

Wilderness Words

Newsletter—

January 14, 2014

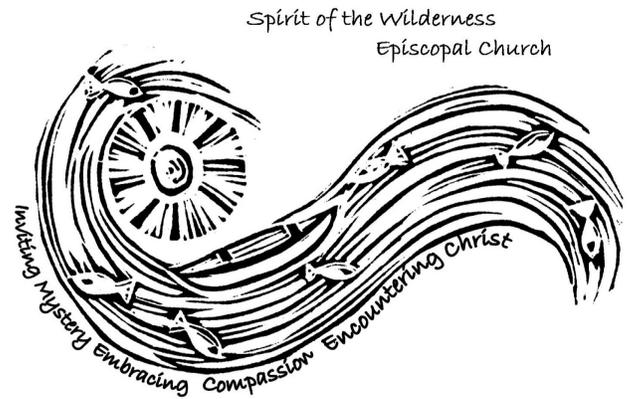
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Vicar, Mary Ellen Ashcroft

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Vicar's Report

As I have been thinking about our all-church visioning retreat this coming Sunday, I've thought about our history. Even though our history as a church doesn't go back as much as that of many churches, we do have a history.

We were begun for some fairly specific reasons, such as to provide an Episcopal Church in Cook County for a number of different reasons—for our kids and for those outside who might find our progressive sacramental worship appealing. In those early days many were involved in making sure church happened Sunday by Sunday.

Over the years we've grown. I believe we've kept many of our original values. But as we've grown we've also changed, just as when a child grows or a family grows, change is inevitable. Our task as a church is to stop occasionally and ask ourselves: "where are we?"

We are no longer what we were; if we were it would be like a seven year old who was still developmentally a one year old. But we also want to check in: "where are we going?" This is crucial—are we still on the path that we have felt called to follow? As we grow are we still recognizably who we want to be? Have we accidentally "thrown the baby out with the bathwater?"

Our retreat this Sunday will be our chance to grapple with these questions. We'll do it by looking at some of what we listed as what we're passionate about and best in the world at. We will spend time discussing whether our motto—"Inviting Mystery, Embracing Compassion, Encountering Christ"—still reflects our values.

This clarity about who we are will also lead to clarity of expression about who we are for the greater community. This is not so that we can grow into a mega-church (!) but so those who live in Cook County whose lives would be enriched by being part of SOTW will hear about us.

As you prepare for the retreat—or if you can't come please communicate with me—consider this question:

Drat. You've been transferred to Honolulu. You go to church there and someone says to you, "What was so special about the church you went to in Minnesota? What is it you really miss?"

Bring your answer along or send my way.

Blessings as we journey together, Mary Ellen



Christmas Eve service—

thanks to all who
were involved and
especially Ellen for
her great
photography!!

Coming Up!

Jan. 15th—South Africa Book/Movie group —
Discuss Alan Paton's novel-- *Cry the Beloved Coun-
try*.

Jan. 18th—SOTW retreat at Hedstrom's House of
Holy Happenings. We'll begin at noon with appe-
tizers, and then do our retreat work, and then
share dinner, finishing by 5pm. All are welcome.

Jan. 25th—Leader training led by Ginny and Lee
after church—required for all leaders.

Jan. 29—RSA Book and Movie group: Watch An-
dre Brink's--*Dry White Season*.

Feb. 5-- RSA Book and Movie group: Discuss Nad-
ine Gordimer's-- *July's People*.

Feb. 8—Forum after church—Passover. Hillary
Freeman.

Feb. 21—Social—sleigh ride at Okontoe—20.00
per person—sign up with Kathy Sullivan.

This Sunday:

Leading—Karen H.
Preaching—Milan
Presiding—Mary Ellen
Music—Bob and Layne

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

Lessons for Epiphany II

I Samuel 3: 1-10 (11-20)
Psalm 139: 1-5, 12-17
I Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

These passages are about calling—what is your sense of
what God calls you to?

*If you have questions about the retreat or food for the
retreat, please call me—I have the main sheet here!*
Mary Ellen