

Wilderness Words

Newsletter—

April 22, 2015

www.spiritofthewilderness.org

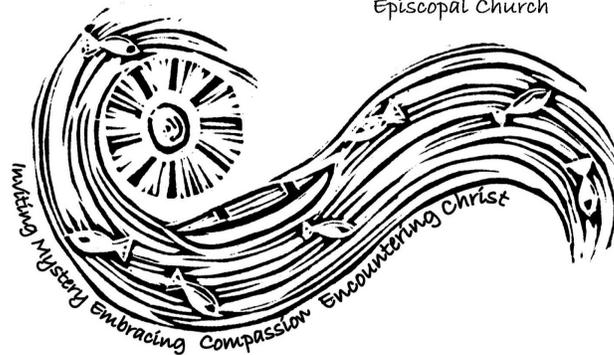
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Vicar, Mary Ellen Ashcroft

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Spirit of the Wilderness
Episcopal Church



Vicar's Report

I've been thinking a lot about CHURCH as it is expressed in different contexts. That's partly because of my work with the Shared Ministry group at Holy Apostles and the way they bring their Hmong culture and sensibility to being church. As I've been working with them, discussing what it means to be Anglican and yet themselves, I've been very aware of what it means for us here in Cook County to be Anglican and yet ourselves.

I've also been thinking about this as I've visited a few other churches in the last couple months—wondering how they're following this call. And as I've been reading in preparation for my sabbatical in South Africa, I've realized how challenging it is for a church to be fully contextual and yet still distinctively Anglican and Christian.

The challenge is starker in South Africa where Anglicanism was so intertwined with colonialism—how do people decide what is central to their faith and practice, and what was a cultural add on? How does a deeply rooted regard for ancestors and their ongoing presence in daily life, for example, fit into a more Western, rational Anglican tradition? That is something our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world (or those working with immigrant populations here) grapple with.

What does it mean to be fully who we are as part of the Anglican communion, and yet also distinct to this context? We have been aware from the beginning of *Spirit of the Wilderness* of a call to certain special areas—around the arts and spirituality, for example. In responding to that call we are very aware of our particular context, and our *Illumination* show this year really exemplified our calling within our context.

We are also aware of those on the edges of the faith, which I believe is a part of our distinctive call. People often say to me, "I'm not really a Christian, but I'd kind of like to come to your church." I'm so happy to be able to say, "We would love to welcome you. All of us are on a journey."

Even our dogs are part of our statement of who we are: not demanding perfection, unafraid of a little chaos.

Another distinctive from near the beginning has been our commitment to outreach. We are unwilling to focus on maintaining ourselves as a church, but committed to "put our money where our mouth is" in giving to the Good Samaritan fund and with other projects.

Last night at the Ruby's Pantry volunteer training, I looked around this great gathering—100?—who are there to care for their neighbors, and felt really proud of us! By stepping up to sponsor and lead this program we are following God's call to us within our given context, and inviting others to walk with us as we serve.

Blessings, Mary Ellen



This Sunday:

Leading—Suzanne
Preaching—Milan
Presiding—Carolyn
Music—Karen and Bob
Treats—?????

Want to bring treats for next week?
Please let Beth know:
bkennedy@boreal.org.

Here are some dates for the women's canoe trip—July 28-30—two nights with little portaging.

Let me know if you are in for those dates... Mary Ellen

Interested????

UK trip led by Karen Halbersleben and Mary Ellen Ashcroft **April 26-May 11, 2016**

UK literature discussion group begins in June.

For more info contact Karen or Mary Ellen.

Adult forums:

May 17th—Life: quantity or quality? (Ellen Stubbs)

May 31st: Historical Service—1670. (Karen Halbersleben)

June 7th: Sacraments—(Mary Ellen)

Thanks to Ellen Stubbs for her wonderful pix from the Seder meal!

Mark your calendars:

**May 6th—6:30 pm
Bishop's Committee**

**May 14th—First Ruby's
Pantry Distribution**

**May 17th—SOTW @ Care
Center**

Look for our Founders'
Day celebration coming
up.

