

The **Stillspeaking Writers’ Group** is composed of United Church of Christ ministers and authors who collaborate on a variety of resources for people in the church, outside the church, and not so sure about the church. Their motto: “Hearing God where you live (and other surprising places).” Read more about the writers of *Wonder* on page 35.

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Quote by John Edgerton

# Wonder

I N T R O D U C T I O N

I love words. I love the way that they can twist and bend like a cat's back. I love the unpredictable way they can change their meaning as they move through the air between speaker and listener. I love how they can open like a puzzle box filled with unseen compartments and hidden treasures. Take just one word—wonder.

“When I see news about climate change, I wonder what kind of future there will be for a child born today.”

“When I look up into the night sky filled with stars burning brightly at unthinkable distances, my heart is filled with wonder.”

Do you see what I mean? This one word, wonder, is a container that can hold a heart full to bursting just as it can hold a

heart close to breaking. Wonder, too, is the theme that ties together the devotionals in this book. We invite you to hold a wide and expansive understanding of wonder.

Together with God and formed in the scriptures, these devotionals explore what this season of wonder means. They explore what new things God might be calling us to wonder about. They explore anew the gift of this season, that blessed joy of wondering at the marvelous things God is doing in the world

I love words. But as much as I love words, they are nothing compared to The Word, God's Living One, The One whose coming we remember and for whose return we ache.

John Edgerton

## Divinized

M a r y L u t i

***“The One who makes rich is made poor, taking on the poverty of flesh, that I may gain the riches of divinity. The One who is full is made empty, devoid a while of glory, that I may share that glory fully. What is this wealth of goodness? What is this mystery that surrounds me?”***

*Gregory Nazianzen (329-391)*

It's an ancient theological question: Why did God become one of us?

Some Christians believe it was to fix a big problem—to pay the unpayable debt incurred by Adam's sin. When he grows up, Jesus will bridge with his broken body the unbridgeable chasm our disobedience opened between us and God. And if that's what you believe about God's purpose, you stand in a venerable stream of Christian tradition, and I won't say you're wrong.

I will say it's not the only way to imagine why God took a body. There are other venerable traditions, and one of them says the Savior came to divinize us, to give us God's own glory. God emptied out to take humanity in. God stooped down to raise us up. God accepted limits to dissolve the limits that made it seem, tragically, as if God and humans are opposites. The mystery—the wonder—of the Incarnation is that we're not.

In this way of imagining, what we wait for in Advent is not someone to fix us but someone to reveal us to ourselves. The gift on the horizon is not a grim course correction but a mirror, a gaze, a joyous shock of mutual recognition—there, the eternal resemblance, the beauty, the dignity, the shining, shining love.

**O to be the objects of so great an Affection! O this wealth of goodness!**

**O this mystery that surrounds us!**

## Peaceful Presents

Q u i n n G . C a l d w e l l

***“...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks...”*** Micah 4:3

A beautiful image, but it's a lot more complicated than it sounds. I mean, let's say that an Israelite doesn't need his sword any more. What then? Go home, pull out the ol' hammer and anvil from the basement, and do a DIY repurposing of those old decommissioned weapons?

Probably not. You'd have to go to a blacksmith. Who, let's face it, could make more money beating plowshares into swords, war being so profitable and all. So you'd also have to convince him to put off other business to take yours. Which would probably require getting together a bunch of people who agree with you and proving to him that plows are profitable by spending your money on them.

If you really want swords beaten into plowshares you're going to have to work. You're going to have to pay and organize. You're going to have to convince other people, people like you and people who run businesses that do stuff that you can't do yourself, that peace is profitable.

Start with your Christmas list. Choose gifts that are made of renewable resources; that use less plastic (and therefore less oil); that are made by companies that are not also defense contractors. Come up with your own list of requirements for peaceful presents. Ask others for similar gifts.

It won't be enough to get Raytheon into the plow business, but it will be a start.

**God, I believe in your coming realm of peace. Help me to make it real—and profitable.**