter holidays more than at other times of the year? What motivates you to give during any time of the year?
3. How do you feel when you do something for someone who needs assistance? Share such a time.