

Blue Christmas
Sunday, December 25, 2022
Tri-County Unitarian Universalists
Summerfield, FL
Rev. Cynthia A. Snively

I am not usually blue at Christmas, but this year I am a bit. There are a few reasons. One. I hate when Christmas Day is Sunday. My experience in the past has been that the Sunday service that day is me and three people. Everyone else came for Christmas Eve and is now home enjoying watching children open presents or sleeping in or having a nice Christmas Brunch. Two. My daughter and grandsons are away having gone to Maryland for the holiday so that the boys could spend time with their dad. Three. I was originally going to take the week between Christmas and New Year's as vacation and go home to Pennsylvania. But now my mother has died and there is no reason to go. My brother and his family will be in North Carolina with my sister-in-law's parents, and I don't need to drive 16 hours to play Rummy-O with my sister.

Other people have other reasons to be blue. United Methodist minister Rev. Brandee Jasmine Mimitzraiem wrote in an Advent reflection this year, "The crimson of Christmas-to-come can carry a different meaning for the infertile. Hidden in the shadows of city sidewalks, behind the anticipation of the birth of the Child so easily conceived, Advent for infertile and low-fertility women can come with the silent dread of seeing a crimson ribbon where none should be.

"I went home for Christmas, after a compassionless ob/gyn giddily announced that I would not be burdened with the ability to conceive children, on crutches. I was moving too fast, carrying too much, and had rolled down a flight of marble stairs. I couldn't navigate the shopping malls or the piles of snow. I stayed behind while my family members went out. The babysitter. The aunty who could not have her own. Resigned to her fate.

"Somehow, we all managed to get to church on the third Sunday of Advent. My mom's pastor preached the first reading, Zechariah 9:9. "Rejoice," he said, 'for everything you desire is coming soon. Be joyful in the expectation of your wildest dreams coming true.' I hobbled back to my mom's house, with two sprained ankles and a torn meniscus, feeling the pain of ovaries wrapped in cysts and a uterus that the doctor said would remain empty, and I wondered where the joy was for me, who deeply desired children, but whose physician rejoicingly declared that I would not be one of the scores of Black women who would 'suffer through that.' I felt defeated, invisible, and no matter how many times I heard the words 'rejoice, O Daughter' ring from my mom's recording of Handel's Messiah (or its Joyful Celebration), I could find no cause for rejoicing."

We each have our own very personal reasons to be blue at Christmas.

Another United Methodist the Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe began an email this holiday season with this quote from - Jack Boozer, Professor of Religion, Emory University and community activist (1918-1989), "In this strange season when we are suspended between realization and expectation, may we be found honest about the darkness and perceptive of the light."

Rev. Henry-Crowe then continued, “.... In a world of war and conflict, 150 million people worldwide living in homelessness, three percent of the world’s population migrating because of climate change, poverty, pandemics and inadequate access to health care, and an epidemic of violence, it is a dark time. Imagining any light seeping through is difficult. The eradication of injustice, disease, racism, poverty, war, conflict, violence and inequality seems very far off.

But Professor Boozer said, “May we be found honest about the darkness and perceptive of the light.”

The poet Mary Oliver said, “Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift.” It is from within the darkness that a pinpoint of light may best be seen.

We may not feel it is possible to see any light at all after the death of a spouse, a child, a friend. We may ask what light can there possibly be after we just had a feared dementia diagnosis confirmed. Where is the light in realizing we are going to outlive our funds? Personally, and globally, there is plenty of darkness in this world, but as Mary Oliver realized sometimes, darkness is a gift. The 13th century Persian Sufi poet Rumi said, “What hurts you, blesses you. Darkness is your candle.”

I am glad not to drive 16 hours each way to Pennsylvania and back this holiday season. I am happy to have been invited to be with some of you this afternoon. There is light in my darkness.

It is our tradition as part of our Blue Christmas service to invite your sharing. Where is your darkness? Do you see any pinprick of light? May sharing with us be one way to bring some peace to your soul.