

## *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:** Lee  
**Preaching:** Carolyn  
**Presiding:** Hillary

### Readings this week:

***Baptism of the Lord, 8 January, 2017***

**First Reading:** Isaiah 42:1-9  
**Psalm:** Psalm 29  
**Epistle:** Acts 10:34-43  
**Gospel:** Matthew 3:13-17

*(Click on citation to link directly to the reading.)*



### Reflections:

*By Mary Ellen Ashcroft*



### Footprints

When I was working with college students, the one, great taboo was ‘cheesy-ness.’ You could be anything else, but don’t be cutesy or sappy. I joined in their sentiments, seeing myself as very superior--aesthetically, intellectually, and theologically-- to ‘cheesy.’

For years, I could not stand that very cheesy poem (which often appears on cards) called “Footprints.” In “Footprints” the speaker reviews her life with Jesus as if she’s following two sets of footprints on a beach. At three or four excruciating periods in her life, she’s surprised to see only one set of prints. She complains, “Jesus, why weren’t you there in the hardest, the worst times? Why did you abandon me then?” And Jesus replies, “Those were the times when I carried you...”

*Inviting Mystery, Embracing  
Compassion, Encountering Christ.*

Cheesy. Sappy. Sentimental.

The last time I went through major suffering—when my ex walked out on our family and I was left trying to hold everything together—I hoped I had received my full lifetime allotment of agony. When, months later, people asked about that time, I’d say, “It was horrific. Excruciating. I didn’t know I would survive. I didn’t know I wanted to survive. But now....well, I won’t ever have to go through that again.”

No, not that. But this terrible loss of my dear Steve.

In some ways, it is helpful to be ‘acquainted with grief,’ – the Isaiah quote that appears in Handel’s Messiah. I know grief well enough to know that bottomless depths and raw despair will lessen, although the loss will always remain. I know that there will be other parts to my life that will be very much worth living. I know this suffering will change me--just as Jacob wrestled with an angel, and said, “I will

**Forums: 2016 - 2017**

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

**Jan.** — Forum on Immigration (*details to follow.*)

**Feb.** — Sacraments

**March** — Arts and social change

**April** — The Ten Commandments

**May** — Prayer.

**Vicar:**

Mary Ellen Ashcroft

Phone: 218-387-1536

<maryellenvicar@gmail.com>

**Assisting Priest:**

Carolyn Schmidt

Phone: 218- 387-1806

<madrecj@aol.com>

[www.spiritofthewilderness.org](http://www.spiritofthewilderness.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/SpiritoftheWilderness>

Box 1115 Grand Marais, MN 55604



not let you go unless you bless me.” I’m asking that this loss mysteriously bless me, bless many, by making us deeper and more loving.

But being acquainted with grief goes further. There is a remarkable gift of Presence-- the ‘peace that passes understanding.’ When I first saw the “Footprints” poem, after my earlier suffering, I read it, expecting to think: “Cheesy.” But instead I thought, “Oh..... Darn..... It’s true..... I was carried... “

During this season of terrible loss, I have felt those ‘everlasting arms’ carrying me. Many people have said they are praying for me, and I feel it. At a profound level I have a deep peace, a solid knowing of God. This comfort is a great miracle—although not the one I’d hoped for. I’m very grateful that in my life right now, only one set of footprints shows on the sand. MEA

**Notes:**

1.) The SOTW **Annual Meeting** will be held on **January 15, 2017** following the 10:30 service.

2.) **Ruby’s Pantry, Tuesday, 10 January, 2017.** (Note: Our local Ruby’s Pantry has given out 100 free gift certificates to all the Operation Family Christmas folks and about 50 others to people in need in Cook County, but we have to get donation to pay for these! Can you donate an extra \$20.00 to cover one family? Send a Check to Ruby’s Pantry P.O. Box 5 Grand Marais, Mn Thanks for your help!)



3.) **Shower for Sarah & Kyle. Sunday, Jan. 29th** at Solbakken. Save the date!



# Stephen David '(Steve)' Ashcroft



Ashcroft, Stephen (Steve) David 37, died at home surrounded by friends and family on Dec 14, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Anna, his two children, Henry and Alice, his parents Rev Ernie Ashcroft (Bette) and Rev Mary Ellen Ashcroft (Suzanne), his siblings Andrew (Sarah) and Susannah Kallaus (Chris), stepsiblings, nieces and nephews, and a multitude of friends. Born in South Africa, Steve was raised in the Twin Cities. He was a graduate of Minnehaha Academy, majored in African History at Kenyon College, and had been studying at Hamline University to become an elementary education teacher, a natural career choice which he had waited years for a chance to pursue, when he was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer. Steve placed high value on relationships and he loved making new friends wherever he went. Even in his last months he was making plans to invite new friends to dinner. He was an avid reader, a writer, an athlete, a lapsed bird watcher, and he loved a wide variety of music (except bluegrass). He was a walking encyclopedia of lyrics, and often quoted lines from songs and books to fit any context or conversation. A favorite line of Steve's was by the band, Silver Jews: "You can't change the feeling, but you can change your feelings about the feeling." Steve was a dear friend to all who met him, and he will be greatly missed. A memorial service will be held at St. John the Evangelist, 60 Kent St N, St. Paul, 55102, on Sat, Jan 7th at 1:30pm. In lieu of flowers, please consider memorials to fund Steve's children's education, as well as a story of Steve to share with the family. [Washburn-McReavy.com](http://Washburn-McReavy.com) Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

*Published on December 31, 2016*

**Mary Ellen notes that *all* are welcome to attend the Memorial Service.**

**From Anna Ashcroft:** Hello all. Thank you for all your messages, text messages, emails, facebook messages, cards, etc. I couldn't have felt more loved and supported throughout this difficult time. Your hearts and minds have really held us up since the beginning, and it has been nothing short of amazing.

Lots of love, Anna



**Addresses:**

Anna Ashcroft;  
3541 Park Ave. S  
Minneapolis, Mn 55407

Mary Ellen / Suzanne  
P.O. Box 1093  
*WindCradle*  
2909 E. Hwy 61  
Grand Marais, MN 55604

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**Christmas Eve (thanks to Ellen):**



