

Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

The Rev. Dr. Scott Couper

Sunday, December 24, 2020, 7:00pm

Christmas Eve

“Transitioning from Darkness to Light”

We are in a time of multiple transitions. The first transition occurred three days ago, on December 21 at 10:03am. Who knows what happened? [...] The winter solstice. That’s correct. At this time, one of the Earth’s poles has its maximum tilt away from the sun. For our hemisphere, the winter solstice is the day with the shortest period of daylight and the longest night of the year. Therefore, we are now literally transitioning from darkness to light.

The second transition we are in is biomedical. Currently, we are enduring over 3,000 deaths per day due to COVID. We are having more people die of this virus than died in 9/11, *every day!* Fortunately, more than one vaccine has been manufactured, FDA approved, distributed, and administered to millions of people. Though we are still in utter darkness in terms of illness and poverty, a shaft of light created by scientists will likely save us from a disaster exacerbated by politicians. We are transitioning from darkness to light.

A third transition will soon come. On New Years’ Day we will move from 2020 to 2021. No doubt, January will bring a momentous turning of the calendar year. The New Year will bring in a new era. Just as in 2009, a new administration will inherit a national disaster exacerbated by the previous

administration and another long gradual recovery will be expected. No doubt for most of the country, 2020 will go down as the worst year in living memory: politically, educationally, medically, and economically. I pray, we all pray, we are transitioning from darkness to light.

A fourth and final transition is happening tonight and tomorrow. It is recurring transition, one that we observe every year. But this year, at least for me, has profound significance because many of us are in the midst of darkness. Tonight and this coming morning, Christians around the world will experience a re-birth by celebrating the actual birth of “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), Jesus the Christ. During the sacred birth, the bright star of Bethlehem pierced through the dark midnight sky just as only three days ago Saturn and Jupiter appeared to merge as they came the closest to one another than they have ever been in four hundred years. In a womb, there is no light. It is complete darkness. Yet just as an infant child bursts into light, so we tonight and this morning will spiritually transition from darkness to light. Friends in Christ, by celebrating Jesus’ birth, we recognise, as the writer of John’s gospel does, that “The true light that gives light to every person [came] into the world” (John 1:9).

So, what will these transitions from darkness to light during the solstice, being vaccinated, and celebrating Christmas and the New Year mean for us? May I propose that while we are transitioning from darkness to light, we simply

ask ourselves, 'who is missing?' In our nation, often missing from the light are those without access to affordable health care. In our nation, still missing from the light is the LBGTIQ community. In our nation, still missing from the light are the BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour). Missing from the light are the poor who are unable to earn a living wage and are being, or soon will be, evicted.

At Centre Church we have what is called 'The Samaritan Fund'. The Samaritan Fund demonstrates to every person who comes to our church door that they are welcome to transition into the light. Today with the Samaritan Fund, I bought socks at Sam's and a turkey at the Co-op for a beautiful woman that is having financial difficulties. Yesterday with the Samaritan Fund, I was able to give a social worker \$65 to help buy diapers in bulk for her single mother client. Last month, I purchased a hotel room at the Motel 6 on a rainy Friday night for a couple and a child who could not be admitted at the shelter that night. What is donated this evening is budgeted each month throughout the year so that if someone comes to our church door desperate for something, he or she is not refused and turned back into the darkness. Instead, they are invited to transition into the light.

Friends, as we transition from the darkness to the light tonight by celebrating our Savior's birth, let us ask ourselves, "Who is missing?". I pray we

will strive to someday affirm, “No one is missing. We are all transitioning into the light”.

This is the word of God, and it was delivered to the people of God, and the people of God responded, “Amen”.