

Rev. Nathan Detering
Sunday, November 18, 2018
“Slice of Humble Pie”

“Here is the world; beautiful and terrible things will happen.

Keep our hearts tender.

Keep our eyes soft.

Keep our words true.

Because this is what we are about:

We know there is no answer but to love one another.

We bear witness against unnecessary destruction.

We gather in community to practice being the person

We say we want to be.

We cannot do everything,

But we can do something, and that something is not nothing.

So forget your perfect offering.

There is a crack in everything

That is how the light gets in.”

It is only November but in Lowe’s the 30ft inflated reindeer and her friend,
The 40ft inflated Santa Claus....

Have already begun their annual early haunting,

And CVS has replaced in the blink of an eye those orange candy corn

Made from ‘natural and artificial ingredients’ that is at once an insult

To both candy and corn

With candy canes as thick as PCV pipe and stocking stuffers that

Would overflow even the socks of the man with the largest feet in the world,

1ft, 4inches. Isn't Google wonderful?

And the Lion's Club in Medway has stacked the rolled up Christmas Trees

Like 10ft tall sentries captured in netting, waiting for the

Home that will be the last stand of their green life.

And yes, Nathan, that's depressing.

Is it too early to feel affects of Seasonal Affective Disorder?

So two questions:

Why does our culture have such a hard time wanting what it has

And being who it is...in this moment, this time, this day...

without flinging us headlong into December such that Black Friday isn't
even on a Friday now,

But Thursday and Wed and Tuesday and Monday and even today?

And second question: why is everything about this time of year
so BIG? So conspicuous! So much of muchness!

But how about we interrupt the rant?

What do we say?

Because our lives are too precious and too short

And what demands our attention and our urgency – like

Errands and emails and lists and gifts and oil changes and expiring

Target cards – aren't always worth the energy and urgency and best parts of
ourselves that we give them,

Right?

Instead this is the work:

To savor, to sip, to admire, to celebrate, to sing, to fight for,

To stand up for, to see, to witness, to reach for each other

And haul each other back to the shore; that is the work.

Oh, and because next week is Thanksgiving,

And because for too long I have received and not given,

And because one shouldn't feel 'good' or 'expert' at something in order

To try,

And because there are lessons to be learned

In the humble task of mixing, cracking, pouring, measuring....

This is the work, too: to bake.

Step 1:

So.....will you join me? (Go down out of pulpit).

Nora Kempner, you ready?

Aprons on (GANS).

Look in big book. Nora, what are we making today?

(Pull out Recipe)

“Title: “Pecan Pie to Die For”

And who’s it from? Uncle Denny.

I choose this recipe for this simple reason:

Because grace means an unearned gift,

And back when Karyn was pregnant with Emerson

And we were figuring out how I could finish seminary

And we couldn’t stay in our Brookline apartment,

It was Denny who lent us the down-payment on an as-is

Condo in Dorchester,

As-is meaning a stove in the kitchen with no counters or sink,

And a toilet with a sink but no shower...

So with Karyn 7 months pregnant and me full-time in school,

It was Denny who lent us the money

And then drove our from St. Louis in his truck, with his tools,

And spent weeks with us putting the kitchen in and the bathroom in,

With just weeks to spare before Emerson was born and we began

Our long journey of figuring out how to be parents when we were,

Frankly, still learning how to adults and be married,

Emerson the definition of our ‘practice baby’

And Denny the definition of extending us unearned and unconditional help....

So that is why, friends, we make this pie...to remind me

Of the times I needed someone, we needed someone,

Because life had laid you low, which is what humble means, 'low'

And you were reliant and even dependent on the gifts of someone else.

Who is that person or people for you?

Step 2:

And as we reflect, Nora, lets assemble our ingredients:

½ butter, 1 cup sugar, 1 cup light corn syrup,

Which is, yes, an absolute contradiction in terms.

Nora, you have all these?

And here can we acknowledge and name the cows that made

This butter, and the sugar cane that made this sugar,

And the sunlight that grew this cane,

And the machines in New Jersey that made this corn syrup,

And the women and men who woke early in the dark morning

And line the factories that make this syrup so that we can have it here...

Step 3:

And now we must combine the butter and sugar and corn syrup

And cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until sugar dissolves.

Use your imagination Nora.

And now, friends, reading that we need to cook over low heat,

Let us cast our vision northward to the towns of Lawrence

And North Andover,

Who this week, still remain without heat and hot water in their homes

After the natural gas explosion in September,

And who this holiday will be trying to say grace, say thank you,

In those cold homes, or in hotel rooms, or in mobile home trailers...

As we all acknowledge how many of the simple things we take for granted,

And are humbled we are by how dependent we are the pipes that snake

Under homes and the people who are supposed to take care of them
And the earth that produces our heat,
And does so not without consequence as it warms and warms our planet...
So Nora, heat this on LOW, ok?

Step 4:

Okay next add four eggs, 1 teaspoon of vanilla and ¼ teaspoon of salt.
And as we do, we give thanks for these eggs given me
By Sierra Bright's chickens in a nod to the first minister, Daniel Gookin,
Who was paid by the church in chickens and firewood...
And the vanilla extracted from the vanilla bean extracted from the Vanilla
Flower that first cultivated by the Aztecs in Mexico thousands of years ago
When there was no threat of border walls....
And the pink Himalayan salt that is mined
At the Khewra Salt Mine in the Punjab province of Pakistan...
And as we measure...
We take a moment to ask who these miners are and if they are
Treated ethically by their employers so that we Nora can sprinkle
The crystals into the bowl, and to find out after the baking is done
And the sermon is over.
Mix well (500 beats).

Step 5:

Add pecans. These coming from the State of Georgia,

The state that very nearly elected the first ever black woman as
Governor, Stacey Abrams,
And who fought a highly contested election against Brian Kemp
That is resulting a federal lawsuit against voter suppression.
And so as we pour in these pecans we are humbled by this process
Called democracy that feels so flawed and vulnerable to those
Hungry for power and is victim to gerrymandering and racism
And access...
And we mix...

Step 6:

And now a delicate part, Nora...we unwrap the already pre-made
Pie pastry and we mold into the glass dish...
And we say praise, praise, praise that such things are possible
So that Nora doesn't have to sift flour and eggs and milk
And then roll it out in front of us, getting all dusty with flour
And having us wait her until possibly after noon....

And so we give thanks for the pastry chefs we will never meet,
And the machines that made this pie dish and the store
That stocked it and the workers who stocked the shelves all
So that we Nora could now pour the mixture into the pie
Dish and we could make Uncle Denny's Pecan Pie To Die For...

Step 7:

Nora, did you remember to preheat the oven to 325?

You did! Thank you! You're great, Nora...

And as you put the pie in the oven

And you set the timer for 50 minutes....

Let's stop for a moment and just notice and pay attention

And notice and feel humble...

....as we cast our vision west to our friends in California...

Who this year have lost homes and towns and, most of all,

Loved ones, in the worst fire in state history....

....as we cast our vision south as thousands of migrants

Work their way to the border where razor wire is waiting for them,

This Thanksgiving it not lost on me or you

That this holiday marks a time when it was many of our forbears

Who were the migrants and the foreigners, right?

....and as we begin to notice the smell of pie cooking, you smell it?

We give things for the nose we have we to smell,

And the mouth we have to taste,

And the hands we have to hold the fork,

And the unaccountable privilege we have to savor food

For the taste and not because, like others, who are starving for every calorie...

And for the simple pleasure of comfort food that gives us comfort

And shows us that we're loved and can love,
And we're taken care of and can take care,
That savoring and tasting and loving and joy and gathering and cooking
And celebrating and singing and waiting for pies in the oven
Nourish our soul, our spirit, our inner life,
And we can't nourish the outer world unless our inner lives are fed,
Right?

Step 8:

And so...guess what Nora? Did you hear that?
Did you hear the ding!
Ding!!
That was a fast 50 minutes!
Pie is ready.
Ready for a slice?
A taste?

And as we chew this prayer:
That this season we will pause and savor...
Will give thanks for the life we didn't earn and the love
We can't buy...
For the people and places that need us to fight,
To stand up for, to celebrate, to witness
As we call each other back to the shore...
For the gifts that depend on others, for those
Who humble, uncredited love and have literally saved us
Time and again....

We give thanks, we give thanks, we give thanks...

As we rise in body or spirit and join in signing

“Life Calls Us On”