**Reflection for Monday,**

**December 18, 2023**

***Fourth Week of Advent***

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Holidays are a time for rituals, whether public or specific to a person or family. I am glad to be in this ritual time with you, Orinda Community Church. In ways that are very much like what we have done in past years, we will enter into the shortest, darkest days of the year, and infuse this time with new light, new hope, and new love.

It interests me that ritual marks the passage of time, and at the same time, the ritual brings us into a space of timelessness.

Among my favorite moments in the church year? One such moment is watching people walk the labyrinth during our beautiful solstice service. Each person is on their own journey, and yet we are united on our movement toward the divine.

The other moment is when the Christ candle comes down the aisle during the Christmas Eve service and we share that light, illuminating each candle until a glow encircles the sanctuary. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome the light.

We carry forth deepest meaning and faith in these times together and I am grateful that this makes it possible to access the peace and joy that seem in rather short supply globally. All the more reason for us to cherish this time together.

So let me invite you, Beloved Community, to the events of this week:

**On Wednesday, December 20th at 7 p.m.,** we will hold our annual solstice service **in the fellowship hall**. You are invited to walk the labyrinth or simply sit in the quiet, soaking up beautiful music and meditative readings.

**On Sunday, December 24th at 10 a.m.,** we will have our regular 10 a.m. Sunday worship service in the sanctuary. We are delighted that Weston Carpenter will be joining us and playing the piano.

**On Sunday, December 24th at 5 p.m.,** we will have our sparkling Christmas Eve service in the sanctuary. Join us for readings, gorgeous music, and lighting of candles.

**All regular programming will continue as usual *this* week.**

**The week *after* Christmas, regular programming will be paused and the church office will be closed, though Elizabeth is always available for those who have need of support. We will have worship as usual on December 31—yes, New Year’s Eve day—at 10 a.m.**

Sending all my affection and gratitude to each of you during this week of preparation and festivities. May you find time for quiet, pleasure, and those rituals that add meaning to your life and make you whole.

In faith,

Elizabeth