

## OPENING WORDS

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed *ahdam* from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *ahdam* became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put *ahdam* whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took *ahdam* and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

## INVOCATION

O God, in giving us stewardship over things on earth, you made us fellow gardeners in your creation: Give us wisdom and reverence so to use the resources of nature, the imaginations of our hearts and the love for others that we may embody your love on earth. We ask your presence with us this evening, not only to rededicate this garden, to remember this place as holy so that we, and generations yet to come, may hold this place sacred as a memorial to those we love. Amen.

## WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

These gardens were originally created that there may be a place of remembrance of the saints of God in our midst, and a place where family members could come and remember, and even visit, those they love who have left this plane of existence.

Creating such a garden has deep biblical roots. Gardens were understood be sacred ground (remember the Garden of Eden, and even Gethsemane). Thus they were protected by hedges of thorns (Isa. 5:5) or by walls of stone (Prov. 24:31). "Watch-towers" or "lodges" were also built in them (Isa. 1:8; Mark 12:1), in which their keepers sat. On account of their designed privacy they were frequently used as places for private prayer and communion with God (Gen. 24:63; Matt. 26:30-36; John 1:48; 18:1, 2). The dead were sometimes buried in gardens. They also served, then, as places of remembrance.

After FP moved to this location the dream was articulated to have a memorial garden. Getting this done was not easy. It had been talked about for some time and yet it had not become a reality until the moderator of the church at that time, Jim Vandermill, asked Herb Dunham to chair the Task Force which planned the whole thing. Herb succeeded magnificently. Not only do we have what we see here, but the garden was planned so that once the present columbarium has reached capacity another tier can be built on the north side. This was also Herb's vision. He was truly the person who put this thing together and made it fly. Herb, thank you! And of course a deep expression of gratitude must be given to Arlene Hutchison who also served on the task force, and who is organizing the reception tonight. And finally gratitude must be expressed to all those who donated funds to have it built, particularly the astounding generosity of the Knight family.

Donna Dedecker, the sculptor of Loveland, CO was the sculptor of the beautiful statues we have here. And a large thank you must also go to Mr. and Mrs. William Worth for contributing the

first sculpture in memory of their parents and the second contributed by Bill in Ellen's memory. It is these sculptures that are now illuminated.

And so we come to the reason for this rededication: the Trask family wanted a living memorial to a remarkable lady named Melissa. And she WAS a remarkable lady. So the Trasks contacted the church to look for a way that her radiant smile and personality could still shine brightly. Through the exchange of ideas everyone became excited by the possibility of lighting this garden at night so that it may radiate the holiness of this space. Speaking personally, it has done this beyond the scope of my imagination. I had no idea it would look so good.

As you all know, Fritz could not be here tonight because he suffered a series of strokes last month. I was just visiting with Fritz this afternoon and he is doing well. He sends his love and his care to all of you.

Thank you to the Trask Foundation, and thank you, Melissa for being such an inspiration of light. You will be remembered in this garden of light.

So here we are after nightfall, seeing the beauty of this spot, seeing the sculptures of children illuminated, and celebrating this event in Advent—the season of preparation for Christmas, the birth of the Christ child on a holy night. I am reminded of an appropriate poem by Sophia Fahs:

Each night a child is born is a holy night.  
Fathers and Mothers  
Sitting beside their children's cribs  
Feel glory in the wondrous sight of a new life beginning.  
Each night a child is born is a holy night –  
A time for singing,  
A time for worshipping,  
For heaven and earth are joined in the new creation.

#### THE ACT OF REDICATION

Each time I do a committal service here in the courtyard I pick up some dust from the ground and say the sacred words of good-bye: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, for it is sacred to remember the words of scripture we heard earlier: then the Lord God formed *ahdam* from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *ahdam* became a living being. So at the time of parting we acknowledge that the breath has left the body, but yet the soul lives on. And each time we do a service here it is not only I who throw dirt on the urn, but every person present is invited to do so. The act is sacred.

We are standing on holy ground here. We are in the presence of saints who have gone before us and who lived lives of beauty and grace. And we are so blessed to be able to dedicate this space as a place of memorial for those we love. So . . .

Let us pray:

Creating God, you took the dust of the earth and with it fashioned every living thing: all animals and plants and flowers. And with that same dust you fashioned us and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and infused in our souls your divine image of love. Thus it is with the love that

you created us, O God, that we rededicate this garden as a place of memorial for those whom we love and who are with us no more. May it be for us always a sanctuary of peace, a haven of rest, and a temple of memory. May those who donated to its creation and renovation, and may those who rest here in eternal peace, know your love, O God, and your living presence both now and in the time to come. Amen.

To close I would like to read a poem written by Fritz Trask's mother, and read at her memorial service:

Cycle of life and death without an end,  
Eternal change, transition, steady slow –  
The old, unaltered sequence starts again.  
Blossom and leaf and polished fruit will bend  
The supple boughs, and in the fields will grow  
And bloom once more Demeter's golden grain.

And so it ever shall be. Amen.