

A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness
Copake Falls, NY

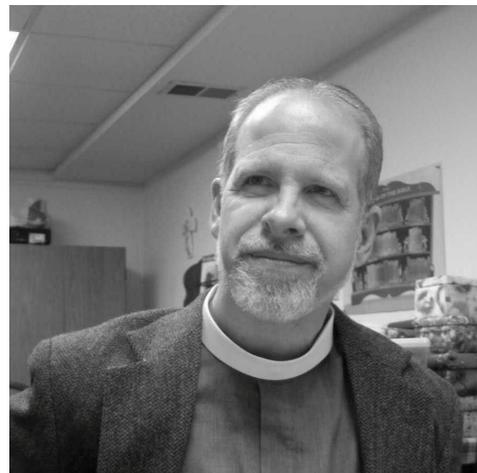
Advent, 2010

Thoughts from the Wilderness

A Blessed Advent to all!

This Advent St. John's has, in addition to Sunday and Christmas services, two ongoing opportunities to focus on the season's meaning. Our Tuesday 7pm Lectionary Study will look at the Sunday Advent readings. And our Wednesday 3pm Divine Reading/Centering Prayer group will begin meditating on the Gospel of Luke with its beautiful Nativity stories. Please consider coming to one or both for Advent.

The season's meaning, Advent's meaning, involves waiting. Waiting is a big part of our lives. So it's a good idea to get good at waiting. We wait to finish school; we wait to find a job; we wait for a promotion; we wait to retire. We wait to get married and have children; we wait for our children to leave for college; we wait for our adult children to come and visit. What's important is that we enjoy the blessings of the current moment while at the same time anticipating the future blessings. Otherwise, our life passes us by as we ignore today's blessings while impatiently awaiting some future possibility. Now I'm not perfect at this; I often fail to appreciate present blessings as I impatiently look to some future blessing. But I'm getting better, slowly, by the grace of God. Prayer and meditation on scripture help.



Advent stems from a Latin word for "*coming*." We're waiting to celebrate the first *coming* of Jesus; we're waiting for Christmas. According to our Advent readings, we're also waiting for Jesus' second coming in "power and great glory" at the end of time. But it's win-win. Because as we wait for Jesus in these two ways, we of course already have him with us. God in Jesus, the Holy Spirit, is already in our hearts. God made us; God sustains us. Actually, it's win-win-win. Number one, God is with us now. Number two, we wait to celebrate Jesus'

birth at Christmas. And number three, “we await his coming in glory” (from Eucharistic Prayer B). Win-win-win.

So really, there’s no downside to Advent. Though we have to wait for Christmas, Jesus is with us now – so we can be happy now! God loves us and wants our happiness. He is the source of all happiness directly or indirectly since he gives us his grace (himself) and he gives us every other blessing from the people we love



to the beauty of nature to the magnificence of music, and of all art. God’s art and (God inspired) human art. These two forms of art pretty much cover everything we have to be grateful for. *Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, James 1:17.*

And I define art broadly. *We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life, Ephesians 2:10.*

Another translation calls us *God’s masterpiece*. So as God’s works of art, we are designed for good works. As such, whatever we do, from fine art to laundry to waiting for a friend who is late, qualifies as good work for God—if we do it with love. And they all have creative potential. And sometimes waiting is the most creative thing we can do. An artist’s, a scientist’s, a person’s biggest breakthrough, their greatest insight or best inspiration, often comes in that fallow period, that waiting time. After gestation, birth!

So as we enjoy life now and as we wait, let’s remember (be creative) the poor who await the generosity of others for their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare... or for a warm smile and a hug. Let’s remember those who wait for a loved one’s return from a war zone, and those waiting to return. As we await increasing peace (from God) in our hearts and in the world, let’s add to the sum total of kindness and love on earth-- among our families, relatives, and friends; at work or at church. God is merciful to us. Let’s share that gift of mercy with ourselves, with others, and with all of God’s creation.

In peace,
John+

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St. John Schedules Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness will be held on Sunday, 16 January, 2011, in Burke Hall immediately after the 10 AM service.

If you are responsible for a report, please give it to Hank Croteau as soon as possible.

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Reaching Up, Reaching Out

As someone interested in the parallels between the natural world and the human world, I think it is interesting to observe these parallels in organizations, such as in our church. Just as trees seem to reach high into the sky, organizations also have the urge to reach up and to reach out. St. John is often involved in such an activity, whether it is reaching with our voices upward with our hymn singing, or reaching out to help one another or to help the wider community, or to extend the parallel, reaching up or gazing up as we pay close attention to the necessary reconstruction of the Bell Tower.

We have now framed and installed the new welcome sign in the narthex as part of the continuing effort to present a welcoming space as we reach out to newcomers to our church. The next phase of this project is to create a new interpretative sign about the work of Richard Upjohn, St. John's renowned architect, and to repair and paint the walls and to install a closet. The blessing sign which has hung for many years in the narthex will be newly framed and will complement the new welcome sign.

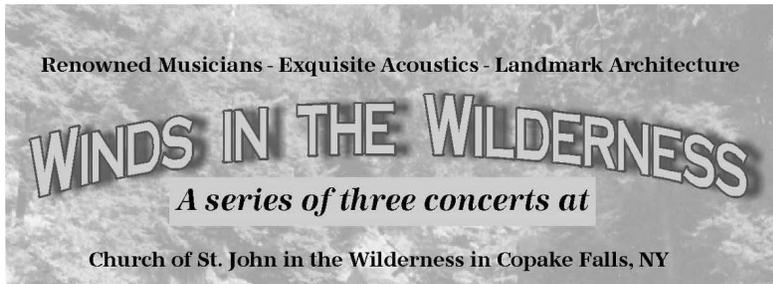
We are certainly thinking about structures which "reach up" as we plan for the reconstruction of the Bell Tower. Trinity Church Wall Street has answered our request for support of this reconstruction by sending the Church \$1,000. Also, additional gifts from parishioners have already been given to this project and we are applying to the New York State Landmark Conservancy under their Sacred Sites Grants for additional support. William H. Pierson, art historian, wrote glowingly of our church's unique architecture in his book published in 1980, *American Buildings and their Architects: Volume 2: Technology and*



the Picturesque, The Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles. Following is a quote from this book which describes the simple elegance of the church and in particular, the Bell Tower:

The taut strings of the battens are closely spaced to accentuate the vertical movement; the west façade, broken only by a single lancet window in the center, climaxes in the sharp pitched roof of the bell cote. This simple but exquisite open-timbered tower is among the most subtly composed to be found in the small Gothic Revival churches of America.

Music seems to be a great way for our church to extend a welcome to the surrounding community. St. John's was the host for a wonderful concert in November by the South African



music and dance group, Thule Siswe on their third US tour; the rafters definitely rocked with their music and dancing! Winds in the Wilderness continues for its second year at St. John's with a December 12th concert and in 2011 a concert on February 20th followed by a third concert in

March. Episcopal Church Women (ECW), under the leadership of Babs Croteau, organized an ecumenical Christmas Luncheon on December 5th, with 7 area churches at the Pond Restaurant in Ancramdale; a wonderful way to get to know people in our wider church community.

We held a stewardship dinner in November. Parishioners enjoyed delicious food, discussed the progress of the Pledge Drive for 2011 and discussed various fund raising ideas, led by Bob Callahan. A Stewardship group to help put these ideas into action (both fund-raising activities and some just for fun, or a combination of both) for 2011 recently met and came up with a schedule of events for the upcoming year. We now look forward to celebrating the season of Peace as we celebrate Christmas Eve at our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with caroling at 7PM followed by a Candlelight Eucharist at 7:30PM. And, then, we begin once again to reach out and reach up in the New Year!

Lucy Eldridge,
Senior Warden

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A Note of Thanks

October 9, 2010

Thank you for all the cards and notes wishing me good health. It is wonderful to be remembered by so many.

Love,

Mary Ann Byers¹

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Building and Grounds

There has been very little activity in our Department since the last newsletter. The only project completed was the Flagpole light at the Graveyard. The only ongoing project is the plaster repair and painting in the narthex by our resident Painter/Plasterer Bob Callahan. *Thanks Bob!*



Progress on the Bell Tower has been slow-- not that people are not doing their jobs - - it is just that the whole process for writing for Grants, have them reviewed, etc and then receiving them takes considerable time. The Committee was in favor of removing the tower so that our part in preparing accurate drawings and specifications could be prepared for the final bidding. However the Vestry felt the need for it to remain in place with no work being executed prior [to] Grant approvals. So, at the present, that is where we stand.

The Vestry has received anonymous donations towards this project for which we are very thankful. Currently the “Kitty” is at about \$3,500.00. We are not going out on any special membership drive to fund this project as most parishioners have given it their all with “Bridge the Gap” and all the other projects they have funded. However, if anyone feels they would like to donate please feel free to contact our Treasurer, Jane Peck, to make arrangements. Perhaps a plaque naming the donors could be made part of the new

¹ Mrs. Byers is the widow of St. John’s long-time rector, Fr. John Byers – Editor.

construction. Our current “Guesstimate” is about \$25,000.00 to \$30,000.00. We will keep you informed as this project moves along.

Respectfully,
Building and Grounds
Committee²

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Pledge Drive for 2011: An Update

We thank all St. John’s parishioners who have pledged their support for 2011. To date pledges total \$57,977, up \$1,952 from last year. The average pledge is \$27.19 per week. There are several new pledges and some from previous years that had not pledged as of December 2, 2010. So, those who have not yet sent in your pledge, **please do so as soon as possible**. Our pledges are an important key in setting the budget for next year, and we appreciate all pledges, small, medium, or large. The Vestry is very appreciative of your generosity and is grateful for your gifts. **Thank you!**

The Vestry

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Episcopal Church Women

The ECW Christmas Roe Jan Church luncheon on Sunday December 5th was a success! Wow!!!

Participating in our 1st ever combined lunch seems to have passed the test. We will have to ask Linda at The Pond her thoughts. We had 26 attending including our guests, the Rev.'s Thompson and Zelley.

The participants were West Copake Reformed Church; Copake United Methodist Church; Hillsdale United and North Hillsdale United Methodist Church and St. John's Lutheran Church Ancram. Also Copake Grange # 935 and the Prayer Square group. A total of 112 attended. The Rev. Juanita Middlebrook of Hillsdale Methodist said Grace for us. Our waitresses were the daughter and granddaughter of a former St. John's member!

I think we all enjoyed it.

ECW has adopted 11 children from Christmas Friends. We will remember our Shut Ins.

²Charles Fox, Harry Garrett, Jane Peck, Hank Croteau, Bob Flynn, and Bob Callahan

We plan to recess until March 2011.

We will pledge and present check at Annual Meeting of \$800.00.

We urge all to remember our local food pantry.

Please see the Annual Reports for detailed information on UTO, Shoe Boxes, Christmas Friends, etc projects we all participate in.

Babs Croteau,

President

babsc@fairpoint.net

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Presiding Bishop to Visit Albany

A very bright prospect for Albany Episcopalians is an announcement that our Presiding Bishop, ++Katharine Jefferts Schori, will visit this diocese in mid-March, 2011, at the invitation of Bishop Love. It is unfortunate that she will not be able address our diocesan convention as she did conventions in Western and Central New York, but she will be most welcome nonetheless. We'll keep you posted as plans for her visit develop.

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Beyond Copake Falls

November 24, 2010, was a very important day for the Anglican Communion and our Episcopal Church. That morning, in London, the Church of England's General Synod voted to pass the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant on to English dioceses for discussion and

local decision. If a majority of dioceses endorse the Covenant, the 2012 General Synod will vote it up or down. If Synod approves, it will go to Parliament and, finally, the Queen. Thus headlines that trumpeted “Church of England Approves the Covenant!” were at least two years premature. What Synod really did was honor the right of dioceses, parishes, and individuals to weigh in on a question of great importance to all Anglicans.

November 24 was significant for another reason. The Primates Council of GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) chose that day to announce that Council members and several other primates from the Global South will boycott the February, 2011 Primates Meeting in Dublin to protest the attendance of our Presiding Bishop and her Canadian equivalent, ++Fred Hiltz. The Primates Council also announced that it can no longer support the Covenant, which it regards as too weak to sway “apostate” churches like ours and the Anglican Church of Canada.



These two simultaneous events put the future of the Covenant, and indeed the Anglican Communion, very much in question. On one hand, the mother Church – England – has moved the Covenant forward. On the other, those leaders whose opposition to gay priests and same sex marriage inspired Canterbury to propose a Covenant in the first place are now rock solid against it. Although most of them are from Africa and elsewhere in the Global South, they include one non-primate: +Bob Duncan, the head of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), a consortium of conservative groups that have separated from the Episcopal Church.

GAFCON, which drew some 250 bishops away from the 2008 Lambeth Conference, touts its Jerusalem Declaration as a better summary of Anglican belief than the Covenant. Its plans include another global conference and preparation of materials for its own, orthodox seminaries. Its clear intention is to create an orthodox successor to the present, Canterbury-centered Anglican Communion. In that new body, ACNA will replace our Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada as the “official” Anglican presence in North America.

Both the Church of England and the Episcopal Church have polities that prevent their officially accepting or rejecting the Covenant before 2012. By that time, GAFCON’s evolution may render the Covenant moot. If two Communion emerge, one very conservative and largely in the Global South, the other moderate to progressive and chiefly western, what will become of

conservative Episcopal dioceses like South Carolina, Dallas, and Albany? How would a split communion affect life in Episcopal parishes, if at all?

Until/unless the global Anglican picture becomes clearer. It would be well for Episcopalians to respond to our Presiding Bishop's request that all of us study the Covenant and express our opinions of it. At the very least, doing so will remind us what it means to be Anglican and Episcopalian and what it would cost us to lose either title.

Albany Via Media hopes to schedule "Communion Conversations" at various places in the Diocese of Albany this spring to provide opportunities to meet and discuss events in the wider Church as they unfold. AVM, which recently hosted Dr. Robert Radtke, President of Episcopal Relief and Development, plans to invite one or more other Church leaders to help us understand what is going on in the wide Anglican world "beyond Copake Falls."

Bob Dodd, Editor

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**Fear not: for, behold, I
bring you good tidings of
great joy, which shall be to
all people.**

Luke 2:10