

# The Work of Christmas

Homily by Audette Fulbright  
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All Souls Church, New York City

There are those who may wonder, why do Unitarian Universalists gather together on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Jesus? Our long history of debate, our skeptical eye toward the question of unique divinity makes some doubt the practice, our own faithfulness in attempting it. How wrong they are.

We gather, as do people of faith all around the world, for many meaningful reasons. We come together to celebrate the birth of a child who changed the world. We come together to light candles, because we can see the darkness, but have hope we can turn it back yet again. We come together to keep faith with one another, because we do not want to journey alone. We come together because we want to share these moments of quiet and meaning with those we love. We come together to sing, or to hear or speak a word of comfort. We come together, because we want to be a part of life. Whatever stories we tell to encompass these desires, this is why we come together. It is no different for us than for those who gather in other churches, to celebrate on Christmas Eve. Our hearts have more in common than our tongues may speak. Let us remember this.

So this is the work of Christmas Eve – this coming together. But the work of Christmas itself is something else. The remarkable Rev. Howard Thurman shared a prayer that resonates throughout the ages. It is, to me, what we are doing when we gather to celebrate Christmas Eve in this way – we are coming together to remember his words, which are:

*When the song of 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 the people,  
to make music in the heart.*

Let us take this time of togetherness, of hope and song, of candlelight and kindness, and let it be the kindling for a fire of dedication that will last the whole year long – that each of us may find our Christmas work and do it faithfully – returning again next year to bring again our gifts to the altar of humanity and hope.

This is my Christmas wish for you: that you will find your Christmas work, and tend it faithfully, as only you can. Merry Christmas, and may you be blessed in all you do.

*Amen.*