

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 or pcoleman@chem.wayne.edu

This Sunday:

Leading: Beth
Preaching: Carolyn
Presiding: Carolyn

Readings this week:

**Fourth Sunday After Epiphany,
 29 January, 2017**

First Reading: Micah 6:1-8
Psalm: Psalm 15
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

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



Reflections:

By *Ellen Stubbs*

(Jan. 22nd, 2017 homily)

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined."



*Inviting Mystery, Embracing
 Compassion, Encountering Christ.*

I can't recall other days when the same text has been repeated in both the Old Testament and Gospel readings. That says to me this must be significant, and indicates its great importance. The people of Israel had endured more than one period of deep darkness, suffering through invasions and occupations by neighboring empires, captivities in Egypt and Babylon, and destruction of the temple. Thanks to Handel, I think of the text now as Isaiah's prophecy of the arrival of the Messiah. But it seems to me to have special importance to us today, this week, to our nation, our community, and our congregation, just as it did to the nation of Israel in the time of Isaiah.

In the times of Isaiah and Jesus, darkness was not easily dispelled-- you couldn't flip a switch or turn on your flashlight. Darkness meant danger, risk, fear, uncertainty. And even now, if our power goes off or our batteries are dead, we can find the darkness foreboding.

While Paul doesn't speak directly of darkness or light, it seems to me that his epistle speaks to our condition today, both nationally and locally. "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, that there be no divisions among you...it has been reported to me...that there are quarrels among you." Sound familiar? Paul could be an exasperated father speaking to a family council. And the small group of believers in Corinth was behaving like a bickering family (perhaps presaging the schisms that beset Christianity for centuries thereafter).

Sowing division is a very powerful tool of darkness, separating us from each other and from God-- an effective way of dousing our lights. These days are troubled and troubling, with discord and distrust threatening our social fabric. Many of our neighbors feel more vulnerable than

Forums: 2016 - 2017

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

Jan. — Forum on the Border Patrol (*details below.*) This Sunday!

Feb. — Sacraments

March — Arts and social change

April — The Ten Commandments

May — Prayer.

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ever before. Their lights are flickering very feebly.

Darkness seems to have descended on us recently, with deaths of vibrant young men and gifted pastors, and an election promising uncertain consequences for our nation. Many Americans fear we are now living in a land of deep darkness, and it can be hard to shake the feeling that something has fundamentally changed forever. This leads me back to the Collect for the first Sunday of Advent: "Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

What are the works of darkness that we can cast away? To me, they range from the soul-destroying "felonies" of hate, rage, violence, unbridled greed, chaos, to the everyday "petty misdemeanors" we all have encountered: fear, division, distrust, cynicism, despair, hopelessness-- the things that keep us living in darkness, feeling powerless.

But that darkness is not our destiny! Look at the start of today's Old Testament reading: "There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish." Think about the Christmas Eve service, with the light carried by so many named and unnamed saints through the darkest times in history. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." None of us alone can be the great light, but all of us together can live last week's Collect: "Jesus Christ is the light of the world: grant that your people, illuminated by your word and sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory." And last week's psalm: "I will give you as a light to the nations"; this week's: "The Lord is my light and my salvation". So many images of light! So many lights that together can become a great light.

Each of us carries in us the spark of God-- the Holy Spirit-- that has been recognized by cultures, religions and traditions around the world. The Sanskrit "Namaste" could be translated "the divine light in me salutes the divine light in you", and is an ancient greeting between Hindus throughout South Asia. I find it resonates with me, and it suggested something for me for 2017.

This year I decided on a New Year's resolution-- something I rarely do, as the track record for resolutions is dismal. But it seemed especially important in this turbulent time, so here goes. I will work to see that spark of God, that divine light in every person I meet, even in those who I think must have extinguished it. It will take work, and it will change how I relate to some people. I hope it will bring new light to some of my interactions.

That spark needs nurturing and fuel, and we need to support it in each other-- to fan it when it seems dim, to feed it with hope and encouragement and love. To rekindle it in those who seem to

have lost it. And to join our sparks to countless others to create the great light that will banish the darkness. That may have started yesterday.

This won't be a weekend project-- we'll be in it for the long haul. The persistent purveyors of discord and darkness are not going away, and we need every light to shine brightly, using the tools of the light as Jesus did-- tools which will always overpower the dark: vision, creativity, love, kindness, justice, optimism, imagination, compassion, generosity, speaking truth, spreading joy, creating relationships, protecting the vulnerable, building bridges of reconciliation.

At the end of today's Gospel Jesus starts his ministry, calling disciples to join him, proclaiming the good news, performing healing miracles. He, and our times today, are calling us to be the light that breaks through the darkness. Let's put on the armor of light and join our neighbors and millions of Americans and people of good will across our planet being God's great light in the world.

Notes:

- 1.) **Forum, Sunday, Jan. 29th**, immediately after Church: Brandon Law, supervisor at Grand Marais Border Patrol station will present on Sunday, January 29, on the topic of the mission, purpose and work of the Border Patrol. He is very much looking forward to it and is planning to attend the worship service before the presentation..
- 2.) The **Art Show is ON!!**, the topic/title of the art show is "**Kindling Curiosity: Lighting the Creative Spark.**" It will open March 10th, duration is likely 2 - 3 weeks. Stay tuned!!
- 3.) **Dorothy Danielson's** knee replacement is Jan. 25th; please pray for her.
- 4.) While Danielson's are out for the next few weeks, we need **church cleaners**. Please sign up with Suzanne (387-1536).
- 5.) Jan. 30th, 6:00 PM. **Maggie Anderson** will host an ethnic themed potluck, Fell free feel to invite others. Her address and directions: 100 Isak Ridge, Lutsen. (Directions: up the Caribou Trail 1.7 miles to High Forest. Right on High Forest. Left on Maple Leaf, left on Isak Ridge and then a quick left into the drive; fire marker 100 if you can still see it. 4wheel drive a plus but not essential. 651-699-6076.)

Shower for Sarah & Kyle. THIS Sunday, Jan. 29th at Solbakken.

Couples shower for Sarah, Kyle and baby Reese. Sunday, January 29, after church and the forum. They need baby clothes size 9 mos. or older, board books, or a "stroller" fund. Gentleman, please bring a photo of you as an infant or toddler. Don't worry--you'll get it back. Bring a package of diapers (any size) and you'll be included in a drawing for a fabulous prize. Questions? Ginnypadz@gmail.com or 218-877-7551 or 507-421-9584.

Please bring a dish to share. Chicken cacciatore and desert will be provided. There will be a power strip to plug in slow cookers to warm items.



Subject: Coming up in Hibbing: Building Bridges Across Culture and Race

Friends in Northeast Minnesota, I'm reaching out to you to invite you to take part in a course coming up at the School for Formation. This course offers an in-person day in **Hibbing** -- much more accessible to you than Collegeville or Faribault. Take a look -- I hope you'll join in! This course is a great opportunity to do some deep work on your own approach to cultural and racial difference in light of the Racial Reconciliation Mission Opportunity this year.

Building Bridges Across Culture and Race Link: <https://schoolforformation.org/learn/about/catalog/dismantling-racism/>

*A seven-week online course with one in-person day | February 20 - April 10, 2017
Meets in person on March 4, 2017 in Hibbing and in St. Paul -- choose your preferred location*

- Essential learning for personal growth for leaders -- the first step in reconciliation work
- Tools for helping your leadership become even more welcoming across difference
- Take this course with other leaders from your faith community for maximum impact

The first 8 people to register from Northeast Minnesota can use the code **NORTHEAST** to take half off the registration fee. (Remember to click 'APPLY' after you put in your code to see the updated fee.)

Please reach out if you have questions -- I'd love to help.

Peace,
Susan

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