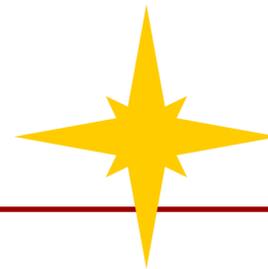




Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star



"Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are."

These are words that could very well have been on the lips of the wisemen on the very first "star trek" as they followed the light in the sky. "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are."

Over the years, many have tried to explain the existence of the star. Was it a divine light placed specifically by God or was it a rare occurrence of Jupiter and Saturn falling into alignment? Was it a comet or a meteor? There are Chinese historical records that indicate that around the time of the birth of Christ there was a "Broom star" in the East. Is that what the wise men saw?

There is a time for explanations, indeed. But Christmas is a time for adoration. There are some mysteries about life that are so large, so important, so beautiful that there is no explaining them. They take our breath away. There is only silent awe, with a lump in our throats, and tears

welling up in our eyes. We call those moments "Behold" moments. "Behold," says the angel, "I bring good news of great joy."

Hold a newborn baby in your arms, so very vulnerable, ten toes, ten fingers, and what is there to say, but "Behold"!

Your child is in a Christmas play. Perhaps she struggles with dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Maybe he is weathering a family conflict. But there she / he is on the stage, reciting lines, shining brightly. Your child is the star of the show! What is there to say, but "Behold"!

The wise men see a light shining in the sky. Something beyond them was calling to them, and it was a tug in their hearts they had been waiting for all their lives. It was a birth announcement. With stars in their eyes, what was there to say, but "Behold"!

The Bible is silent on the specifics of the star. The Greek word here in the Bible is vague. It

simply means a general bright object in the sky. Since the gospel writers are silent about such mysteries, I wonder if they are encouraging us to be silent, too. To simply marvel in the mystery.

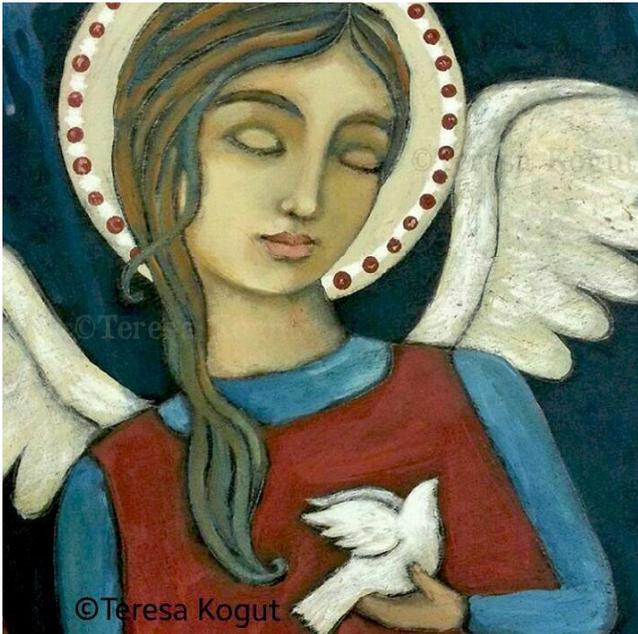


"Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are." There is a truth so great it has no words. Such moments we are called to quietly behold.

~ Rev. Dr. Jill Kirchner-Rose

*But
Christmas
is
a time
for
adoration.*

Peace



"We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.

Peace. We look at our world
and speak the word aloud.

Peace. We look at each other,
then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology
or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul."

~ *Maya Angelou*
(painting by Teresa Kogut)

Barnraisers

In the early history of the Redlands UCC, the men of the church started a Barnraisers group. The name came from the concept where a group would come together to help an individual with a project. An example: a farmer solicits the help of an entire community to build a barn in a few days; in contrast to what may have taken many months to do individually.

The church members would place a work project around their home in a hat. The project would be drawn out scheduled. The entire group would meet once a month on a Saturday for an early breakfast cooked at the church. The member with the project that month would

furnish the food for that day. After breakfast, there would be a short program or discussion, then all members would travel to the person's home to work on their project. During the work day, the member would provide all needed materials as well as refreshments for the group. The group would work together for four or five hours.

Examples of some past projects:

1. Paint the patio at the Van Blair's home.
2. Scrape off all



the rocks and gravel from the roof at the Boomer's home.

3. Trim all hedges at the Fred Arth and Hurley's home.
4. Clean the pool tile at the Hooper's pool.

It was a fun way to get a lot of work done and enjoy one another's fellowship. If the church is interested in a Barnraisers group, it would be open to all members of our church family.

~ *Ken Hurley*

Entertaining Despair

“The Poet Must Never Lose Despair.

He says, and quietly sits down.

My mind turns _____ on its
own inward journey.

Under the frigid
intensity of despair _____
Discover creative
expression???

Despair feeds anger.
God allows His
closest friends
to be prone to anger.

Despair pushes us _____
into our experience
of personal
poverty.

Despair requires of us _____ a humility about
who we are and what we do.
So that life
can be captured fully.

Understanding ourselves
better,
giving more
freely,
knowing a humility
we can stand fast in!



~ Rev. Dr. Alden E. Sproull

Gloria in Excelsis Deo



Glory to God in the highest
And on earth peace
To those of good will.
O be joyful in the Lord, all ye
lands;
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Glory...
Come before his presence with a
song.
Glory...
Be ye sure that the Lord is God.:
It is that hath made us and not we
ourselves.
Glory to God in the highest and on
earth peace to those of good will.
Alleluia!

Christmas Cantata - Gloria - Vivaldi

A Christmas Pageant

MARY: I don't know! I just followed my heart and tried to do what was right in the God's eyes, and I guess God smiled on me. The angel Gabriel told me I would give birth to a son and his name would be Jesus.
HELEN: Well, let's bring them out. Zachariah, Joseph, bring those boys out here. Well, that's our show for today. I shall use some of Mary's own remarks in my closing, but I believe that all generations will be blessed through her son, and that his mercy will be upon those who love him. It is up to us, the people, to decide if he is the only begotten Son of God. We'll see you next time.



In a related story comes a heartwarming tale from the depths of our city. Among the chaos and turmoil of our time, a child was born to a carpenter and his wife. She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And this is tidings of great joy, which is for all people. For unto you is born this day, in this, the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. From all of us at RUCC TV, good night and Merry Christmas!



Dear God

Dear God,

Where in the name of God are you? I mean, really. I decided to take this trip to be with you. A retreat. A much needed vacation. Time to be alone with just you.

We needed this time, God. Really badly. I mean, I can't remember the last time we took time alone together. I wanted to walk with you, talk to you, tell you how much I care, and to hear your words of love for me. I hungered for this. I thought you did too.

It was going to be just the way it used to be, way back then before the noise of life interrupted our deep silent communion.

First, it was the baby. Yes, it's true I knew you were smiling at me through her eyes, touching me through the satiny softness of her hands, sending love messages to me through the babbling brook of her precious voice. But we

only talked to each other through her.

And then dad came to live with us. It's true I got to care for you when I cared for him, show gratitude for the gifts of love and protection you always gave to me when I fed him and watched out for him so he wouldn't be afraid as his mind grew dim. There was so much distraction in being a worried but loving parent and daughter, and yes, sometimes there was so much resentment for all their needs, that I lost track of your comforting voice. I even forgot how to listen.

And now, finally, all these years later, I have come to this place to be with you, and I am all alone. All I can hear are my own words talking to you. I might as well be talking to empty space. I don't feel you. I don't see you. I don't know you.

Why are you not there in the gentle breeze? I don't



feel the softness of your touch. Why are you not here in the running brook? I don't hear the comforting babble of your words. Why are you not there in the sunlit sky? I don't feel your warmth.

Where are you, my sweet God?

"Within, my love. Look within.

I am here.

Be quiet.

Be still.

Listen to the beat of your heart,

*pumping my life into you
and filling every fiber of your being.*

I am you, and you are mine."

~Judith Turian

From the Editor's Ipad

In the dark folds of the night, much is happening. Events, lives, incidents are merging together for that point of intersection where life bursts with utter joy and wholeness. This point is surely the sum of many hidden currents, as it will be a detail that will have repercussions till the end of ages. The dwellers from the East had a long journey

before them. Their unwavering faith of a new hope kept shining forth until they reached their destination. How do they know, one would ask? It is a knowledge as certain as life itself. A knowing that what dies regenerates; from under the ashes, the green grass will grow; from wounds, healing will come. So they go the distance with their most pre-

cious belongings: gold, myrrh and frankincense. All three gifts celebrate the generosity and marvelousness of the divine. It is just as it should be.

~ Katia Hage



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As the Redlands United Church of Christ, we are called by God to follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

We are an Open and Affirming community of faith, who value all people as the family of God.

We love, nurture, support, and give hope to one another on the journey of faith, seeking God's will for our lives.

Led by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to serve, and to help heal the hurts of humanity and the world with caring justice to the glory of God.

We welcome all into the full life and ministry of this church.

Practice This New Birdcall

The way we live opens windows
And calls in a secret voice to anything
Still missing.

There is nothing in your mind
You have not invited in.

There is no event in your life
You in some way
Did not drive a hard bargain for.

We were all once like moons,
Often full and bright.

The hearts, in its wisdom,

Carelessly shops for
Him.

The wise in any foreign country
Seek a true guide.

The guide says,

“Just practice this new birdcall,
It will attract to you
Something even
Greater than
Love.”



~ Hafiz