

## WILDERNESS WORDS

### Editors

If there is anything that you would like to have included in the Newsletter: 313-673-6519 and [dmc@chem.wayne.edu](mailto:dmc@chem.wayne.edu) or [pcoleman@chem.wayne.edu](mailto:pcoleman@chem.wayne.edu)

### This Sunday:

#### Leading:

**Preaching:** Program (24) & Carol (25)

**Presiding:** Carol (24 & 25)

#### Readings this week:

#### Christmas Eve & Christmas

#### Day:

24th & 25th December, 2016

**First Reading:** Isaiah 9:2-7

**Psalm:** Isaiah 9:2-7

**Epistle:** Titus 2:11-14

**Gospel:** Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

(or Script or Alternate Readings as Selected.)



### Reflections:

By Sarah A. Stover

**Advent:** the season of anticipation and expectation regarding the birth of Christ (although I suspect that many of us are waiting for the proverbial other shoe to drop in this dumpster fire of a year.) I have noticed that there are many people who are afraid of what's next lately. There is, however, an overarching and fascinating theme in the Gospel scriptures both for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and for the coming week: fear not. Don't be afraid.

Easy, right? (Cue hysterical laughter.)

Both Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-4/15-20 contain variations of that idea, even though they were directed at different audiences. In Matthew, it was directed at a man who was engaged to a suddenly (and unexpectedly) pregnant young woman (who wasn't yet his wife. The social stigma around that alone would have terrifying implications.) In Luke, it was directed at some (likely tired and cold) shepherds. (I, too, would honestly have pooped masonry if a host of angels showed up proclaiming the glory of God in the middle of the night. Either that or I would have wondered who laced my food with psychoactive substances...)

It's easy to be frightened. Fear, after all, is a natural response to a perceived threat. There's certainly no shortage of things to fear: unstable geopolitical climates, health issues, climate change, financial strains, icy roads, the perceived loss of humanity and civil discourse... this list could go on and on to the point of nausea. Given these things, paired with the fact that many of us are reeling from profound loss this year, it's easy to be afraid. What's next? To quote Clark Griswold in National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, "Worse!? How could they get any worse!? Take a look around you, Ellen! We're at the threshold of Hell!" We are left standing in this mire, wondering how much more can our hearts handle. We are left



*Inviting Mystery, Embracing  
Compassion, Encountering Christ.*

## Forums: 2016 - 2017

Forums — we grab our coffee and treats and spend an hour learning.

**Jan.** — Immigration  
(tent.)

**Feb.** — Sacraments

**March** — Arts and social change

**April** — The Ten Commandments

**May** — Prayer.

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### Notes:

- 1.) Our **Christmas Eve** service will begin at 5:30pm. **Christmas Day**, as normal, at 10:30am.
- 2.) The SOTW **Annual Meeting** will be held on **January 15, 2017** following the 10:30 service
- 3.) **Shower for Sarah & Kyle. Sunday, Jan. 29th** at Solbakken. Save the date!



standing, sorely afraid, wondering if God can hear our plaintive cries... or if He even cares.

Yet in this fear, there is a strange, small redemption of all these terrible happenings. In Matthew, Joseph was reassured — that this unexpected child would do something incredible. That infant would grow up to save the world. In Luke, the shepherds were told about this baby who came to save them — not from being cold while watching sheep, but from far greater things.

The point I am trying to make here is that throughout the New Testament, we are told not to fear. I don't think it's saying that fear is bad, but to allow fear to dictate our lives and actions is limiting ourselves and how God can work miracles through us.

Imagine how wonderful the world could be if we worked towards life after fear. How many hate acts would be stopped before they could be committed? How many refugees would be safe and secure? How many tattered relationships could experience reconciliation? How many people would love without reservation? How many dreams would be chased, callings answered, and goals accomplished? How would our own lives look if we moved beyond fear, trusting that the same God who came to us in the form of a dependent child would care for us in the same loving manner?



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**From Anna Ashcroft:** “Many are asking about service arrangements for Steve. With the upcoming holidays it seemed to make sense to do this early next month instead. Therefore, a service will be held on **Saturday, January 7th at 1:00pm in St. Paul, MN**. Details and a full obituary notice will be released at a later date. Please spread the word far and wide.”

**For Erv Brown:** Funeral services will be held at Memorial Church, Bolton Hill, 1407 Bolton Street, Baltimore on **January 7, 2017, at 2 pm** with a reception to follow. The family requests donations be made in Erv's name to Partners in Care c/o Memorial Church, Bolton Hill, 1407 Bolton Street Baltimore Md A full obituary can be read at: <http://m.legacy.com/obituaries/baltimoresun/obituary.aspx?n=ervin-brown&pid=183122065&referrer=0&preview=True>

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On a happier note: The Coleman's have been blessed to have visits in the D by Sarah and Kyle Stover in November, and this past weekend by Shawn, Dave, Nicole, and Christopher Howe. It was special; on Sunday we all prayed for Steve and for Erv and their families at Christ Church, Detroit.

