

**Sing, Choirs of Angels**  
Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer  
Sunday, December 24, 2017 (4:00 & 6:00pm)

**First Unitarian Universalist Church**  
Rochester, Minnesota

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**READINGS**

*How the Light Comes* by Jan Richardson

*It is the glad season* by Maya Angelou

*The Song of Mary from the Gospel according to St. Luke*

*Glory Sings Here* from Rebecca Parker

## HOMILY

My grandparents house greeted the seasons of the year  
with festivity and feasting.

From the painted glass Christmas tree  
atop the large, wooden stereo from the 1960s,  
flanked by Santa and Mrs. Claus electronic figurines  
slowly swaying with their lit candles  
to the gigantic lit-up Santa face on the side of the house  
to the lights on the front bushes  
the tree filled with pictures of grandchildren  
adorned in golden star ornaments  
to the knit decorations hanging near every threshold and doorway  
and the stockings  
and the wooden reindeer  
and the table runners  
and the mistletoe  
and the cookies and bars sprinkled with red and green

and the crèche – the lit one outside  
and the fun-size one inside –  
you couldn't move two feet in any direction  
and not see the halls decked –  
not be reminded  
Santa Claus is coming to town –  
and a little bitty baby is going to be born in Bethlehem.

One year, however,  
things took a little turn.  
Somewhere between the giant Santa face  
and the little baby Jesus  
lit up on the outside of the house  
was the angel choir –  
quietly aglow, offering their illuminated voices  
of peace on earth and good will to all.

But during the night, nearing Christmas,  
someone, for some reason, removed the plastic heads off the choristers –  
and my grandparents awoke to a headless choir.

What to do?

Do you remove them from the front entry, in defeat?

Do you let them stay, lit up more like Halloween than Christmas –  
and be “that house...with those really weird decorations”?

Luckily, a local angel – the neighbor boy  
who delivered their papers and shoveled their walk  
found the angel heads in the alley the next day.

He brought them back to my Grandma,  
who in turn gave him money to say thank you,  
and he, in turn, bought her flowers  
in a cycle of generosity and spirit.

And Grandpa,  
like any good plumber,  
bolted the heads back on  
and chained them to the railing.

There would be no more silencing of joy  
no quieting of the choir at this house –  
though they looked a little like Frankenstein,  
they were illuminated joy  
welcoming the season and the passing stranger  
with songs of joy and peace.

In increasing and growing darkness,  
in a dim and dimming world,  
in a world, sometimes, when, in the words of Dr. King,  
there is an adding of deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars –

it takes some grit and generosity and determination  
to bolster our spirits and make us sturdy enough  
to sing peace, and give light, and offer some song  
that breaks through the dark  
with hope for a weary world.

Maybe it's shining from a doorstep –  
It shines in the interaction of kindness  
and how love and grace and hope  
grow by how we offer light and love to one another  
in being neighbors to each other.

We must be light bearers – for ourselves, and each other –  
we must bear the light of liberation and compassion,  
of justice and equity –  
and shine it right in the face  
of those whose policies trample on the poor,  
those whose power attempts to silence stories of oppression –  
there are lanterns coming through the storm –  
lanterns in the form of #metoo  
lanterns in the form of protests in the halls of power  
lanterns in the form of language we are told not to use.  
*O hush the noise, ye men in power – and hear the angels sing.*

The entire story of Christmas is about  
of a poor, brown-skin, undocumented refugee family –  
in a town where they likely had relatives  
that, because of social custom, were told they were not welcome.

A story as old as humanity – a story we still live within.

We still need lanterns, friends.  
We still need the enduring flame of the menorah  
and the midnight fires of solstice  
and the humble manger with love made flesh in a baby.

We need angels lighting up every front door – we need your lantern  
so that, together, we find our way through the storm. May it be so, and Amen.