

Rector's Address

The Rev. Bonnie A. Perry, D.MIN



Dear Friends,

The poet Mary Oliver writes in her book *Upstream*,

*"In the winter
I am writing
about, there was
much darkness.*

*Darkness of
nature, darkness
of event, dark-
ness of the spirit.*

*The sprawling
darkness of **not
knowing**. We
speak of the light
of reason.*

*I would speak
here of the
darkness of
the world, and
the light of*

*[But] I don't
know what to
call it. Maybe
hope.*

*Maybe faith, but
not a shaped
faith—only, say
a gesture or a
continuum of
gestures.*

*But probably it
is closer to hope,
that is more
active, and far
messier than
faith must be.*

*Faith, as I imag-
ine it, is tensile,
and cool, and
has no need of
words.*

*Hope, I know, is
a fighter and a
screamer."*

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Hope, as I said in my Christmas Eve sermon, hope is a fighter and screamer.

Hope is a baby born in a barn. Hope is remembering again that God risked everything coming into this world as a helpless infant, born to a family without wealth or power.

The way Mary Oliver depicts faith it feels as if faith is much more about acceptance; whereas, hope is anything but acceptance.

Hope is:
the Northside Housing and Supportive Services, One Northside, the Tent City organizing collation and the members of People's Church refusing to accept the closing of a much needed homeless shelter.

Hope is the people of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and their allies refusing to say ok to risking their water supply for oil passage.

Hope is the city of Chicago declaring itself a sanctuary city in the face of possible federal deportations.

Hope is this church deciding to invest more of our time and energy into refugee welcome, resettlement and the prevention of deportation.

Hope is saying we will neither acquiesce to the state, nor become agents of Cesar,

Hope says, loudly, in as many languages as possible, *"Hate is not welcome here."*

Hope. Hope is a fighter and a screamer. Hope is noisy.

I wrote this on the Eve of our Celebration of our Savior's birth, because it seemed right and prudent and necessary. I say it now, again, in this season of Epiphany on the Eve of our next president's



inauguration, because it seems right and prudent and necessary. Now more than ever, my friends, we are being called to enact the Gospel values of: welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, visiting the imprisoned and reaching out to all who may soon find themselves on the margins, outside the protection of power and wealth and whiteness.

Where do we want to stand? With whom do wish to ally ourselves?

Hope is noisy and brash and brave.

We are a place of faith that strives to practice the Gospel values I have listed above. So I don't necessarily see us needing to start up many new programs. Instead I see us doubling down on our current efforts in feeding people body and soul, ramping up our immigration and refugee work, reinvigorating our work on race and white privilege and being a place of warmth, welcome, sustenance and healing for this fractured, broken world of ours.

We need not create new ministries, but enter into our current ones with a sense that now it is game time. All that we have been doing before was practice. It is game on. Game on. Game on.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government, the government will be upon His shoulder, and Name will be called, wonderful, counselor, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

-Isaiah 9:6

Hope is also grounded and pragmatic.

We will not try to change everything all at once. We will recognize that small continuous steps will enable us to reach our goals of justice and fairness. And one of the most essential pieces of all transformative undertakings is our ability to offer ourselves and all the weary who wander through our doors care and spiritual sustenance. With this in mind the staff and I, as well our worship committee, will be paying special attention to all of



our music and our liturgies. Souls need to be fed and I intend for All Saints', Chicago to be one place where that care and feeding happens every single week.

Hope does not give up, hope does not let go, hope carries on. Hope is harder when it is a solitary venture. It is better fed in community. So let us commit to being here for each other, being vulnerable with each other, being prayerful for each other.

Hope is in it for the long haul and so too should we. Our children matter more than ever. The morals and values we impart to them will be the bedrock and cornerstone of our community and country in twenty years. The formation of our children is as relevant and as important as the sanctuary we may offer to a refugee. The long haul. We are in it for the long haul because hope has a vision of something more.

Finally, on this 25th time I have addressed this congregation as your priest, I am struck by my call to be with you, and your call to be in this place, with the people next to you, with the people who are travelling and protesting, and with me. I am struck by the rightness of this and I give thanks to God, who has invited me to lead this place. Wow.

What we do, how we do it. To be sure we blow it, sometimes in very noticeable fashion (God knows I do.). But we also come back and try again with a tenacity, whimsy and faith that fills my heart and stirs my soul.

Thank you.

May we leave here filled with some hope. Not quiet passive faith, but loud, noisy hope, that we with God and God with us, that we who have walked in great darkness will see and even help create a light, a great light, an eternal light.

A light to enlighten the nations.

In the name of God: Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Bonnie A. Perry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P" at the end.

The Rev. Bonnie A. Perry, D. Min.
XII Rector