

“NOW THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS REALLY BEGINS.”



ESG Community of Care

January 26, 2022



Music to set the theme, The ***Work of Christmas***
Arman Ferber, with Sarah Facuri & Jep Go

► <https://youtu.be/Lbc6lCDiM48>

WELCOME TO OUR COMMUNITY OF CARE

- We are glad to see you. See who is here and greet them
- Appreciate that ***We are not alone***
- Please Mute your Audio until we ask for participation
- Light a Candle inviting the Creator's presence
- Take a moment To Breathe & Focus on where you are right now



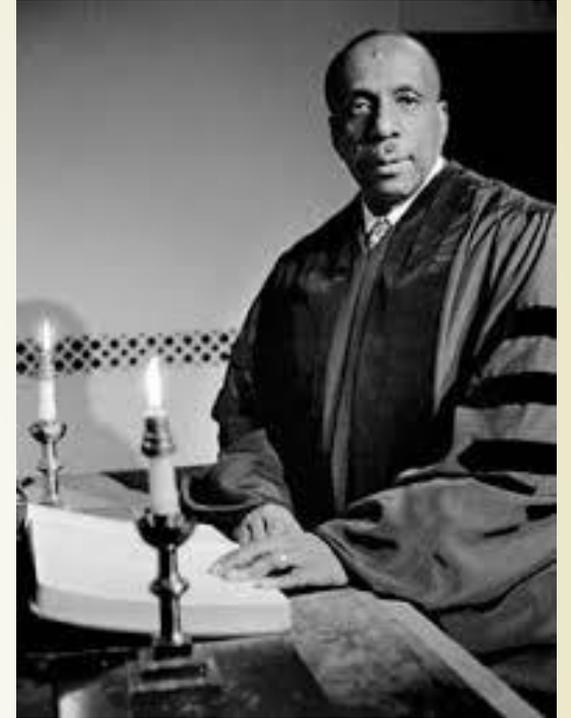
The work of Christmas

by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

RETHINKCHURCH™



Written by Howard Thurman, an African-American theologian, educator & civil rights leader and a mentor of Martin Luther King

Christmas is about the Light coming to the world in the form of the Child born in Bethlehem.



Matthew 4:16. *“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.”*

The responsibilities that come with this gift:

Matthew 25: 35,36 & 40: *“...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me....Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”*

In Carla Works’ commentary on Mathew 25, she says:

“This divine reign has invaded the world and is good news — especially to those on the fringes of society... In God’s kingdom, no one is hungry, naked, sick, or alone. To bear witness to Christ as King is to be a messenger of this kingdom—to serve others and thereby profess the invasion of God’s glorious empire.”



Thomas Merton speaks of his transformative mystical revelation in 1958 in Louisville, Kentucky:

“ ...in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness... I have the immense joy of being a man, a member of a race in which God...became incarnate.”

“Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander”, 1966



The season of Christmas is: ***“about the rhythms of the world being reset by God to remind us that we are one, and should live and work as one. It’s about making the world a better place; treating others as equals; and resisting malice, evil and hatred whenever we see it.”***

Michael Coren, “What it means to follow a divine rebel”

Toronto Star, December 24, 2021



Questions arising from “The Work of Christmas”

- **Who are the lost? Are people who are unlike me actually ‘lost’ or just on a different path?** I can accompany them for a way on their path and listen to their story.

Then it becomes a mutual path and they are no longer the lost ‘other’. I may even learn something and find new directions for myself.

- **How do people get broken? Could I be a cause of brokenness? How do people heal and what is my role in this?**

All people are wounded by loss, betrayal and exclusion. We are all connected. Wounds means there are vulnerabilities and scars and the possibility of being wounded again. Yet scars also mean we have toughness in those places, are resilient and have developed special gifts of sensitivity and compassion.

We can listen and honour their wounds and their journey.

This can be a gift of healing.



- **What role do I play in the hunger of others? Is it only earthly food they/we hunger for or also food for the spirit?**

We can feed each other by our presence and our compassion as well as our money and our food.

We can share the good news of how we are fed and nurtured by God.



- **Who are prisoners and how are they imprisoned? How can I release others?**

We can release others by being open about what traps us instead of being judgemental. We can try being compassionate and present. We can be willing to learn from them – of their wounds and hunger and lostness and healing.

We are not alone.

This is freedom.



- **How do we rebuild nations?**

By showing justice and mercy - and advocating for justice and mercy. We can choose to treat members of all nations and all earthly levels of 'status' as human family members deserving of dignity.



- **Are our divisions “real”? How can we be peacemakers?**

We can bring peace by loving - and by highlighting that we all experience pain, challenges and joys - as part of the human race in all its glorious diversity.

We acknowledge our common need for bread and connection and spiritual sustenance.



What is this mystical music of the heart and how do we make it?

We make music when we express love and connection in a language beyond words so that it is immediately understood in the inner being of all people.





Thus, it seems to me, that the work of Christmas is to share Jesus' vision of our common humanity, to unlearn the practice of "othering" and to share God's love, grace and light with the world.

I hope that we have the courage to ask ourselves how this will look in practice for us in small daily ways.

Mary Thomson

"Only joining in with people like us might make sense to us, but it isn't much help to anybody else. We can make a larger impact when we join together, advocating for justice in and with a community made of all types of people."

Milligan Burroughs d365.org



Share your Prayers & greetings Or people you wish to mention

- ▶ Turn On your Audio/ Video if you choose ...
- ▶ We'll start with a prayer
- ▶ Then feel free to join or in silence
- ▶ Offer your Prayers or thoughts for others





NEXT COC MEETINGS

Tuesday Feb 1, 2022 at 2:00 pm - ***“Now the work of Christmas Really Begins” – Part II.***

Jim Black & Mary Thomson

Wednesday Feb 9, 2022 at 10:30 am: ***“Mission: JOY”***

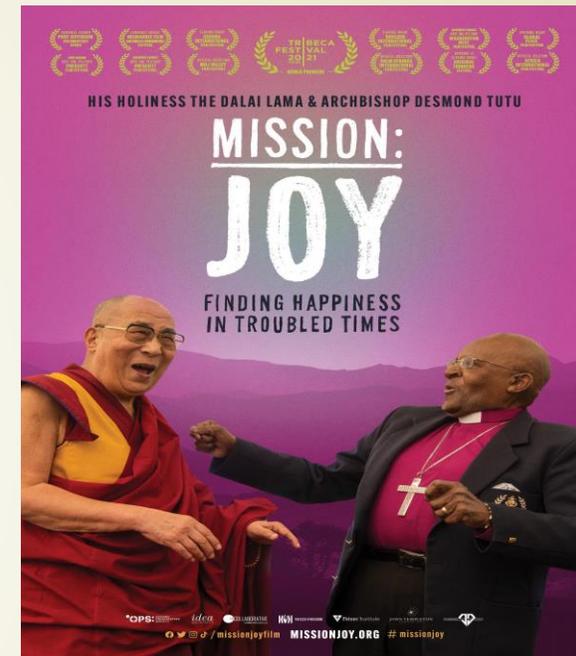
Patti Thompson

ESG's Adult Education Committee has arranged for a special screening of this moving and laugh-out-loud funny video which you can enjoy in the comfort of your own home. The film showcases a five day exchange between these two respected and beloved human rights heroes and spiritual leaders. You can watch never-before-seen footage shot at the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala, India where these luminaries recount stories from their lives, each having lived through periods of incredible difficulty and strife. With genuine affection, mutual respect, and teasing, these unlikely friends impart lessons from lived experiences, ancient traditions, and cutting edge science about how to live with joy in the face of life's challenges. This is an antidote for our times!

Screening Times: The film will be available to you from Thursday, February 3rd at 6:00 p.m. until Sunday, February 6th at 6:00 p.m. Pick the time that suits you best and sit back for 90 minutes of laughter and tears.

Register: The link will be available one week before the screening times begin.

To get the link, please send an email to Patti Thompson (patriciathompson@rogers.com)



Gracious and loving God, you are the God of Ages. You are the great I Am and the humble baby in a manger.

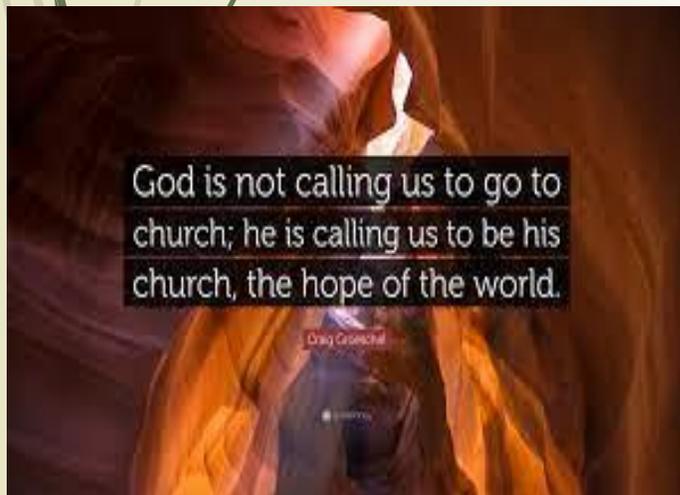
You are and have been and will be. You want deep joy for the world. You offered us your very self so that I might have that grace and hope.

PARTING BLESSING

God calls us to join the story of God's goodness and creation.

Go and find where God is calling you, in the smallness and largeness of the world.

Go in fellowship, in love, and grow in the story that God has for us.



I am the Light of the World, VU87

<https://youtu.be/U2raH2XxEqU>

