

La Posada
December 15, 2012
Caldwell Presbyterian Church
Rev. John Cleghorn

What a joy it is to be here with you all. Today, even on a day of national mourning, we are grateful for so many things.

We all are grateful that the preschool will reopen here in January. We are grateful for our ongoing partnership and ministry. Today, in particular, we are grateful to you for sharing this wonderful tradition with us, one more example of how we have so much to learn from each other as we share our lives together. La Posada is a new part of our Christmas celebration here at Caldwell. It enriches our preparation for the coming of our Lord and, I imagine, will become an annual event. We, your Caldwell family, receive all of these things as "glad tidings" of this wondrous season.

One of my favorite parts of the bilingual worship services we have shared is the Immigrant Creed. We Presbyterians haven't exactly been on the cutting edge of leadership when it comes to inter-cultural ministry and worship. But I am proud that the Immigrant Creed, which is now widely used in America, was written by a Presbyterian.

Two parts of that creed come to mind today:

The first is our claim that we "believe in Jesus Christ, a displaced Galilean, who was born away from his people and his home, who fled his country with his parents when his life was in danger"

We should never forget that Jesus was not only born as an immigrant ... but that he was itinerant for the most important parts of his life on earth. As Jesus said of himself, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Our churches adorn themselves in purple this time of year, the color of royalty to honor Jesus as King. But we also know Jesus spent most of his time with the poor, the oppressed, the outcast, the foreigner and the stranger, people usually on the move. Jesus and his sort were hardly royalty sitting back in comfortable settings. No, they were on the move.

The sum of scripture is a journey, people on the move, people seeking God, often traveling far away from their native land. From Abraham, Moses and Sarah to Peter and Paul centuries later.

But this time of year we are especially reminded that the sum of our lives is a pilgrimage. We are, in that sense, all peregrinos. We're all seeking to make a life and, for those of us gathered here today, we seek to make a life with our God, the God of all nations and all peoples, the God who gathers and unites us all and his children. So in these weeks of Advent, we're all peregrinos moving together toward Bethlehem, toward the manger.

The second claim of the Immigrant Creed that comes to mind for me today is the paragraph that reads: "We believe that the church is the secure home for the foreigner and for all believers who constitute it, who speak the same language and have the same purpose."

"We believe that the church is the secure home"

We need to hear those words in these days, don't we? These are days of such ongoing uncertainty and widely felt insecurity. They are days of conflict among nations and bitter strife among those we have elected to lead us. Yesterday's tragedy at an elementary school in Connecticut is only the latest reminder that we have work to do as a society to make ours a safer nation.

So, we need to hear that there is a secure home for us, a place that will open the doors when we knock, a place where there is shelter from the storm and warmth against the cold, a place where we are welcomed by a hospitable God, a place where we are loved by a protective parent.

So we are here today as a people who actually have a lot in common. Yes, we have traveled different paths, no doubt about that. Some paths have been longer and far more difficult than others. Some paths have required particular courage and commitment to a better future. In that sense, some of you have taught some of us what it means to be family, to take great risk and go to great lengths for the good of the children.

But we are all peregrinos, pilgrims, and today, at least, we have reached the same destination.

Like the shepherds in the story of Jesus' birth, we pilgrims seek the same source of the light that pushes back the darkness of the night sky in these days of national tragedy and mourning.

Like the shepherds, we pilgrims will find the same thing this Advent, a Prophet, Priest and King introduced to us in the form of a little child in swaddling clothes.

As on the first Christmas, we will gather around the manger in a circle of diversity – rich and poor, young and old, of different nationalities and cultural heritages – and kneel before our savior.

And, as on the first Christmas, we will be sent out to tell the world of what we have seen.

All that is old is new again.

To our Latino brothers and Latina sisters, thank you for bringing us a new part of Christmas this year.

Feliz navidad.

En nombre del Padre, el Hijo, y el Espiritu Santo. Amen

(In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.)

