

An introduction to Page Eastman's sermon given by
Pastor Elaine Hewes

As you may have read in the “Navigator” our theme for the Advent season this year is “Light Carried in a Jar”... a theme inspired by this canning jar that has on its lid a photovoltaic battery that can be charged by the sun by day and used by night to turn on the bulb under the lid, so to light a room or a path or a way in the darkness...

These “lights carried in a jar” are made by a company in South Africa called Sonnenglas, whose mission it is to equip villages without electric power with these lights so the people in those villages can have safe, consistent, environmentally-friendly lighting during the nighttime hours. The company also has guidelines and policies that are consistent with racial, economic and gender justice, so the light their jars carry is a light of many different kinds...

We chose the theme “light carried in a jar” for our Advent season this year in part to highlight the work and witness of the Sonnenglas company. But we also chose it as a way to help us all think about the many ordinary down-to-earth things any of us might use to carry light to the world. Because really, what’s more ordinary than a canning jar?

This morning our reflector, Page Eastman, who is also an artist with her camera, is going to speak of how she uses light in her photography, thus “carrying” light in her photographs for others to see...

Page and her partner David are frequent visitors to St. Brendan in part because one of Page’s favorite places to take photographs is Deer Isle and Stonington. But Page is also a dear friend of mine from way back... and so any opportunity I have to see her and to highlight her work is an opportunity I don’t pass up...

As I prepared for worship this morning, it occurred to me that

Page's offering speaks **not only** to the theme of our Advent season this year, **but also** to the lessons appointed from Romans and Matthew this morning, **as well as** to our service of healing, as together they call us to "wake from sleep, to lay aside the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light... and to do so without delay... so we might participate in the healing power of God's kingdom... a kin-dom that is already with us, but still coming in a fullness we can't begin to imagine... even in this very here and very now... a time and place pregnant with possibility, just waiting for us to perceive, to receive, and to conceive the in-breaking of God's kingdom in our very hearts and bones and hands and voices so we too might carry the light of Christ into the darkness of this world..."

Light carried in photographs: Page Allen Eastman

When Pastor Elaine asked me to do a reflection on light carried in photographs, I realized that as a photographer I am always checking how the light is expressing itself. As each day unfolds it brings a certain quality of light to it. Days without sunlight are perfect for photographing flowers; back lighting can make photographs even more dramatic, the golden hour creates gentle, soft tones in photographs, and some light is just too harsh to even think about photographing.

The word photography is a combination of the Greek root words, photo – meaning light, and graphia, meaning writing or drawing. Thus, photography literally means writing or drawing with light. Light is the most important component of photography. It determines exposure, contrast, texture and color, helping to shape a photograph into something expressive, and meaningful, even storytelling. It can transform an ordinary scene into something magical. I find that light acts not just as an illuminator but as a creative partner.

Each lighting style from natural sunlight to artificial sources shapes how a subject looks and feels. During golden hour, that magical time just after sunrise or just before sunset, is fleeting. You can't pause it, and you can't hold it forever. This fleetingness makes photography a special art. There are some photographers who will only photograph during the golden hour time.

I am very familiar with the golden hour before sunset arrives in Stonington. It's so evident when I am photographing the harbor, the boats, how the more intense light of the day dissipates and my composition takes on a softer, gentler appearance. And if I want to photograph the sunset in Stonington in July, I need to start shooting anywhere between 8 and 8:30 in the evening, whereas in December the sunset is typically between 4 and 4:15. And if I want to photograph the sunrise in July, I am ready to start shooting around 5 in the morning, but by December the sunrise is around 7. I think that's why I love to photograph the sunrise and sunset because I know both are fleeting and won't last forever, and I have the privilege of witnessing this beauty unfolding. If I want to photograph either one, I need to show up – make a commitment.

When I think about your advent theme – light carried in a jar and about how that theme can relate to light carried in photographs, I think the best way to talk about that is to show you some examples.

I have four photographs where I feel that the light acted as a gift. And the composite of these photos is included in your bulletin.

Not far from where I live in Bangor, is Mt. Hope Cemetery, the second oldest garden cemetery in the U.S., and listed on the

national register of historic places. I photograph there in all seasons and went there several weeks ago to photograph the way fall was expressing itself. The cemetery has so many trees, especially maples, and in other years that is what I concentrated on. But this year I found myself transfixed on a small pond there. A pond that is full of turtles in the spring. I so enjoy photographing them basking on the rocks, sometimes 4 or 5 at a time all grouped together, varying in size. The turtles are hibernating now, and on this beautiful, warm, fall day I was seeing how the light was giving the colorful leaves a way to find reflection in the small pond – vivid oranges and reds – creating an abstract impressionist painting of sorts. Mallards were lazily swimming in this pond and as I watched and absorbed the color, I patiently waited until the mallards swam into the color, into the painting that the light of that day offered. That was when I felt ready to take my first photo and many more after that. The light was a holy gift that afternoon that I hadn't experienced before in that way, and I found that the light encouraged and enlivened my inner light. It was very difficult for me to leave that day – to leave that **very sacred** experience. Where a very ordinary situation became an extraordinary experience. **Unexpected blessings.** As Mary Oliver said, "Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable".

Light on an island has a different quality than light on the mainland – all the painters like Rockwell Kent, Edward Hopper and James Fitzgerald knew this – and came to Monhegan Island because of this. Sunsets on Monhegan are amazing in their expression – their warmth and creativity – their magic. This night the sunset found its way into the window of this cottage – as I stood there taking this sunset light in, I treasured how it was unfolding – an ordinary picture window in a cottage becoming a vessel for the sunset to express itself and I was the fortunate one to see this. Some people probably just think the cottage lights are on – but so much more is happening here.

The Cosmos this fall was so expressive – it seemed to appear everywhere I traveled, languishing their long necks up to the sky – their faces radiant in the glow of the light. And I found that I could photograph them shooting into the light and capturing their inner glow in a magical way that front lighting couldn’t express. And in this photo the light doesn’t just show the flower – it becomes part of what the flower is in the photograph.

In conclusion, I find that light is the secret ingredient in many photographs where the ordinary becomes extraordinary. And the relationship I have with my camera is very important in this process. Light is the gift of telling – it helps shape what you photograph into something more than documentation, into something expressive, meaningful and storytelling. When you begin to think of light not just as illumination but as a creative partner, your photographs start to carry more than **what is** – they carry **how it feels**.