

Various Texts from the Jan 2 worship service with FUSW and SPC

Art Lowenstein reading: A New Century, by A.C. Swinburne

An age too great for thought of ours to scan,
A wave upon the sleepless sea of time
That sinks and sleeps for ever, ere the chime
Pass that salutes with blessing, not with ban,
The dark year dead, the bright year born for man,
Dies: all its days that watched man cower and climb,
Frail as the foam, and as the sum sublime,
Sleep sound as they that slept ere these began.
Our mother earth, whose ages none may tell,
Puts on no change: time bids her not wax pale
Or kindle, quenched or quickened, when the knell
Sounds, and we cry across the veering gale
Farewell, and midnight answers us, Farewell;
Hail, and the heaven of morning answers, Hail.

Anne Day reading: from enfleshed.com (a non-denominational group that publishes worship materials aimed at “spiritual nourishment for collective liberation.”)

Blessings for a New Year

In threshold places, where endings meet beginnings,
We listen backwards as we move forward.

What can we learn from the year past –
from how evil played its cards,
or from relationships gained and lost?

What brought you deep delight, when everything was swirling?
To whom were you able to turn to and who challenged you to grow?

Individually and collectively,
none of us are the same.

For some of these changes we weep and for others we rejoice

but from each we carry something forward
– a feeling, a lesson, a memory, a challenge, a call to solidarity...

Collectively, we acknowledge a closing and an opening;
A fresh start that offers only as much meaning as we need from it.
Inviting us not to wage war on ourselves,
but just to pause,
pay attention to our longings and our pain,
and what we might learn from them about how we wish to live.

A new year does not need to mean “a new you.”
“You do not need to make demands of yourself
grounded in messages that are only meant
to make you feel inadequate or unlovable.

Your worth is ineffable,
that is a constant that carries from year to year.

Move gently with yourself into 2022,
speaking instead words of possibility,
committing to that which calls you,
letting yourself be lured by the Sacred
in the direction of your most powerful becoming.

Make only resolutions that will lead to more flourishing of life, yours and others.

Reject individualistic notions of success (or “failure”)
and channel your growing
in the directions
of what we can create
of what we can divest from
of what we can abolish
of what we must claim
of what we must fight
of what we can become.



Kris Kliemann reading: from the Gospel of John -chapter 1 verses 1 to 5.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome[a] it.

REFLECTION/COMMENTARY from Kris Kliemann

I was always a literary kid – reading everything I could get my hands on (books, of course, but really everything, such as cereal boxes) – and I was often reading beyond my own understanding of words and certainly didn't know how to pronounce a lot of words I read – but those are stories for another time. Anyway....it always made sense to me that “in the beginning was the WORD”. So, I was intrigued when I was reading a book for my book club recently – to discover that in this passage from John “WORD” in English is a translation of the Greek: LOGOS – which is often translated as WORD...but actually has other meanings.....

In the book I read, *Transcendent Kingdom* – which is author Yaa Gyasi's second novel, the main character is a neuroscientist PhD candidate studying at Stanford U. the character's name is Gifty – and she is the daughter of Ghanaian parents – who came to the US and raised their family in Huntsville Alabama. Gifty and her mother and brother attended a Pentecostal church – and it was there that

Gifty's teenage imagination was caught by the idea that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God' might actually be translated differently: “Word” was translated from the Greek word Logos, which didn't really mean “word” at all, but rather something closer to “plea” or even premise... In the beginning there was an idea, a premise; there was a question.'

And as I was thinking about this service – I did some more research – the world of translation by the way is a very interesting world and translator's choices for word and the nuances of languages is endlessly fascinating – to me and maybe to you? I'll just say: there are a lot of works to be read about Biblical translation and this passage gets a lot of attention – and arguments about whether the Bible was a refutation of Hellenism, about rationalism and universal intelligence and whether Logos and Logos doctrine and Logos theology should even be a part of our religious understanding – heated debate. Look into Isaac Asimov's 2 volume *Guide to Bible* – something I knew nothing about

until last week – they were published in the late 60s. read Philosopher/Theologian Paul Tillich on the topic of the Logos Doctrine. But for now, I'm going to just sit with the little passage from Gyasi's novel that started me down this path in the first place:

For me, this shift from "word" to idea, premise, or question – changes everything for me:

In the beginning was the Question, and the Question was with God, and the Question was God

Maria Harris reading: "The Journey" by David Whyte:

The Journey
From House of Belonging by David Whyte

Above the mountains
the geese turn into
the light again
Painting their
black silhouettes
on an open sky.
Sometimes everything
has to be
inscribed across
the heavens
so you can find
the one line
already written
inside you.
Sometimes it takes
a great sky
to find that
first, bright
and indescribable
wedge of freedom
in your own heart.

Sometimes with
the bones of the black
sticks left when the fire
has gone out
someone has written
something new
in the ashes of your life.
You are not leaving.
Even as the light fades quickly now,
you are arriving.

Art Lowenstein reading: As we transition from a truly forgettable year just ended to the hope that is embodied in a brand-new year, let us profit from a few words from Henry David Thoreau.

Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear. Nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness to the world, and if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity. I say let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. Simplify, simplify.

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "what's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood as his sentinels.

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito wing that falls on the tracks. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation, let company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry, determined to make a day of it.

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it, but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains.

Reading by Kris Kliemann: the last few lines from a poem entitled *New Year's Morning* By Helen Hunt Jackson – a 19th century American poet...

*Always a night from old to new!
Night and the healing balm of sleep!
Each morn is New Year's morn come true,
Morn of a festival to keep.
All nights are sacred nights to make
Confession and resolve and prayer;
All days are sacred days to wake
New gladness in the sunny air.
Only a night from old to new;
Only a sleep from night to morn.
The new is but the old come true;
Each sunrise sees a new year born.*
