

For This

(written for the Copper Beech Tree Lighting, Portland Museum of Art,
2019, by Linda Aldrich)

For the copper beech tree
older than we are,
extending roots
past the time
of our children's grandchildren,
for the small creatures
sleeping their furry sleep
within it, and the birds
with tucked wings on its branches,
for those of us standing
here in the cold sea air
to commemorate

we light these lights

for these days of candled prayers
and wishes lifted
for those we loved who are gone
and for those soon to leave us,
their eyes set on something
inside themselves
far, far away

we light these lights

for those who sit alone
in rooms that grow dark,
for the secret pain carried
silently in the marrow
of memory,
for the body trying to heal,
for words unsaid
and words wished back

we light these lights

for the displaced walking
worried paths
for those huddled
in doorways
and over heating grates
for the brutality of poverty
and the barricaded minds
for the times justice failed
and hope dimmed

we light these lights

may this bright tree call the moon
to its shoulder and the night
into gentleness
may the stars know
we place lights in our window
for all to see that our ways
yearn toward peace
and our hearts toward kindness.