

## Hopes and Fears

Of all the years, this one I'll remember as a time of opposites. Fires on one coast, floods on the other. Fake news and fact-based reality. Black Lives and white supremacists.

In the workplace, women stood up for themselves. On the football field, men knelt and bowed their heads. In Washington, every day brought new hopes for the best, new fears for the worst. The world seemed to oscillate from dark to light, then dark again.

Or did it? Angels bending near the earth may have a better view, and I think they see something else. Life isn't just some perpetual motion machine swinging back and forth from pole to pole. It's a spiraling upward, like the trees we decorate together.

A wise man once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Things have a way of working out.

Centuries ago, men wrote the songs we know today as carols. It isn't habit that brings them back to mind each year. It's Hope and Love and Good prevailing.

I'll spend the holidays in New England, where the sun goes down at four o'clock. I'll drive down a darkened causeway, lit only by the stars, and into the woods behind the beach and the cluster of cottages I know so well. When I was little, the town barely plowed this narrow road. If we went there in December, and we seldom did, the woods felt dark and deep.

Now retirees stay all winter, families come for the holidays, and the lights are on. Not just house lights. Little white candles in every window. Icicle garlands draped along the rafters. Spotlights shining on silver wreaths. These aren't decorations; they're beacons!

Much the way smoke jumpers light "control burns" to fight fire with fire, we take our stand against the night. In thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light. The stars in the heavens look down. And we look up.