

# Wilderness Words

Newsletter—

December 10, 2014

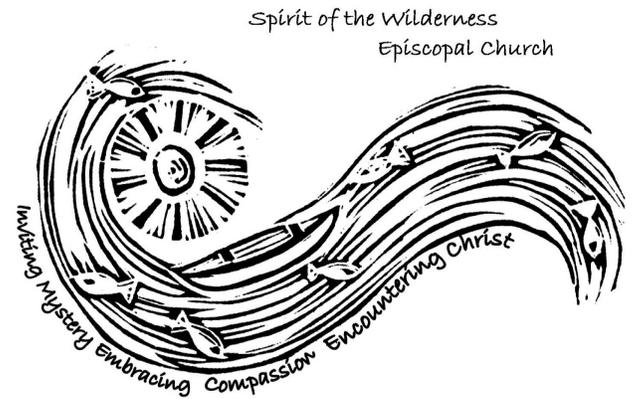
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Vicar, Mary Ellen Ashcroft

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## Vicar's Report

Watching the Borealis chorus sing their wonderful Christmas concert the other night, I was bowled over again. Not only by the beautiful music. I can turn on the radio and get that. Or I could go to a concert in a city and hear a professional orchestra and choir that might be technically more perfect.

When I looked at this chorus and orchestra I saw people whose lives are real Cook County lives—our mechanic, baker, doctor—but who are giving of themselves. They give their time and talents to bring this lovely music. There is no audition for this choir, just willingness.

As I allowed the music to surround me, I suddenly thought, “Wow. This is what we’re trying to do at *Spirit of the Wilderness*. We’re encouraging non-professionals to bring their gifts and work together to make something beautiful.”

I firmly believe that this is the future of the church. (And the past, of course, in the earliest movement). The old model in which everything important is done by a professional, with lay people making coffee or maybe reading: those days are over, thanks in part to changing financial realities, but also to our changing culture. Fewer and fewer people go to church wanting to be spoon fed.

The joy on the faces of the singers, and the stirring in our hearts as listeners—these were wonderful. Way better than perfection. And that’s the other thing about the way we’re doing church at *Spirit of the Wilderness*. We do the best we can, but perfection is not our goal. Love, involvement, connection—these are our goals.

My job, to continue the metaphor, is that of conductor—facilitating, encouraging, stopping and making sure we are in tune, and calling out gifts.

One of the final anthems that was sung was from an ancient text, where some writer was bowled over by the mystery of the incarnation and wrote the words to *O Magnum Mysterium*:

O great mystery  
And wondrous sacrament,  
That animals should see the  
New born Lord, lying in their manger.

God’s movement in the incarnation is away from pristine perfection toward smelly straw and animal breath, toward collaboration and presence in unexpected places. We are a part of that movement!

Blessings, Mary Ellen



**South Africa Book and Movie Group—CCHE**

Save the dates and invite a friend. 6:00-8:00

Jan. 8-- Background to literature/film of South Africa. Watch Athol Fugard's *Master Harold and the Boys*

January 15-- Discuss Alan Paton's novel-- *Cry the Beloved Country*.

January 29—Watch Andre Brink's--*Dry White Season*.

February 5-- Discuss Nadine Gordimer's-- *July's People*.

February 12-- Watch Athol Fugard's *TsoTsi*.

February 26—Discuss J. M Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

March 5—Watch *Invictus* and discuss some short readings by Nelson Mandela.

March 12-- Watch *Long Night's Journey Into Day*. (Optional reading: Antjie Krog's--*Country of my Skull*).

Come, and invite a friend! Free, though there'll be a jar out for the Good Samaritan Fund.

**Coming Up!**

Dec. 21st Help decorate after church.

Dec. 24th Christmas Eve service at 5 PM.  
(Christmas potluck follows at WindCradle)

Jan. 7th Bishop's Committee Meeting

Jan. 8th—South Africa Book/Movie group begins

Jan. 18th—SOTW retreat (save the date!)

We hope to give grocery store gift cards to some low income folks again this Christmas—if you'd like to make a special donation, please write a check or give some cash to the Good Samaritan Fund.

**This Sunday:**

Leading—Rolf  
Preaching—Dave Coleman  
Presiding—Carolyn  
Music—Bob and Karen  
Treats—??????

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

**Lessons for Advent 23**

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11  
I Thess. 5: 16-24  
John 1: 6-8, 19-28

The ministry of John the Baptist features in all four gospels. What is it about John the Baptist that we are supposed to learn from this? Who would be a contemporary John the Baptist?