

The Divine Comedy:

Notes from Pastor Darryl

January 2019

I love Best Of Lists! I always look forward to these lists because it helps me discover new things in the areas of music, movies, books, television shows. So, I thought I would publish my “Best of KCC 2018” and highlight a few things that touched and spoke to me this past year. In highlighting what spoke to me and inspired me in 2018, hopefully it gets you reflecting on the ways KCC has touched you and lifted your spirits over the last calendar year. So in no particular order ... here is **Pastor Darryl’s “Best Of 2018”**

1. Praying at a member’s Embryo Transfer Procedure

After 18 years in professional, ordained ministry, there aren’t a lot of firsts that I get to experience anymore. But this past summer, I was so privileged and humbled to hold the hand of a parishioner as she went through the procedure of an embryo transfer. It was a powerful experience where God’s presence was felt by all in the room. It was not only a new experience, but one that I will always cherish.

2. Watching The Live Nativity

The event formerly known as *Las Posada* is a KCC favorite. For 10 years, it has brought Christmas to life for many in our community. This year’s Nativity was remarkable. It was incredibly special for me to watch Kimi embody our “Mary” as she rode a pony through Kensington. We saw new youth step up and provide vital leadership. We’ve had some turnover and lots of growth within our youth group, and the group is full of incredible young people.

3. Hearing the Youth Group Discussion on Gun Control and Fear following the shooting at Parkdale High School

“... and [the] child[ren] will lead them.” The Wednesday following the horrific events on Ash Wednesday at Parkdale High School, our

youth spent the majority of their session discussing gun control laws, the culture of fear and violence in our society, and what might be done. During this 60-minutes of discussion the youth hardly ever totally agreed with each other, but unlike so many adults, they listened intently to each other, were respectful in their disagreements, and showed a great deal of love for each other. I so often walk away on Wednesday night inspired and awed by the insight and depth of our youth!

4. Creating the Young Adult Exchange with Maryhill Parish (Glasgow, Scotland)

Over the last few years, we have been building a relationship with Maryhill Parish in Glasgow, Scotland. This summer we solidified our relationship with them by doing an exchange of young adults. Azar, Nik, and Rex interned in Glasgow, and we welcomed Morven and Talulla Bell to KCC. This exchange had a profound impact on the interns and congregations, alike. Rev. Stuart Matthews and I are working on ways to continue strengthening our bond. But until then, we'll just bask in the glow of the joy this exchange had on us all.

5. Going through the Budget Process for the 2019 Budget

We turned things upside down in creating the 2019 budget. And in doing so we accomplished a level of transparency in the budget process that we hadn't reached in the years I've been at KCC. The new way of creating the budget was sometimes frustrating and the leadership of the church wrestled with what our driving principles ought to be, and in doing so, conversations were heated at times, but the end result was a budget that I think is fair, (almost) balanced, and will move us forward into a bright and exciting future. Thanks be to God.

6. Attending the Vigil for Tree of Life Synagogue

On Oct 29, there was no place I would rather have been. And yet, on Oct 29, I wish I had been any place else because I tire of vigils for mass shootings in our country. I tire of attending vigils when the leaders of our country refuse to do anything to curb the violence.

But on October 29th, in attendance with over 1000 of my fellow San Diegans from various backgrounds, creeds, and traditions, I was moved to not give up on my faith that with God's help, we shall overcome one day the addiction we in the United States have to guns, and we will finally come to live in peace with one another.

7. Presiding at Dude Stephenson's Celebration of Life

I am always humbled to preside at any funeral. But Dude's Celebration of Life was better than a Broadway show! That's because the subject matter – the extraordinary life of Clarence "Dude" Stephenson – drew out the very best in us who were so privileged to remember and honor him. We sat in the theatre at SDSU, a congregation of the sad and thankful. And through song, poetry, scripture, eulogies, and prayer, we thanked God for giving Dude to us all the days of his earthly life, and we pledged ourselves to continue Dude's life work – to help young people find their voice and use it to make the world a more beautiful place.

8. Watching the Last Lecture Series during Lent

I read the book, *The Last Lecture*, and was immediately struck with a moment of sheer genius: I ought to give a platform for KCC members and friends to share their insights and beliefs as if they were giving their last lecture ever. During this past Lent, we did just that. And the six people who shared, showed such courage, depth, and faith. If you were present for the lectures, then you know how powerful they were. If you didn't attend, then you should watch them on our website at: kensingtonucc.com/grow/adult-learning.

9. Leading the Closing Worship Service at the Fall Retreat at Camp Stephens

You should all come on the next retreat to Camp Stevens. There is something about worshipping in that space on Sunday morning as the sun rises over the peaks, the wind and the birds harmonize, and the pigs give a homily. Artist, James Hubbell, created a beautiful space called *The Chapel of the Transfiguration*. And I believe the 32 people who attended the retreat were transfigured in that space. One

retreatant took communion for the first time in over two decades, so overwhelmed by the Spirit was this person. I'm telling you ... you should come to the retreat!

10. Watching & Discussing “GET OUT” in the Sanctuary

Horror movies and church usually don't go well together. But in this case, hosting a watch party of the Oscar Award winning *GET OUT* on MLK Jr. Weekend for our UCC Partnership sisters and brothers, and then delving into a real and hard conversation on race and justice – all of which took place in our sanctuary – made for a wonderful marriage between horror and church. I walked away entertained by the movie, deeply moved by the sharing of the people in attendance, and motivated to do what I can to be a more just and caring person. Maybe we ought to show more horror movies at church? Hmmmm...

There you have it. My **Best Of 2018**. I could easily list 10, 20, 30 more on this list. I would love to hear what moved you this past year.

And let us be open to how, when, and where God will present to us a “Best Of” moment in the coming year.

Peace. Love. Understanding.

Pastor Darryl