

# Wilderness Words

Newsletter—

October 29, 2014

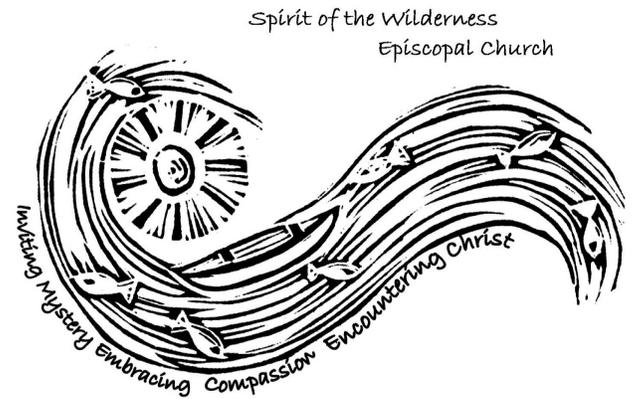
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Vicar, Mary Ellen Ashcroft

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## Vicar's Report

The last few weeks have affirmed something for me: the crucial nature of our welcome at Spirit of the Wilderness. People coming to church, people I've been chatting with in other settings, people I meet for spiritual direction in the cities—I'm been given such a strong sense of people's deep spiritual longing. But for many, along with that longing is a sense that church isn't open to them. Perhaps they didn't believe enough or had been told that there was something wrong with them or simply because they had outgrown a childhood god: but this sense of longing and yet alienation is strong.

As I was chatting with an old friend and colleague in Minneapolis Monday about this, she said, "You know, Mary Ellen, this is the challenge the church is facing. Many people carry this sense of longing and alienation, and the church has not been good at reaching out, welcoming them DESPITE. This is pioneering territory you're in...it's uncharted."

Twenty years ago, people went to church because they went to church. That is no longer the case. We at SOTW are noticing this and responding to it, but it is also affecting other churches. Soon, churches will not be able to be as unwelcoming to visitors as many are. Even mega churches will feel this crunch.

As we consider who we are as a church, "welcoming" has emerged as a key word. But as I consider these encounters I've had over the last few weeks, I realize this "welcome" is deeper than shaking someone's hand as they come in the door. It has to do with an ethos of deep acceptance. We want people to join us for the journey as we all grow deeper. We believe Christ is inviting us all to follow.

How can we at Spirit of the Wilderness more fully embody Christ's welcome? How can we at Spirit of the Wilderness more fully embody Christ's welcome both inside and outside our walls?

Not only embody, but express: How can we at Spirit of the Wilderness more fully express Christ's welcome in the message we portray? How can we be clear enough that people will know this is who we are?

Not only embody, express, but also support: How can we at Spirit of the Wilderness support—with time, talents and treasure—Christ's welcome?

Blessings, Mary Ellen



Spirit of the Wilderness women live up to our name!!

Border Trail overlook of the Pigeon River—thanks to Ellen for her pictures.

### Coming Up!

Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, All Saints—bring pictures of loved ones you want to remember.

Nov. 5th, 6:30—Bishop’s Committee Meeting @ Schmidt’s.

Nov. 13th, 6 PM Centering Prayer at Schmidt’s.

November 7th and 8th—”All Hearts are Open” liturgy workshop at St. John’s Linden Hills—let me know if you’re interested!

Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> is stewardship Sunday.

Nov. 13th, Empty Bowls at St. John’s Church. SOTW does clean up.

Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> A forum after church on “Difficult passages of the Bible” by Hillary Freeman.

Nov. 26th, 7:00-8:00 PM—Thanksgiving service at Maple Hill.

Dec. 3rd, 6:30—Bishop’s Committee Meeting

Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> —A forum after church on the book of the year—the Gospel of Mark! Carol Mork.

Dec. 7th SOTW leads worship at The Care Center.

Thanks to those ‘retiring’ from Bishop’s Committee—Lee and Val.

Lessons for All Saints:

Revelation 7:9-17  
I John 3: 1-3  
Matthew 5: 1-12

Who are some of the people you think of as “saints”? What are their qualities?

**This Sunday:**

Leading—Lee  
Preaching—Beth and Suzanne  
Presiding—Mary Ellen  
Music—Layne  
Treats—Dorothy

(If you want to bring treats for next Sunday, please contact Lee—387 2983.)