



“DO NOT FEAR”
CURT JUDD, GUEST PREACHER
OPEN DOOR MCC

GLEANINGS FROM THE LITURGY

CHRISTMAS EVE 7PM, 2017

Opening Words: (*from* Steven Garnaas-Holmes)

To find the child
one must *find* the star.
To *find* the star one must go into the darkness,
the pain, the fear, the emptiness,
the hidden weeping,
the heart’s dark wounds.
Only in the darkness
can the be stars seen.

**To find the child
one must hear the angels.
To hear the angels
one must listen in silence and solitude,
in perfect speechlessness,
in attentive adoration to the Mystery.
Only in such stillness
are the angels heard.**

To find the child
one must enter the stable.
To enter the stable
one must stoop,
decline all palaces, all safety,
all familiarity or fortification,
and settle into poverty.
Only in such humility
is the stable entered.

**To find the child
one must *behold* the birth.
To *behold* the birth
one must be awakened
to the heart of all things
beating in one’s soul,
the light of God shining in one’s hands.
One must be willing to speak
alone with one’s *heart*.
Only in awakening**

will the birth be beheld.

**To find the child,
seek in the darkness,
*listen in stillness,
become one with the humble,*
lay your heart open,
and discover therein
light unconquered.**

Welcome

Welcome to Open Door MCC on Christmas Eve, a congregation whose first value is welcome. Bless each one who is here safely through snow and ice, and blessings on all who stayed safely home or who are traveling this week. Thank you to Harriet Petersen, our Music director, and each performer who has made a gift of music this season. Thanks also to every person who has been a part of our priesthood of all believers and ministered to the congregation of Open Door and its greater community. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined. Many of you have encountered, or have been, that light.

Wendell Berry said, It gets darker and darker and darker, and then Jesus is born.
Please pray with me.

Opening Prayer (*from [Sara Eileen LaWall](#)*)

God of darkness and light, Spirit of life and love: We come together on this sacred night to awaken ourselves to the joy of Christmas, To the miracles of life, The birth of a baby, The rise of the sun once more, The magic of this earth, The love for one another. The Christmas story calls us to remember that the ordinary can become extraordinary, that any child, our own children, can become great prophets, teachers, leaders of nations, saviors even of lives, working to end the ills and suffering in our world. The challenging thing becomes Not just to look for miracles, but to find them where there isn't any. This is our prayer... We pray for peace, for all for food for all, for forgiveness for all. We know that this prayer requires our action and with this prayer we resolve to act, To seize the moment, To seize our own power. The Christmas story reminds us That this moment is precious, and holy, and powerful. This moment is love and is full of hope and possibility. This moment is all we need On this silent and holy night, Amen.

Passing the Peace

Weave, weave, weave us together.

Weave us together in unity and love.

Weave, weave, weave us together.

Weave us together, together in love.

First Reading: (Isaiah 9:2-7) (NRSV, NCCC trans., inclusified)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the

yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a child given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting, Ruler of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of our God of hosts will do this.

Here ends the lesson. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsive Reading: (People Look East)

People, look east. The time is near

Of the crowning of the year.

Make your house fair as you are able,

Trim the hearth and set the table.

People, look east and sing today:

Love, the guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,

One more seed is planted there:

Give up your strength the seed to nourish,

That in course the flower may flourish.

People, look east and sing today:

Love, the rose, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim

One more light the bowl shall brim,

Shining beyond the frosty weather,

Bright as sun and moon together.

People, look east and sing today:

Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth

Christ who brings new life to earth.

Set every peak and valley humming

With the word, great peace is coming.

People, look east and sing today:

Love, good news, is on the way.

Second Reading: Luke 2:1-14 (NRSV, NCCC trans., inclusified)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of God stood before them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

Here ends the lesson. **Thanks be to God.**

The Great Thanksgiving

Mighty One, who chose from among the least and the lowliest the one to bear the source of our salvation: Remind us again that your criteria for greatness is so different from ours. You choose the humble over the proud, the weak over the strong, the poor over the rich and powerful. Make us like you, God, make your choices our choices, and use our gifts today to lift the lowly, feed the hungry, bring justice to the oppressed, bring love to those feeling unloved, and hope to those who feel forgotten. Amen. (*from Sunday's Child*)

God is with you!

And also with you!

Let us open our hearts!

We open them to God.

Let us give God thanks and praise!

It is a good and joyful thing to do!

(Blessing the Way, Jan Richardson)

With every step

you take

this blessing rises up

to meet you.

It has been waiting

long ages for you.

Look close

and you can see

the layers of it,

how it has been fashioned

by those who walked

this road before you

how it has been created

of nothing but

their determination

and their dreaming,

how it has taken

its form

from an ancient hope

that drew them forward

and made a way for them

when no way could be

seen.

Look closer

and you will see

this blessing

is not finished,

that you are part
of the path
it is preparing
that you are how
this blessing means
to be a voice
within the wilderness
and a welcome
for the way.

Please, God, make this meal become in us, with us, and through us your light in the darkness, your new day and new dawn, your life-giving, life-changing, life-sustaining presence. Amen. Bless this meal, and make it become truly in us, with us, and through us your life-giving, life-changing, life-sustaining presence and your abiding love. Amen.

Closing Blessing (Wendell Berry)

Geese appear high over us, pass, and the sky closes.
Abandon, as in love or sleep, holds them to their way,
clear in the ancient faith: what we need is here.
And we pray, not for new earth or heaven,
but to be quiet in heart, and in eye, clear.
What we need is here.
Go in peace

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