

A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls, New York. November 2016.

Thoughts from the Wilderness, Advent 2016

Sermon for November 13, 2016

My email signature includes a quotation from the courageous dissident against communism, playwright and later president of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel. The quote is, *Truth and love must prevail over lies and hate*. Simple words yes – but very important: *Truth and love must prevail over lies and hate*. Havel added that to his own signature. He didn't just write these words, he lived them, putting his life on the line against the lies and the spies and the oppression of communism – he was jailed multiple times.

For various reasons societies even well-developed societies can slowly or quickly out of fear or out of ideology, out of excessive nationalism, out of economic inequity or out of greed, start to become very comfortable with what later generations and other peoples see as the most blatant and obvious lies.

It's like a whole country sometimes, or many people in it, have joined a cult and submit themselves to a cult leader or leaders. The leader may provide a false sense of security or the people may simply agree with the leader's prejudices and falsehoods.

And a comfort with and acceptance of these lies and prejudices can lead to further lies and rationalizations – and then can lead to very bad behavior: oppression, murder and even genocide.

I was just looking at a recent book entitled, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* by Robert Ericksen, from which I'll quote at some length:

“It is very easy to view the Holocaust as an event and a set of behaviors completely outside our reality. However, the best historical inquiry draws us closer to the complexity of the past and makes it harder for us to dismiss other peoples and ages as totally “other.”

He says also, “Among genocides, the Holocaust is the one perpetrated by a nation and culture most deeply rooted in the modern West, and thus much like the United States and other Western nations today...”

When we acknowledge that these perpetrators were people much like ourselves, then we can try to understand what drove them to radical measures and

perhaps even recognize circumstances that could tempt us in a similar direction.

He continues, “Germans faced an unusual array of crises in the 1920s and 1930s: military, economic, political and cultural crises that many or most Germans regarded as threats to their entire future as a nation. Might modern Westerners ever face such an array of crises? Would we be able to handle such crises without giving up our belief in human rights and civil liberties or otherwise pushing aside our democratic principles?...”

‘Good Germans’ almost certainly did not think we would pore through their papers half a century later and label them villains. We must hope that historians half a century from now will not be trying to understand behaviors of ours that they have learned to condemn” (pgs. 2-4).

Words to think about.

Jesus says in today's gospel about the stress of the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans which happened in 70 A.D., “You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends!” (Luke 21:16) And he seems to imply here and elsewhere that these betrayals can happen other times as well.

I hope that the new leadership in this country will do good things. But as we all know we live in a very divided country. For many there is a feeling of fear and betrayal in the air. I'm dating a woman of Colombian descent. She was born in the United States, grew up mostly in Colombia and has spent most of her adult life back in the US. She is a citizen of both the United States and Colombia. But she is afraid right now. Afraid of being harassed or attacked for her heritage or the way she looks.

And not without reason. There has been an increase of harassment and verbal and physical attacks on people during the campaign season. And since the election, by all reports, there has been a further increase in harassment and threats to African-Americans, Latinos, Muslims and other minorities; and even death threats on immigrant rights leaders. The bigots are emboldened!

This is not acceptable. And it's not about which political party you support. It's about realizing or *not*

realizing the truth that God loves everyone - people of all races and creeds, colors, classes and countries of origin. God loves gay and straight, and people with or without disabilities. *And God respects women.*

One of many pertinent things Scripture says is this from Leviticus 19:33-34: “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

The very next verse says, “You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity.” Meaning of course that we should be honest in our business dealings.

May we all, as the prophet Micah says, “Act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God” (6:8). Amen.

*In peace,
John+*

From the Desk of the Senior Warden

On Wednesday some heard the news that Donald Trump had won with joy and relief, while others heard it with fear and sorrow. For those that are optimistic, we hope that you are right. For those that have qualms, remember, Psalm 34:18 says “God is close to the broken-hearted.” We need to give ourselves a space to heal, to process, and to know that like any loss, we will heal in time. Self-care is important at a time like this as well as using spiritual tools to stay centered and calm. As I worked through my emotions that day, I continued to remind myself that no matter what America has weathered many storms and has prevailed.

The election on Tuesday capped an election season marked by a divisive campaign that showed me just how divided our country really is. There is real anger and fear throughout America and as Americans took to the polls, they voted for change. Whether we get the change that voters’ want, remains to be seen. As an American, I hope Mr. Trump succeeds and can truly be the President of all people.

True to form, the Fall at St. John’s has been busy with a successful Harvest Fest led by Tonya Carter. Our pledge drive, headed by Dale Peterson is well underway, and many of us enjoyed a delicious dinner

organized by Karen Flynn. A big thank you to all who help St. John’s to fulfill its mission.

On other good news fronts, I just read that “women who attended religious services more than once per week were 33 percent less likely to die during a 16-year follow-up than women who never attended, according to a study from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Those who frequently attended religious services also had significantly lower risk both from cardiovascular- and cancer-related mortality, according to a press release on the study.

The study was published online in May, 2016 in JAMA Internal Medicine. I hope the same holds true for men who attended religious services!

This is consistent with the research done by the Bluezones (bluezones.com). Speaking from personal experience this rings true. Since becoming a regular attendee at St. John’s I’ve been healthier and fitter than at any time in my life. OK, there was that one blip, but I recovered quickly. As I think about it, it makes sense. The peace and community of like-minded souls gives me strength and comfort. The positive difference we make in the lives of neighbors in our community lifts my heart and spirit. The friendships sustain me and give me joy.

And you knew I’d bring in my dog Cora! As we walk each morning it is not only good exercise, but it is a spiritual experience. I get to see glorious sun rises, the leaves turning green, the flowers budding, the magnificent colors of the Fall. All of this reminds me every morning that God is in heaven and all’s right with the world.

Martha Glantz

Editors’ Note: Email Delivery of the *Voice*

In the spring we are going to begin email distribution of the *Voice*. This will save cost (postage, paper, etc.) and will simplify production of the newsletter. Of course, we understand that a number of parishioners do not use email at all or use it seldom. If you’re not an email user, please tell Jane, Dale or Louise and we’ll make sure you continue to get a paper copy of the *Voice*.

Dale and Louise Peterson

A *Voice* in the Wilderness

Editors: Louise and Dale Peterson

Please send submissions including news of church members to peterlouise@gmail.com
Please submit reports, articles and news items at least one week prior to the issue date. Thanks!

Winter Market and Bell Choir Concert

Copake Falls Winter Walk

Sunday December 4

You are invited to participate in **Winter Walk 2016 Copake Falls, Sunday, December 4, 2016, noon-5PM**. As part of Winter Walk, St. John's will hold a Winter Market, from 1-3PM, in Burke Hall including the popular sale of homemade Christmas cookies in festive tins, bundles of kindling and evergreens, as well as beautiful evergreen table decorations.

At 3:30PM, we will welcome once again the wonderful Bell Choir from Salisbury Congregational Church. The choir will help us ring in the holiday season with their joyful Christmas music; tickets are \$10 and children are free. A portion of the proceeds from the event will be donated to the Taconic Hills Back Pack program, providing weekend food for families in need. At the end of the concert, caroling will begin at the church and singers will sing their way down to the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society.

On Thursday, December 1 at 6PM in Burke Hall, we will create evergreen "table toppers" and on Saturday, December 3, at 10AM, we will assemble Christmas cookies in tins. We welcome all church participants as bakers of Christmas cookies, creators of evergreen table toppers, sellers at the Winter Market and as concert goers to the Bell Choir of Salisbury Congregational Church!

Lucy Eldridge

Social Justice Committee

Hello, fellow parishioners. I am proud to announce that St. John in the Wilderness has formed a Civil and Human Rights/Social Justice Committee. This committee will focus on some of the following issues within our community and in a more global context: Wage Equity, Fair Trade, Women's Rights, End Hunger and Poverty, Racial Equity, Child Labor Protections, Educational Justice, Immigration Reform, Mental Health Awareness and Support, LGBTQ solidarity. The goal of this committee will be to hold events related to these causes. We are pleased to announce that committee members are being sought. As you consider joining this important effort, let me provide you with a rough framework of how this committee will become operational:

1. Training. I was fortunate recently to participate in two days of training at NYSUT in Latham. This "train the trainer" weekend prepared me to conduct training at the local level. The training phase

of the SJC will provide us with skills to engage and activate others on civil and human rights topics. I will facilitate the training, which is extremely interactive in nature. I anticipate that this phase will take two meetings.

2. Planning. The goal of St. John's SJC is to have at least five events over the course of 2017 related to social justice issues. Many of these issues are already addressed through previously established events (Food Bank fundraisers, etc), and those events will be counted toward our goal of five. As a group, we will plan these events and establish a rough timeline. I anticipate we will need one to two meetings to complete this phase.

3. Implementation. Once we have identified the events, I will ask for volunteers to help organize and participate in the events. I am fully aware that people will not be able to attend all events, and my hope is that we can spread out support to adequately staff each event. It is at this phase that we will recruit community participation and work in conjunction with other agencies to share event planning resources. I do not anticipate needing specific meetings for this phase, as I believe that we can accomplish a lot through email, texts, phone, etc.

Please consider becoming a member of the St. John's Social Justice Committee. If you feel called to service, please email me at garrar26@gmail.com and John+ at stjohnw@fairpoint.net.

Rebecca Garrard

2107 Pledge Report

As of November 18, the church has received \$78,600 in pledges for 2017, which is about 90% of our \$88,000 goal. Generally we receive pledges through the end of the year, so we are optimistic that we'll hit the goal. If you haven't pledged already, please give prayerful consideration to your 2017 commitment to St. John in the Wilderness.

Dale Peterson

Corie Miller

During our fall 2017 Pledge Drive several members of the parish spoke in church about what St. John in the Wilderness means to them. Corie Miller is a member of our Sunday School Here are her remarks:

What does St. John in the Wilderness mean to me?

St. John's means that if anyone is having trouble in life they can come here to pray to God. We have communion every Sunday to represent Jesus falling for our sins. The bread represents his body. The wine represents his blood. To me this church isn't just God's home, it's my home. Every Sunday we come to church

to not only thank God for this wonderful world we are standing on now, and to thank Jesus for giving his life to take away our sins. I was baptized in this church and when I was baptized I felt like I was joining a whole new family and I have been coming here ever since.

This is what I think St. John's means to me. It is a big family and we all love each other.

ECW News

This Columbus Day weekend Tonya put on a great Harvest Fest for the ECW and community outreach. Thank you to her and all that helped. The ECW really appreciates all the help and donations. Summer and many others had a great time. The balloon art and face painting were a big hit! I was so sad that I was on doctors' orders not to go (all is well now).

There are two exciting events coming up for the ECW in December. December 11th at the Taconic Wayside Inn will be our annual ECW Christmas luncheon. Cocktails start at 12:30 p.m. I and others who helped me plan this wanted to give them a chance since they are so local and have always donated to the church. More details will follow this coming week. On December 18th at 1 p.m., the ECW will be hosting a paint and sip in Burke Hall as a fundraiser. This will be a fun way to raise some money and nobody has to work! Please everyone come and make a gift for yourself or for a Christmas Gift. I will email a poster as soon as I get it but for now please visit the website berkshirerepaintandsip.com and sign up. Invite Friends and Family. Please.

It is that time of year to donate to Christmas friends again. Please help make a child's Christmas great! Any size donation is greatly appreciated and for many children a Dollar Store item will put a smile on their face (we as a church have always done a great job for the children). I hope everyone has a great Thanksgiving and Christmas.

*Regina Shea
ECW President*

Harvest Fest

Considering the damp weather, we had a great turn out for the 3rd annual Harvest Fest on October 9th. We had Kaptain Kraw with a puppet show and fantastic balloon tying. The kids loved him! Our local artist Tracy Hanselman did face painting. We had pony rides, pumpkin painting, and a scavenger hunt. There were a lot of vendors, a Chinese auction and a bake sale for the moms and dads. We can't forget the awesome food that Bob Callahan and Chuck Miller dished out at our food bar! A big thank you to everyone who helped!!! Here's to next year!!

Tonya Carter





Jacob Stickle Memorial 5K

On Sunday, September 18, St. John's hosted the first annual Jacob Stickle Memorial 5K. September is childhood cancer awareness month, and St. John's proudly became part of the Go Gold for Childhood Cancer campaign. One in every 285 children in the US will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 20. Worldwide, a child is diagnosed with cancer every 3 minutes.

Our 5K, which was a family friendly walk/run, honored the life of Jacob Stickle. Jacob was a student at Webutuck and Taconic Hills Schools before he died of neuroblastoma at the age of 9. The 5K raised money for the American Childhood Cancer Organization and the Ronald McDonald House of the Greater Hudson Valley. As a result of the generosity of participants and donors, I am proud to share that we raised a total of \$2,249.01 for these worthy causes! Many thanks to all of those who helped to make this possible.

Rebecca Garrard



The Visit

A holiday story by Bob Dodd

"What's wrong?" my wife asked as I rooted under the bed for my slippers.

"Stomach's upset." It was an understatement, as far from the truth as a scooter is from a tank. Something was on fire under my rib cage." I looked at the alarm clock and groaned. One-thirty! In four hours, maybe less, three children would bound into our bedroom yelling, "It's Christmas!"

I tiptoed down the stairs in search of Tums. When I reached the bottom landing, I froze. At the far end of the living room, outlined by moonlight, a figure was hunched over, grunting and wrestling with something in the fireplace.

A burglar, I thought, my heartburn forgotten. What should I do? Sneak back upstairs? Yell "Stick 'em up!" or throw something? I had decided on silent prayer when the intruder stood up and turned around. "Don't just stand there, Bobby!" he bellowed. "Turn on a light and give me a hand with this blasted bag!"

I was stunned – a cheeky burglar at that! -- but did as I was told in the interest of safety. The light revealed an amazing sight: a little old man, no taller than a pony, in a filthy red suit. His white hair and beard were matted with soot. A cigar stub was clamped between his teeth.

"Santa...Claus?" I whispered.

"Among other aliases!" he boomed. "Come on, man, hop to it. I don't have all night!"

It's just an anchovy dream, I thought as we pulled his bag and a year's worth of soot out of the chimney. "Ought to have it swept, he growled. "You're asking for a chimney fire if you don't."

He wasn't your Norman Rockwell Santa: rather scrawny, and with no cherry nose. Then there was the cigar.. "Gave up my pipe," he said, "cigarettes too. Read the Surgeon General's report. Now it's just the occasional stogie when Mrs. Claus isn't around." He chuckled, shedding more soot on the carpet. Seeing me frown, he said, "Don't worry, Bobby. Have I ever left soot on your rug?"

I shook my head, embarrassed. Suddenly aware that I was being a poor host, I asked,. "Can I get you something – uh -- Santa? A glass of milk? A beer?"

"Milk!" he roared. "One more glass and I'll moo! And no beer while I'm on duty. Don't want to be busted for DUI!" He patted his belly. "Diet soda, please. Mrs. Claus is after me to watch my weight. So are the reindeer!"

When I returned from the kitchen, he was filling the children's stockings. I cringed as he added cookies and gum, recalling huge dental bills. "Oh, don't be so tight, Bobby!" he exclaimed. "The cookies are made of granola and the gum is sugar-free. It's not like the junk you got for Christmas when you were a kid."

He finished filling the stockings, sat down on the hearth, and cocked his head. "Bet you never thought you'd meet me," he said with mock sternness. "Seems to me you swore off old St. Nick some 20 years ago."

"Longer," I admitted.

"Oh, I don't mind," he said. "I feel for you guys who have to pay the tab while I get all the credit. Makes it hard to get the Christmas spirit, even if the bills don't come till January." He looked reflective as he relit his cigar. "Nope, skeptics don't bother me, but. I don't much like kids who stay up late to catch me. Even in a heated sleigh, long holds are a drag, and they put the reindeer on time-and-a-half. But the only thing I really hate is getting shot at."

"Shot at?"

"Yep, shot at! No-fly zones are popping up so fast I can't keep 'em straight. Pilots are nice boys, but nervous. *Nerrr-vous!*" He chuckled. "I wonder how they explain me to their C.O.'s!"

I laughed too. "You must have had some wild times in – what – 2000 years?"

"Not quite that long, but – yes – I've had adventures. Now and then, I forget to check out a chimney and burn my feet. Good thing Dasher is checked out on first aid. Then there was the time the reindeer got into a marijuana field in California. Some ride that was!"

Santa's smile faded. Suddenly, he looked his age. "It's not all fun," he said. "I've got labor problems at the Pole: Job actions, elves working to rule. Then there are government regulations. Would you believe I have to give naughty American kids low-sulfur coal? Just keeping square with Washington takes mountains of paperwork!"

"You should go digital," I said.

"The missus thinks so too, but the International Brotherhood of Elves won't hear of it. No robots either. No sir, there's a lot more to being a jolly old myth than you'd think."

"But you like your job?"

He thought for a moment, then grinned. "Well yes, I do. It's seasonal, so there's plenty of time for fishing, and it's prestigious. I mean who hasn't heard of Santa Claus? But what's best is knowing that an old duffer like me can still count for something." He drained

the last of his soda. "Picturing all those happy kids helps when my lumbago kicks up and 'Ho, ho, ho!' comes hard."

Santa stood up. "Well, Bobby," he said, "gotta go. With reindeer getting \$75 an hour plus benefits, I can't spend much time visiting." He pulled a whisk broom from his sleeve and brushed soot into the fireplace, then turned to me. "By the way, it wasn't anchovies that did in your stomach. It was mixing martinis and scotch at the office party. An old dog like you should know better!"

With just a parting nod, he vanished up the chimney. I ran to the window, expecting to hear the traditional "On Dasher, on Dancer..." but I was disappointed. Over the pitter-patter of tiny hooves and the crackle of static, I heard Santa say, "Red Base, this is Red One. Leaving Copake on vector 095. Out! "

I was still staring out the window when my wife startled me. "Voices," she mumbled from the stair well. "I heard voices."

"It's nothing," I said, thinking fast, "just Leno and a guest on the TV." It's not nice to lie to your wife, especially on Christmas Eve, but some things are just too hard to explain.

Advent Events – Church of St. John in the Wilderness

December 1, Thursday, Evergreen Table Toppers,
Burke Hall, 6PM
December 3, Saturday, Christmas Cookie packaging,
Burke Hall, 10AM
December 4, Sunday, Copake Falls Winter Walk
Winter Market, 1-3PM,
Handbell Concert by the Salisbury Congregational
Church choir, 3:30PM
December 11, Sunday, ECW Christmas Luncheon,

Taconic Wayside Inn, 12:30 PM
December 14, Wednesday, Blue Christmas, 6PM
December 18, Sunday, Paint and Sip, Burke Hall,
1PM
December 24, Saturday, Christmas Eve Service,
Carols and Eucharist, 7PM
December 25, Sunday, Christmas Day Service,
10AM
January 21, 2017 Sunday, Annual Meeting

Weekly events

Sunday

8:00 am Spoken Eucharist.
10:00 am Choral Eucharist.
Sunday school at 10:00 am.

Wednesday

3:00 pm Divine Reading / Contemplative
Prayer Group.

A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the
Church of St. John in the Wilderness
(Episcopal)
Copake Falls, New York

The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Martha Glantz (1/17) Warden

Brian Boom (1/18)

Vestry

Tonya Carter (1/18) Jane Shannon (1/19)

Karen Flynn (1/19) Regina Shea (1/17)

Rebecca Garrard (1/19) Madeleine Tramm (1/18)

Richard Peck, Clerk of the Vestry (1/21)

Louise Peterson, Treasurer (1/19)

Eucharists

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)

Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

www.stjohnw.org

www.facebook.com/stjohnwilderness

518 329-3674

261 State Route 344, PO Box 180
Copake Falls, NY 12517

