

# A Voice in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls, New York  
March 2013

## Thoughts from the Wilderness Lent 2013

“Life has a way of shattering our safe and comfortable images of God. Over and over again we are driven to search for a deeper understanding, for a renewed and deeper relationship. We will never know God fully in this life; the fullness of the Mystery will always be beyond our comprehension.” – *Br. David Vryhof*, Society of Saint John the Evangelist.

This statement of Brother David’s is true. And often very frustrating. We want answers. Answers about our lives. Answers to scientific, medical and environmental problems. Answers about our relationships. Answers about our futures (most of which no one has). With so many unanswered questions, and with Brother David’s claim that “the fullness of the Mystery will always be beyond our comprehension,” life can feel pretty shaky, pretty frightening at times – and that’s when we’re not in the midst of a crisis – when those feelings can be even greater. Even with all this, most people seem to have a measure of hope and a measure of determination to embrace life with all its unknowns. Many in fact have an enthusiasm and a joie de vivre that often belies their life challenges. And that’s good.

Certainly many are suffering great hardship in this world; hundreds of millions lack basic necessities like food and safe water, many are in zones of violence and war, many more are abused verbally or physically by those who should love

them. Many in these situations exhibit great courage and determination as well.

Life provides most of us with many joys and many sufferings. What keeps us going? That varies from person to person. One thing that helps a lot of us is seeing the positives in our unknown futures and in the Mystery of God. That is letting these mysteries give us the excitement of experiencing life as an adventure, the suspense and challenge of it all being part of the fun of being alive. People often embrace physical and/or emotional hardship for something viewed as ultimately worthwhile, like climbing a mountain or running a marathon or taking on a challenging job or starting and maintaining a relationship. The sense of accomplishment and/or overall enjoyment, the sense that one is doing something valuable or good or even noble is seen to outweigh the hardships.

Even the mystery of God is apparently meant to be taken by us as a positive! As presumably God is in charge and purposely maintains considerable mystery about himself. One way to describe this is that God calls us to have faith. Indeed a measure of faith is called for in the various adventures of life including, for example, committing to someone in a serious relationship.

Alas, many (probably most of us at certain moments) just can’t deal with the (unavoidable)



unknowns in life or in God. And some decide that they know answers (which might be fine), but it becomes a serious problem when an inflexible, self-righteous philosophy results, which harms relationships and at worst can lead to terrible, fanatical violence.

Healthy spirituality may indeed, as in the case of Christianity, make specific claims such as, God is personal and has revealed himself most clearly in Jesus. But my understanding of that, and of the best of the world religions and spiritualities is that God (or a higher power or whatever one's name for the transcendent may be – and whether or not this higher power is personal) is good and loving. God is love as our Scriptures say.

Of course it's hard for many (again, likely most all of us at certain moments) in the face of great mystery or great hardship to maintain a *joie de vivre*. And this gives us the opportunity to reach out and love, relieving others' suffering.

The Christian Scriptures cover many of the bases regarding both an affirmation of God as good and loving and full acknowledgment, even celebration of God (and life) as full of mystery. The book of Ecclesiastes certainly acknowledges the mysteries. Some call the Teacher (the purported author of Ecclesiastes, traditionally, but unlikely, considered to be King Solomon) the most pessimistic writer in the Bible. Others claim his moments of joy in the book in the face of life's difficulties make him an optimist!

He famously starts by saying, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" And he adds things like, "All things are wearisome; more than one can express;

the eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun." And, "For in much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase sorrow." Paradoxically he also says, "Wisdom gives strength to the wise more than ten rulers that are in a city." He speaks paradoxically of both the joys and the futility of seeking wisdom and the joys and futility of seeking/experiencing various pleasures. He covers the bases without coming to definitive answers.

Without attempting definitive answers myself, I will close with two wise suggestions for living with mystery.

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves. Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now." – *Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet, 1934.*

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. – *Philippians 4:8-9.*

Thank you and peace,

*In peace,  
John+*

## Notes from the Senior Warden

Welcome Spring! We know it's lurking around the corner and we are all looking forward to

the transition to warmer weather, green grass and flowers. The vestry is also looking forward to a

### A Voice in the Wilderness

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Upcoming issues:

2013: June 30, September 8, November 24

Please submit reports, articles and news items two weeks prior to the issue date. Thanks!

fruitful year. At our last meeting we reviewed the full calendar of events for the year and it is amazing to see what an involved and active parish we have. The vestry has new members with great ideas for family fun, fellowship, and stewardship. 2013 is shaping up to be a busy year so put on your running shoes and join us.

Work on the bell tower is scheduled to begin soon, so don't be surprised to see scaffolding on the side of the church. The work of the building and stewardship committees, as well as the efforts and generous donations from parishioners and supporters of the church has made this possible. We owe a big debt of gratitude to all those who have

been working diligently behind the scenes for the last few years.

Sitting in church this morning, I was heartened to see all the children who are now attending our Sunday school. The pitter-patter (OK, maybe a little stamping) of little feet is a welcome sound at Communion! It is great to have young families in our midst. Thanks to Wendy and the "helper Moms" who keep the kids involved. Seeing all the young people in church gives meaning to the work of the vestry and parish. I look forward to serving this year as Senior Warden.

*Karen Flynn*

## Portrait of Wendy Langlois

On a personal note, I got to know Wendy a little more when we were part of the four person team (plus Mibs Zelle and Marya Dodd) to meet Fr. John in Tuscaloosa, Alabama as part of the search for a new rector. We had many adventures on the trip, including trying to look anonymous when we visited St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Fayette, a church way up in the countryside where he was conducting the Sunday service. It was hard to remain anonymous visitors in the small country church as we definitely had the "look" of Easterners, not locals, and we ended up admitting that we were on the search committee to find a new rector and enjoying their Southern hospitality!

Wendy was born Wendy Theberge in Brooklyn, NY in the Gerritsen Beach community -- the same neighborhood where many of her extended family lived. Her home happened to be the closest to the beach, so it was always full of members of her Mom's family (aunts, uncles and cousins). Perhaps this early interaction with lots of family has amply helped Wendy in her many successful years of teaching at St. John's. She told me the manner in which her long and fruitful tenure as St. John's Church School teacher began:

*"We started attending St. John's probably in 1977 or 78 I think. I told Marge McClurg that I would like to try helping out in Sunday*



*School. It was probably only a week or two after when she said I think you will do fine! She retired and I took over the job. I have seen the little kids I started out with become adults with children of their own. There have been a lot. It makes me feel both "so old" on one hand but proud, on the other hand."*

Wendy went to high school in Miami, Florida. She attended Pratt Institute for 2 years in Art Education and transferred to Bard College graduating in 1976 with a major in Art History with an emphasis on Early Christian and Byzantine Art.

She came up to Copake Falls as a baby with her Mom and Dad. They stayed at one of the inns or the cabins at Taconic State Park. Her Mom, Isabel (called Bella by family) was the first to come, coming up with her brothers & sisters to stay at camp Heavenly Rest as a youngster (her mother and Edie Froggatt are cousins). Her Mom introduced her father to the area and the family moved up permanently in 1977. Edie Froggatt helped Wendy's family find a house in Copake Falls where Wendy still lives.

Wendy married John Langlois in 1981 at St. John's where they were married by Fr. Byers. Their daughter India was born June 1991.

As far as contributions to St. John's, Wendy considers her 2 main contributions as Church School and Altar Guild. She commented about her Altar Guild contribution,

*"I am sentimental about Altar Guild because it's something my mother taught me and we did together in the early days here."*

Working on other committees are enjoyable also, such as the gardening committee with the Petersons, the fund-raising and organizing of the stewardship committee as well as the dedication of the Garretts. She said, such committee work is "pretty cool."

When she has the time, Wendy enjoys reading history, studying family history, and day trips in the car.

Wendy has had a long tenure at Wheeler and Taylor, Inc. in Sheffield, MA where she has worked

for 24 years. She is currently account manager, which entails servicing a book of business that includes all kinds of personal lines of insurance projects. She says about her clients,

*"I am totally attached to the folks in Sheffield who I serve. Like Sunday School, I am writing insurance for the next generation."*

Along with thoughts of serving several generations, and speaking of the future, Wendy is now contemplating some sort of transitional employment prior to retirement. Possibly she will work part-time in customer service in one of the area's inns such as the Red Lion in Stockbridge or a bed and breakfast in the area. Whatever it will be, it will be a meaningful contribution, adding to Wendy's ever widening circle of service to herself and others.

*Lucy Eldridge*

## **ECW report**

The first meeting of the year for ECW was Tuesday March 5th. The ECW welcomes all women of the church to attend the meetings which are held quarterly throughout the year on the first Tuesday of the month at 6pm. Everyone brings a brown bag dinner.

At this month's meeting we revised our governing rules to be more current.

The next meeting will take place on June 4th at 6pm. It's a good time of fellowship and to discuss ongoing charitable events.

*Jeanne Van Hoesen*

## **Notes from the Country Fair and Auction**

The theme for this year's Country Fair and Auction was chosen at a coffee hour meeting on Sunday March 10<sup>th</sup>. Ideas that have been proposed to me since last year's Fair were mentioned and some seem possible if we have the necessary labor force. We don't want to make ourselves crazy.

I am, as I'm sure we all are, looking forward to Spring when we will have a true organizational and planning meeting, probably sometime in late April. Watch for further information.

I thank the Voice for attention to the Country Fair early in the season as it is one of our major fund raisers. Might I suggest while planting this spring, we can all put a few extra seeds in for the plant sale at the Fair. It's not too soon to look around the house and decide that it's time to move things along to new homes, including quality furniture you no longer need. Posters will be available soon and can be e-mailed from my computer to yours if you are interested.

*See you in church, Elen  
ballinamore@fairpoint.net*

## Remembering Bea Wolcott

*St. John in the Wilderness remembers our faithful long time member, Bea Wolcott, who died on February 22. Her life was celebrated at a funeral service at St. John's on Saturday March 2.*

*Bea's obituary from the Peck and Peck funeral home in Copake is reprinted below.*

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Beatrice B. Wolcott, 81, of Millerton, New York, died February 22, 2013 in Raleigh, North Carolina where she had spent the winter months for several years. Bea was born September 3, 1931 and was the daughter of the late Bill and Eva Burdick of Copake Falls, New York. On August 31, 1957 she married Robert J. Wolcott who died August 26, 1992.

She was a 1949 graduate of Roeliff Jansen Central School, and a 1953 graduate of Oneonta. She started her teaching career at Ichabod Crane and also taught at Webutuck. But the majority of her years teaching were at Roeliff Jansen/Taconic Hills Central School where she taught third grade. She retired from teaching in 1989.

Bea was an active member of St. John in the Wilderness in Copake Falls, New York.

She was an avid reader, and enjoyed the time she spent with family, especially her four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Bea is survived by her son, Michael Wolcott and his wife Norma of Raleigh, North Carolina; and step-daughter Ann Webster and her husband Richard of Copake, New York. She is also survived by grandchildren: Krista (Tony) Reiss, Jessica



Wolcott, Mark Wolcott and Greg Wolcott; and great-grandchildren, Ali and Max Reiss. She is predeceased by a sister, Betty Tayer and a brother, Allen Burdick.

The family will accept friends at Peck and Peck Funeral Home on Friday, March 1, 2013 from 2-4 pm and 6-8 pm. The funeral will be at 11 am, Saturday, March 2, 2013, at St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls, New York.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to St. John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls, New York 12517 or Dollars for Scholars of Taconic Hills, PO Box 44, Hollowville, New York 12530.

## Beyond Copake Falls

Lent finds the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion unusually quiet. Our Church is still digesting, and implementing, the proceeds of last summer's General Convention. The Church of England, under its new Archbishop of Canterbury, ++Justin Welby, is struggling with two ends that were still loose when ++Williams stepped down: The issues of same sex marriage and female bishops. The Anglican Communion remains badly divided but with only local spats to remind us that the Global South is marching to its own conservative-evangelical drum. One such dustup concerns Kenya's recent appointment of an "Anglican" alternative to the Bishop of Sheffield, a

step reminiscent of Nigeria's open support for breakaway Episcopal dioceses and parishes in the United States.

As the Nicene Creed reminds us weekly, Episcopalians belong to the wider church catholic. Thus the retirement of Pope Benedict XVI on 28 February is, or should be, of some interest to us<sup>1</sup>. Described by some as an abdication and the focus of much speculation about the reasons for it, it has

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<sup>1</sup> He is the first pope to resign since Pope Gregory XII did so in 1415, and the first to leave voluntarily since Celestine V 1294.

shone a bright light on the many problems that will confront his successor. If more light were needed, the abrupt 25 February resignation of Cardinal Keith O'Brien, the most senior Roman Catholic cleric in Britain, provided it. He stands accused of "inappropriate behaviour" with three priests and one former priest" in the 1980's.

Pope Benedict's retirement is symbolic as well as historic. As Giles Fraser+ observed in *The Guardian*, "The resignation...reveals that the papacy is simply a job, an office." It calls into question "the cult of personality that has built up around that office." Fraser concludes that, "The purposes of the almighty do not flow exclusively through the narrow weir of the papacy."

Is it too much for those of us in other corners of the church catholic to hope that Benedict XVI's successor will have the generous spirit, humility, and broad mind of the lamented John XXIII?

### Restructuring the Episcopal Church

An important outcome of last summer's General Convention was a commitment to evaluate the structure and practices of the Church, with an eye to making it a more effective instrument of mission.

One of the most controversial suggestions for streamlining The Episcopal Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is selling the Church Center (aka "815") and moving the Church offices from New York City to less expensive quarters elsewhere. In a 26 February report to the Executive Council, a group of executives from the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) suggested that it would be better to remain in "815," consolidate the Church's operations therein, and increase the amount of space -- now 3.5 floors -- that is rented to others. They argue that this would be "in the organization's best interests financially, both in terms of budget effect and for long-term investment purposes."

Evaluation of Episcopal Church structure has barely begun, and the fate of "815" is a very small part of it. The commission charged with the review is supposed to solicit opinions from all levels in TEC. Our diocese has not yet announced plans to participate.

## South Carolina Update

On 26 January, members of the continuing Episcopal Diocese in<sup>2</sup> South Carolina elected and installed a provisional bishop and reconstituted its administration. The special convention, held in Grace Church, Charleston, drew large crowds of enthusiastic Episcopalians who came to conduct official business and greet the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, our Presiding Bishop.



The Rt. Rev. Charles vonRosenberg, 73, retired Bishop of East Tennessee and a resident of Charleston, was elected by acclamation. In accepting the charge, he pleaded for tolerance and understanding during a fraught time. "There is no place for self-righteousness here," he said, "but there is much room for humility. Like the provisional bishops in other continuing dioceses (e.g. Pittsburgh, Fort Worth, and San Joaquin), Bishop vonRosenberg will serve until a permanent diocesan is elected.

At its February meeting, The Episcopal Church's Executive Council voted to authorize a \$250,000 line of credit for the Diocese in South Carolina -- tangible support for the daunting and expensive task of rebuilding the fractured diocese that Mark Lawrence left behind.

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2 Because a court has upheld ex-Bishop Mark Lawrence's claim to the diocese's name, Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, the continuing diocese has changed **of** to **in**. An appeal of the court's unfortunate decision is in progress. Lest the issue seem trivial, its resolution bears on property rights as well.

## Albany Via Media: Under New Management

A wise man of my acquaintance said, "A committee is like a compost pile. It works best if it's turned often." After nine years on the Board of Directors of Albany Via Media, Marya and I stepped down in December to make room for fresh troops. On 5 January, the Board met at St. Paul's, Albany, to elect officers for 2013 and make plans for the year. The new President (Barbara Wisnom of St. Andrew's, Albany) and Vice President (Fr. Paul Blanch, Rector of St. George's, Schenectady) join John White and Dennis Wisnom, who will continue as our Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Two new Board members, both from St. George's, are Virginia Manning and David Kennison.



Barbara Wisnom

Those of you who have supported Albany Via Media in the past, spiritually and/or financially, will want to read President Wisnom's inspiring inaugural letter on the AVM website ([albanyviamedia.org](http://albanyviamedia.org)). Our progressive organization remains in very good hands!

AVM plans to emphasize enlightening programs as it goes forward. One such, which will take place in April, is described below.

### Matthew Fox to Speak in Schenectady.

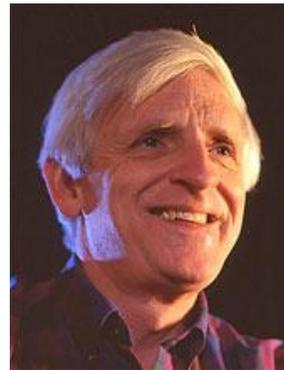
On the weekend of 19 to 21 April, theologian and priest Matthew Fox+ will present a series of talks on the theme, *Occupy Christianity — A New Reformation: Creation Spirituality & the Transformation of Christianity* in Schenectady. Sponsored by the Capital Region Theological Center and supported by Albany Via Media, there will be three opportunities to hear Fr. Fox:

- Friday April 19, 7:00–8:30 p.m., First Unitarian Society, 1221 Wendell Avenue, Schenectady.

- Saturday April 20, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., St. George's Episcopal Church, 30 North Ferry Street, Schenectady.
- Sunday April 21 at 10:00 a.m. Worship at First Reformed Church, 8 North Church Street, Schenectady. (Matthew Fox preaching)

For information on registration for the weekend (required), please visit the Capital Region Theological Center website: [capitalrtc.org](http://capitalrtc.org)

Matthew Fox (born 1940), an American priest and theologian, was a Roman Catholic Dominican before he joined the Episcopal Church in 1994. He was an early and influential exponent of a movement, Creation Spirituality, that draws inspiration from both medieval Catholic mystics (e.g. Hildegard of Bingen and Thomas Aquinas) and the wisdom traditions of Christian scriptures. Creation Spirituality supports ecological and environmental movements and embraces many spiritual traditions, from Buddhism to Native American spirituality. It is, in the widest sense, ecumenical.



Matthew Fox

Fox's 30 books, which have sold in the millions and have attracted a huge following, cover a wide theological range. Among his most unorthodox teachings was belief in "original blessing," which collides with Catholic doctrine that we are born into "original sin". Because of his position on this issue, his emphasis on feminism and ecology, and his tolerant view of homosexuality, he was often at odds with the Church.

In 1988, Fox wrote a public letter to Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, who was then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. After the letter, entitled "Is the Catholic Church Today a Dysfunctional Family?" was disseminated by the *National Catholic Reporter*, Cardinal Ratzinger issued an order forbidding Fox to teach or lecture for a year. Fr. Fox left the Church soon thereafter – Rome's loss, TEC's gain!

*Robert Dodd*

## Events in the Wilderness

Maundy Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>: Seder Meal at 6:00 p.m. with Maundy Thursday Eucharist to follow (about 7:30 p.m.)

Good Friday Services: March 29<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. and at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt with Prizes and Pizza:

Easter Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup>:  
8:00 a.m. (said Eucharist)  
10:00 a.m. (with joyful music).

## 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.

Hold  
the  
Dates

On Saturday June 22 at 3:00 pm, St. John in the Wilderness will co-host a special event at the Roeliff Jansen Community Library on Route 22 in Hillsdale. Jack Alvarez, an alum of the Roe Jan School and the preservation architect for our bell tower restoration will speak on Richard Upjohn, the significance of our church building and the techniques used in its restoration. An outdoor reception will follow at the church.

Mark your calendars for this special event and for the Country Fair and Auction on June 13.

### 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

Karen Flynn, Sr. Warden  
Rebecca Garrard, Jr. Warden

#### *Vestry*

Robert Dodd Dale Peterson  
Martha Glantz Regina Shea  
Kent Kay Jeanne Van Hoesen  
Marilyn Kay, Clerk of the Vestry  
Jane Peck, Treasurer

#### *Eucharists*

Sunday, 8:00 AM (spoken)  
Sunday, 10:00 AM (choral)

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