

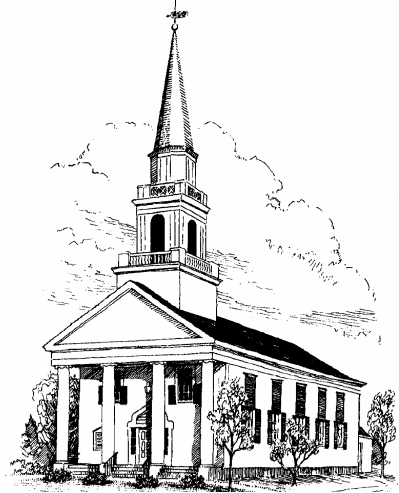
# Mystic Congregational Church, UCC

## Mystic, Connecticut

Sermon from January 3, 2010

Rev. Ann M. Aaberg  
“Real Age”

Scriptures:  
Jeremiah 31:7-14  
John 1:1-18



**M**y mother's favorite directive was, “Act your age.” Although I don't remember it specifically, I think the first time she issued this familiar command to me was at the tender age of four when, after having basked in the privileged world of the only child, my baby brother arrived. Apparently my regression into infantile behavior prompted this new directive which I was to hear repeatedly for the remainder of my young years. Act your age. Sometimes it came in the form of a question: *When are you going to act your age?*

But by age 10 or 11, “act your age” takes on a different perspective than grow up and stop acting like a baby. Then it means, act like you're 10 or 11, not older than that, like sixteen or seventeen. The marks and privileges of adolescence will come soon enough, not now. Act your age.

I also remember her criticism of adults who did not act their age: out late, carousing like college students, when they really should be getting home to relieve the babysitter and get on with assuming the responsibilities of adulthood.

There's a new phenomenon now that is somewhat related and that's called Real Age. You start with your chronological age and using a formula, input other data about you, height, weight, body mass index, amount of weekly exercise, blood sugar level, blood pressure, and you come up with your Real Age—the age your body thinks it is. Eat your vegetables, you're younger than the calendar says. Sit around like a couch potato, and you're really much older than you think you are.

I guess it all comes down to behaving appropriately given the amount of time you've been on earth to develop as an adult. Which may be why so many people did not recognize Jesus for who he was. We read this morning that “the world did not know him ... he came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.” Boy from Nazareth, 12 years old, talking with the elders in the Temple, not acting his age at all, much older than his chronological years. Jewish prophet in his thirties, ruffling feathers everywhere he went, apparently not content to go back home where he belonged and settle down and accept the role of Galilean carpenter, always putting himself and others in danger—maybe not acting his age then either.

This morning the Gospel according to John points to why Jesus appeared not to be acting his earthly age: he was older than creation. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. And we read this passage at Christmas time in order to circle back and answer the question: who was that baby in Bethlehem and why should we care?

And this morning we read again about John the Baptist, testifying that the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. The true light that shines in the darkness, the darkness that did not and will never overcome it, the true light came into our world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. The Son of God, fully divine, who *was* the beginning, close to God's heart when the universe first burst forth, comes to the same world that came into being through him, and the world with the short memory is amazed at his behavior, puzzled by his enigmatic words, and uncomfortable with his understanding of scripture. They didn't know him. He came to what was his own—he made us after all—and his own people did not accept him.

But, BUT, But—the first word of verse 12—there were those who did receive him, who were moved by his words, forever changed by their encounters, who did believe in his name, who saw his glory. Who accepted that the Word, the Word from the beginning, the Word who was with God, the Word who was God, became flesh and lived among us.

The Word who was God, who is God, became flesh and lived among us and really did act his age, because he was the wisdom of every age and beyond ... beyond the beginning of time and beyond the end of all time. Always was and ever shall be. All-knowing. All-powerful. And he came to us and lived among us to make God known to us.

No one has ever seen God. Moses caught a glimpse of God's back; Elijah heard a still, small voice; the prophets had visions and dreams; but Jesus made God known to us. He revealed God to us so we could witness and know infinite compassion, infinite mercy, infinite love, power over and above and beyond bodily death. As Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "God put skin on divine attributes so that followers who want to know how they sound and act have someone to show them."

From his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. And all those who receive him, who believe in his name, have been given the power to become children of God. We have been given the power to become children of God, to act our real age, which as God's children, holds limitless freedom and potential: to take the light we have been given and to continue to light up the world, to put our skin on mercy and compassion and love.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, as well as his divine understanding of who we are and what we need. And Jesus, knowing who he was on the night before he died, gave us the gift of the Eucharist, something we could put our hands on, his flesh and blood held up to us as bread and wine in memory of him.

As we approach our Communion table this morning, we encounter bread with an age of a few days to a few weeks, grape juice bottled only months ago. Yet when we accept them at their real age, their eternal significance, even beyond their institution as a sacrament 2,000 years ago, and we take them in, in communion with each other, we humans, limited though we may be by our weak understanding and our earthly chronological existence, by grace upon grace, we are welcomed and taken in to the very heart of God, where time ceases to exist, where there is no beginning and no end.

Knowing we are children born of God, perhaps now is the time to act our age. Amen.