

Blessed NOCC Community A local radio station playing Christmas music offered this reminder between songs by Dean Martin and Elvis: "All your favorite greatest hits will be back on December 26!" In other words, Christmas ends at midnight on December 25. Utterly tragic. Soulful friends, I URGE you to savor and celebrate, as much as is practical for you, the twelve days of Christmas. Keep listening to Christmas music in your car, for example. Hold your prayerful focus on the nativity. I think I heard that the Trans Siberian Orchestra show this year is on the 26th. Fabulous! In whatever way you can devise, hold Christmas close for 12 days. Don't allow a radio station (Grinches----or worse-----Herod!) to dictate the terms of your Christmas. Can I get an Amen?

CANTATA SUNDAY MORNING You've heard the buzz. This year's Cantata is shaping up to be extraordinary. Join us at 1015AM!

CHRISTMAS EVE 7PM AND 11PM Music by the choir and bells (at 7) and a more contemplative celebration at 11. Attend either or both!

WORLD PEACE MEDITATION 6AM DECEMBER 31 I know---the challenge is real-----but this annual event is a marvelous gathering of KC folks from many faiths that will be good for your soul. Plus-----the lovely experience of being part of a global moment----people in every time zone in silent prayer together for our world. This is one time I am happy NOT to be on the Oregon coast---their events happen at 4AM. Location: Rime Buddhist Center on West Pennway. We are asked to arrive around 530AM. I'd welcome your company and maybe a little breakfast in the Crossroads following.

MEET OUR GENERAL MINISTER JANUARY 12 2PM Rev. Terri Hord Owens is making her first trip to Kansas City. I hope many of you will join me in an opportunity to gather as KC Disciples for a time of worship with her on the 12th at Merriam Christian Church. OR join me on the afternoon of Sunday January 13 3PM as she is the featured speaker at the 2019 MLK celebration at Community Christian Church (Plaza)

"From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace..."

Thank you all for being grace upon grace in my life!

Merry Christmas!

Rob

Luke 2: 8-9

Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch through the night over their flock, when suddenly there stood before them an angel of the Lord, and the splendor of the Lord shone round them.

A fundamental theme of the Gospel is that in Christ and through the Church God has entered into history to “bend” history toward justice and toward shalom—to lift up the poor and the marginalized and to advocate for the dignity and thriving of all...an affirmation and a continuation of the earlier work of the Hebrew Prophets in the time-frame of 900-300 BCE. This does not necessarily mean monochromatic economic equality. It DOES mean that cultures and societies are compassionately inclusive and just in social and economic matters. It is fitting, then, that the first humans to hear the news of Jesus’ birth are among the poorest and least esteemed of that first century socio-economic world.

In Israel’s history, shepherding had once been an honored profession. But as the Hebrews slowly developed an economy based on farming, shepherds were relegated to the margins. In some versions of Hebrew law, it was considered acceptable not to rescue a shepherd who had fallen into a pit.

Does this mean that God takes the side of the poor as over against the affluent? There are some in today’s church who see it this way. Others maintain that God does not take sides at all. Shalom is only secondarily about economics and the Gospel is not really about winners and losers. It is primarily about communities and societies undergoing a COLLECTIVE shift of mind and heart and spirit away from greed and toward compassion. Jesus’ many striking gestures of inclusion, his critique of self-righteousness and the careless freedom with which he loved, are intended to gently nudge and sometimes forcefully jolt our hearts and minds toward this collective shift. He knows that as hearts are transformed, so are economic arrangements, and entire cultures.