

Intro. To “1st Watch Service”

*These woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
And miles to go before I sleep.”*

Frost’s poem always seemed like a New Year’s poem to me.
As we turn the calender to yet another succeeding year
it can be a new beginning,
like the freshness of new-fallen snow,
the purity of a silent wood.
But entering the future can also feel dark and deep.
The question is, how do we make it lovely?

At New Years many of us muster the courage
to make promises of change,
and to manufacture the hope to keep them.
Promises defined by old wounding.
Promises to amend worn-out ways.
Promises, not only for one’s own little world,
but to better our whole world and the future of all.

This 1st Watch Service was created
to remind us about our rich Judeo-Christian legacy
of promise and hope.
As a people of faith we believe our best promise
is based on the promises of God
and our best hope is renewed through Jesus.

READING ONE

Rev. Jim Gray

Genesis 8:20-22 God's Promise to Noah

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humans, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

22 As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease."

READING TWO

Jane LoBrutto

Genesis 17:1-7 The Sign of the Covenant

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty;^[a] walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³Then Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram,^[b] but your name shall be Abraham,^[c] for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

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READING THREE

Rev. Holly Ross

Genesis 34:8-10

⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The heart of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. ⁹ Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ You shall live with us, and the land shall be open to you; live and trade in it and get property in it."

READING FOUR

Peter Davis

Jeremiah 31:31-34 **A New Covenant**

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

Hebrews 6:13-20 The Certainty of God's Promise

¹³ When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵ And thus Abraham,^[a] having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ Humans, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute among them. ¹⁷ In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, ¹⁸ so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

READING SIX

Jane LoBrutto

Hebrews 11:1-3 and Hebrews 12:1-2

The Meaning of Faith

11 Now faith is the assurance^[a] of things hoped for, the conviction^[b] of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith^[c] our ancestors received approval. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.^[d]

The Example of Jesus

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,^[a] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of^[b] the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Revelation 21:1-5 The New Heaven and the New Earth

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home^[a] of God is among mortals.
He will dwell^[b] with them;
they will be his peoples,^[c]
and God himself will be with them and be their God;^[d]
⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for^[e] the first things have passed away.”

⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also, he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

- Jan. - Supreme Court Justice Stephen Bryer announces retirement
- Pfizer and Moderna Covid vaccines get FDA approval.
- 2021 found to be in top 7 warmest years on record.
Fossil fuel emissions at 40 yr. high.
- Feb. - Russia invades Ukraine as world condemns and intervenes.
US sends 3000 troops to Poland, Germany & Romania.
- Men & Wom's Natl. Soccer Teams reach equal pay agreement.
- Mar. - Florida passes anti-LGBTQ identity education bill
- Myanmar's genocide against Rohingas condemned.
- Sol. Energy Collection tops 1 terrawatt for 1st time.
That's enough to power every home in Europe.
- April. - Twitter agrees to sell to Elon Musk for \$44 bill.
- Once endangered humpback whales now a growing population.
- May - Covid vaccinations reach 1 bill. worldwide.
US marks 1 mill. Covid. deaths.
- Ten killed, 3 injured in mass shooting @ Buffalo supermarket
- 21 killed in shooting in Uvalde Tex. Ele. School - 19 children.
- June - Jan. 6th Insurrection Committee Hearing holds first TV hearing.
- First major federal gun safety legislation passed in decades.
- Largest interest rate raise by The Fed since 1994.
- Supreme Court overturns Roe vs. Wade.
- Ketanji Brown Jackson is 1st black woman Sup. Crt. Judge.
- July - Report finds sales of gas-powered cars now in decline.
- 43 dead from wide-spread flooding in Kentucky

- Boris Johnson steps down as Prime Min. Of U.K.
- Fr. Prime Min. Of Japan, Shinzo Abe assassinated during speech.
- Worlds largest wind farm off coast of England. Enough power for half of NYC.

Aug. - Millions of veterans exposed to toxic burn pits get health care benefits by Congress.

- FBI search Mar-a-Lago for stolen classified documents.

Sept. - Hurricane Fiona cripples Puerto Rico.
Hurricane Ian devastates central Flor. 126 are killed.

- Queen Elizabeth dies as the longest-reigning in Brit. history.

Oct. - Talk-show host Alex Jones guilty of defamation re. Sandy Hook school shootings. Ordered to pay \$965 mill. in damages.

- Iran has largest protests in decades after death of girl by Morality police.
- Paul Pelosi hospitalized after attack by politically motivated home invader.

Nov. -Dems. widen Senate majority, Rebs gain House majority.
Nov. elections show health of American democracy and voting.

- Former Pres. Trump announces run for 2024
- Gunman opens fire on LGBTQ nightclub in Colo. Springs, killing 5, injuring 25.
- Worlds largest active volcano Mauna Loa erupts after 40 years.

Dec. - Jan. 6th Comm. holds final hearing & recommends crim. charges.

- US Dept. Of Energy announces world's 1st man-made nuclear fission.
- Argentina wins World Cup held in Qatar.
- 100 mill. people around the world became refugees in 2022.
- Fr. Pope Ratzinger dies.

