

# Wilderness Words

Newsletter—

December 26, 2014

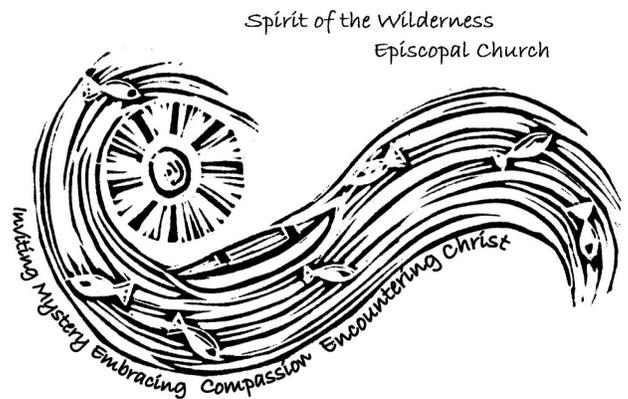
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Vicar, Mary Ellen Ashcroft

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## Vicar's Report

Christmas brings us a remarkable paradox—God made flesh.

Our readings for this Sunday encompass this theme. In Isaiah we are given a God who will make all things right. In Galatians, Paul writes about the law, and how the coming of the incarnate Christ frees us from “keeping the rules” to God within, bringing us to an intimacy that means we can call God “daddy” or “mommy.” And then there’s John’s prologue “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.”

Talk about mystery! If anyone tells you this is simple, shake your head and walk away!

The earliest believers seemed happy to live with their experiences of God in different forms without pinning becoming doctrinal. But many of the discussions around the Nicene Creed were an effort to pin things down. “Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father”?!? In his book *Genesis of Doctrine*, Alistair McGrath argues that in hammering out the creed, people were struggling to put their experience into doctrinal form, a project akin to taking something three dimensional and putting it into two—impossible without distortion—like a globe flattened to a map.

Another time/place where you see incarnation being grappled with is in Renaissance art, when painters often portrayed the magi looking closely at the infant Jesus’ genitals, because they were indicative of the limitations of gender imposed by incarnation.

Our faith encompasses this mystery, and it is expressed in the Feast of the Incarnation or Christ’s Mass or Christmas.

Christmas with its consumerism and hype have pulled us away from this crucial truth. Does it matter that God became flesh? Tremendously. The incarnation means flesh matters. It means that our faith must embrace health care, nutrition and child care. All these matter because of the incarnation.

Friends of mine ended their Christmas letter with two quotes which they said could be taken together to express the mystery of Christmas:

Augustine: God is an infinite circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

Harry Nilsson: I can’t live if living is without you.

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!**

Jan. 7th Bishop's Committee Meeting

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

Jan. 18th—SOTW retreat at Hedstrom's House of Holy Happenings. We'll begin at noon with appetizers, and then do our retreat work, and then share dinner and fun. All are welcome.

**Celebrate!!**

We were able to give 23 grocery gift cards to folks who needed them!

We're closing on our stewardship goal!

Around 25 people came to the Christmas Eve potluck after the service!

I want to take a moment to thank you very much for the gift card to Gene's for Christmas! This past year has been somewhat difficult as I was diagnosed with a brain tumor so my social work asked if she could put me on a list to receive a gift card for the holidays and I was happy to see it was from you and could thank you. Can you please print this out for your congregation or whomever contributed...thank you once again!

Christine

**This Sunday:**

Leading—Suzanne

Preaching—Mary Ellen

Presiding—Mary Ellen

Music—Bob and Karen

Treats—Suzanne

(If you want to bring treats for next Sunday, please contact **Beth Kennedy—387 1314.**)

**Lessons for Christmas I**

Isaiah 61: 10-62:3

Galatians 3:23-25; 4: 4-7

John 1: 1-18

Special thanks to all who participated in the Christmas Eve service!

Musicians—Karen, Bob, John, Layne and Ella!

Readers—Alyssa, Dave, Ella and Ellen! Greeters—Beth and Tim!

Candles and lighting—Ginny and Rolf! Luminaria and pix—Ellen and Karen!