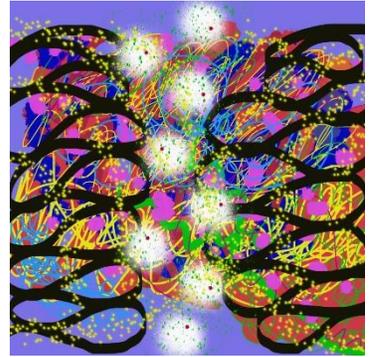


Darkness Cannot Overcome

"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it." John 1:5

Yesterday (Sunday) afternoon, my husband Tom and I hung colored lights on our porch. It was a beautiful afternoon for the task, the air crisp and smelling like winter. The challenge was that I had to keep turning the ladder to ensure that my back was to the sun as I wound the lights around the pillars, otherwise I'd be blinded by the blazing light, low and strong in the afternoon sky. Light blinds as surely as it illumines. Light pierces as surely as it comforts.



"The Light Shines in the Darkness." Susan E. Goff 2019

In this holy season of Advent, as we look for the light of Christ to come blazing into our world, we experience the darkness of a continuing Coronavirus pandemic. What we know about increased infection rates pierces our hopes for Christmas. The news of a dramatically increasing death rate shatters our annual traditions and plans. We've known for a while that the late fall and winter could bring us to a crisis point, and that crisis for our health care system is upon us. Hope for effective vaccines is on the horizon as well, and fulfillment of that hope is drawing closer every day. Still, the dangers remain ever-present. As the days grow shorter and the darkness of night increases, the darkness of fear and frustration, anger and worry increases as well.

The light of Christ illumines our darkness more powerfully than a spotlight sun on a winter afternoon. The light of Christ pierces this winter of our discontent. It has the power to shatter our restlessness and scatter our dis-ease. The light of Christ shines in our darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

In this blazing, piercing, blinding light of Christ, we are called by God to make the sacrifices we must to protect those we love and to save the lives of the most vulnerable -- and we can do it. We can worship the newborn King in blazing joy without gathering physically in our church buildings for this one year. We can hang out with extended family and friends without being together in the same room. We can support and serve others without threatening their health. We can share treasured traditions in new

ways, knowing that all of these sacrifices are for the sake of love and are only for a short time. In the light of Christ, we can love others in these and so many more concrete ways. That is, after all, why Christ was born on earth in the first place -- to teach us how to love fiercely in the midst of a dark and fearsome world, to show us by word and example how to sacrifice our own desires for the sake of others. We honor the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ by following his example in the ways this time demands of us and in countless other ways, large and small, throughout our lives.

May the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path as you make sacrifices today, throughout this Advent season, and always.