



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York

“Christmas Eve: A Celebration of Light”

Delivered 24 December 2022 (8 p.m.)

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“In the middle of a world swirling with chaos,
something new is born.
Something that turns us towards each other”

Year after year, season upon season, we return again and again to the story that lies at the heart of Christmas, and we challenge ourselves to remember there is never just one story.

In so many ways the story of the birth of Jesus as represented to us in the Christian scriptures is a story of fear. Mary was afraid when she was made to understand what was happening to her. Joseph was afraid when he learned of it, and when he had to travel with his pregnant wife, and when they could not find a place to stay that was safe. The shepherds were afraid at the sight of the angels. And after hearing about fear upon fear we are told that the angel tells those shepards: “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.”

To all people. To everyone who fears. To everyone who is uncertain. To all who are tempted to look away when they are overcome.

“In the middle of a world swirling with chaos,
something new is born.
Something that turns us towards each other”

From the midst of that world swirling with chaos, with fear, we hear also the words of our beloved Unitarian Universalist ancestor [Sophia Lyon Fahs](#):

“Each night a child is born is a holy night—
A time for singing,
A time for wondering,
A time for worshipping.”

Each night a child is born - which is every night.
Something new is born, that turns us toward each other.

The movement, too often, in our minds and hearts and spirits is to move away. To move away from that which we fear, to move away from that which we do not understand, to move away from the oversimplification that leads to the growth of misunderstanding, that leads to the growth of hatred.

“Today, we are reminded that we don’t have to look very far for the source of our hope.

We just have to pay attention. Close attention.

Listening carefully in the midst of all the noise.

Letting wisdom bubble up from within.

Moving at the pace of God, not of production.

Take courage. Linger in the mystery. Look anew at one another.”

This from the beautiful minds and spirits of the [enfleshed worship collective](#), whose mission is to introduce a liberative, anti-oppressive lens to the art of worship and a deep commitment to creative theologies not bound within doctrines, creeds, dogmas, or denominations. “Take courage. Linger in the mystery. Look anew at one another.”

These words from the 21st century of the Common Era would be of comfort, I think, to the fears we hear in the story of the birth of Jesus at the start of this same era. What will a young woman do upon finding herself pregnant with uncertain support? What will a young man do in the face of his own uncertainty in offering support? How are we to travel for the purposes of tax

law, when we barely know how we will survive with a baby on the way? What on earth are we to do with all these things we don't understand?

“Take courage. Linger in the mystery. Look anew at one another.”

“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.”

If we are to imagine ourselves each the recipient of good tidings of great joy, if we are to linger in this particular mystery and to look to one another anew, then we must know deep within ourselves the greatest truth, that if we turn towards one another in the joy of life, the creation of light, then we will learn to reside within that mystery and to access that joy even when it feels the most remote.

Because that joy will recede. We will find ourselves within the swirling chaos, we will find our own hearts uncertain with all that is asked of us, required of us, all that we ask and require of ourselves and one another. When we feel ourselves surrounded by darkness, what can it mean to turn to each other? Not to hide in fear but to gather together under the gentle cloak of darkness that gives us space to sleep, to dream, to create - even to create life.

“I am divinity defined
I am the god on the inside
I am a star
A piece of it all
[I am light](#)”

It is only in the darkness that you can see the stars, as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us. We are all made of the stuff of stars, the matter swirling in the chaos at the beginning of it all, carrying those pieces within even as we move through the confusion and uncertainty of each day.

If we turn to each other, we will see the light shining out. The holy light of our own birth, the sacred light within all living things.

Behold, for the good tidings of great joy reside within each and every one of us. Behold, for when we turn to each other and see the divinity within each of us, we celebrate the sacredness of our incarnation. Behold, the mystery of existence where we linger, and celebrate one another, and are granted courage.

Year after year, season upon season, we return again and again to the story that lies at the heart of Christmas, and we challenge ourselves to see it anew. To consider it another way. To think about the burning light of love deep in the heart of the story of two scared humans turning towards one another instead of away, saying yes to the coming of the miracle of another birth. Is every birth a miracle? Yes. Is every birth commonplace? Yes. For the miracle is creation knowing itself. The miracle is here, the miracle is us, and we remind ourselves year after year, season upon season, so that we may never forget. We do not have to look far for the source of our hope. We must turn to one another, and know that we are light.