

# A VOICE in the Wilderness

Newsletter of the Church of St John in the Wilderness, Copake Falls NY  
Advent 2018

## Thoughts from the Wilderness

Sermon for November 4, 2018

[Ruth 1:1-18](#)

We hear the beginning of the book of Ruth today. The two main characters are women – which is unusual for a biblical book. In fact the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi in this chapter is the only one in the Bible between two women that doesn't concern a man. Rather, Naomi and Ruth are discussing each other's welfare. This is the only one (between two women) not because biblical women only talked about men, but because men wrote most of the books of the Bible.

What would you say is the status of Naomi and Ruth in today's reading? ...

They *are* very vulnerable. Both of their husbands have died. Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law to go back to their mother's house that they may find *security in a new husband*.

In this patriarchal culture without the support of a husband or father, a woman was vulnerable to poverty and worse. Indeed Naomi says, "The hand of the Lord has turned against me."

Earlier Naomi and her husband had left Bethlehem in Judah. They were forced to migrate because of a famine, and they traveled to Moab, Israel and Judah's erstwhile enemy.

Now, tragically a woman and both of her daughters-in-law are widowed, a desperate situation.

So poor, widowed Naomi is forced to migrate again – back to her original home of Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth loyally sticks with Naomi – "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge." (Ruth 1:16).

But they couldn't be more vulnerable! Naomi and Ruth are women, they are without male support, they are migrants. As Naomi was a foreigner in Moab, Ruth will be a foreigner in Judah – if they make it back to Judah.

But they do make it to Judah, to Bethlehem. What is God's view of Ruth, the foreigner, the immigrant, coming to live in the midst of God's chosen people in Judah? As we'll see in more detail next week, God's view of this poor, widowed, immigrant, Moabite woman is that she will be blessed in Judah and have a family and be the ancestor of King David and the ancestor of the Messiah – Jesus!

What then should our attitude be toward migrants, like Ruth and Naomi, fleeing poverty, fleeing violence. Well our attitude should not be to scapegoat them with racist, paranoid lies. Blaming, those who are “other” as a group, scapegoating poor vulnerable migrants – blaming them for problems they have nothing to do with. Because it's wrong to do that it's bigoted, it's classist, it avoids the real issues, it brings division, it stokes hatred, it contributes to or as is the case today, is simply one example of scapegoating vulnerable and minority groups – like women, and Jews, and African-Americans, and Latinos, and the poor. And finally, all this hatred and bigotry inspires and gives permission for real violence – as we have seen lately.

Let's live in the real world and protect ourselves as a country from those who are real dangers – foreign or domestic terrorists and killers; let's protect ourselves by having sane gun laws; let's protect ourselves by knowing the facts – The Anti-Defamation League reports that “71 percent of the extremist-related fatalities in the United States between 2008 and 2017 were committed by members of the far right or white-supremacist movements. While Islamic extremists were responsible for 26 percent.”

This is a nation of immigrants. The United States is less than 250 years old. Native Americans of course have been here a lot longer. And slavery preceded and followed the Declaration of Independence.

God says this about immigrants: *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.* (Leviticus 19:33, 34).

And here's what America at its best says to immigrants:

“A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome.  
Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

(From *The New Colossus* on bronze plaque in Statue of Liberty by Jewish American poet [Emma Lazarus](#)).

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### **From the Desk of the Senior Warden**

I can't believe that November is here already and we are getting ready to plunge into the holiday hustle and bustle of both family and church activities. Things have been active for the last few months around the church as we are getting our buildings and grounds spruced up and ready for the future while continuing with the religious and secular activities that keep us active and connected with our community.

The rectory is looking great and has been the focus of construction as Chris Najdek's Construction crew finishes the porch and pent roofing. Lonnie Thorn and his painting crew have battled the elements to get the rectory scraped and painted. Special thanks to Harry Garrett, Bob Callahan and Bob Flynn for spending the day cutting back and pulling out Arborvitaes trees to give the painter access to the office side of the church. Because of generous contributions and monies from the Upjohn fund we have been able to fund these projects which have cost approximately \$30, 000.

Other projects have also been completed. The bank at the back corner of the church has been cut back and seeded to allow for the plow to get around the corner of the church and have the ability to push snow back off the drive way. We had a near miss with a sewer back-up in Burke Hall that was averted by a call from our house cleaner. The septic has been unclogged and emptied and access to the septic has been improved for future use. Again thanks to Dale Peterson, Bob Callahan and Bob Flynn for rectifying that situation quickly! Bob Callahan also provided a fresh coat of paint to Burke Hall in preparation for enjoying Father Moody's wonderful landscapes while we sponsor his art show. Thanks to Lucy Eldridge who helped with the arrangements to make this possible.

The stewardship campaign is proceeding well under the able direction of Martha Glantz. Thanks to all who continue to support the financial needs of the church. I am writing this report as we are getting ready to provide the Pork BBQ

dinner this Saturday. The “Cousins Bob” (Callahan and Flynn) are getting the smoker ready and I am hopeful that our stewardship dinner will be an evening of fellowship and fun.

On another note, the vestry has moved forward to hire a bookkeeper to assist us with our treasury activities. Louise Peterson has served ably as our treasurer for the past 5 years and has spent many hours each week keeping our finances in order. As Louise is retiring from this position, we found that we had no volunteer with the time to take this position. Louise is willing to assist us with the transition to a bookkeeper with a vestry liaison and has outlined a job description for each. Louise is presently working with Debbie Jones to assist her to get up and running with our bookkeeping. Louise will then work with me as I will serve as vestry liaison for the next year. I am hopeful that as we adjust to this new normal that we will have a parishioner who will wish to volunteer for this liaison position in the future.

As I near the end of my year as Senior Warden, I wish to thank all of the people who continue to generously give of time and money to help us with the multiple church activities and events that keep us a thriving parish. We have many unsung heroes who work behind the scenes keeping our altar, bulletins, lay ministries, coffee hours, music, The Voice, special programs, building and grounds up and running. Thank-you to those who volunteer for all the big and small jobs. I also wish to thank the vestry who are supportive of the work we do throughout the year. I especially thank Father John for his Spiritual leadership. May you and your loved ones have a blessed holiday season and healthy and happy New Year.

*Sincerely, Karen Flynn*

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## Stewardship Update

By the time you read this edition of In the Wilderness, we will have enjoyed our annual Stewardship dinner which was held on November 10. This year’s dinner was a little different in that it was a total thank you for all who come to St. John’s and contribute in any way. The Stewardship Committee and all of St. John’s give thanks all who helped to make the dinner a success and all who joined us for a wonderful evening of good food and fellowship. In addition to a thank you to all in our parish, the dinner gives us another chance to thank all who help make St. John’s the vibrant community that we are.

As we’ve done in the past few years, at the end of service over the last several weeks, members of the church have spoken about the importance of pledging. A common theme among the speakers is that word “community.” It’s not just the community and fellowship we receive by being part of the church. It is also the community we reach beyond our parish in many forms, including but not limited to the local food pantry, soup suppers, Thanksgiving and Christmas Baskets—Churches and the Shoe Box Ministry.

Your pledge allows St. John’s to develop its budget so that we can commit to all the activities that make us the welcoming and important community that we are. As I write this article, we have received 33 pledges for a total of \$84,533, which is about 84% of our goal. If you haven’t given us your pledge card, please do.

Thank you.

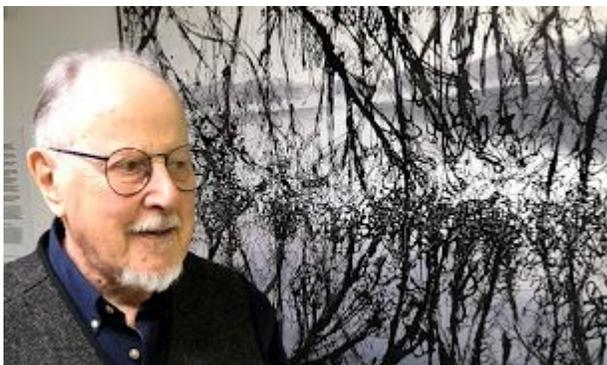
*Martha Glantz  
Chair of 2019 Pledge Campaign*

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## Landscapes: John Moody

The current exhibition in Burke Hall Landscapes: John Moody, October 20–December 3, 2018 has been well received. The opening, held on October 20, was attended by both parishioners and friends of St. John's. The Rev. John Moody, an Episcopal priest, has been a member of St. John's for many years.

John Moody's landscape paintings in the exhibition include many views of the natural world, set in both country and urban settings. Visitors to the show delight in these works which seem to invite and welcome them to enjoy nature in visual and spiritual ways. The entire exhibition was recently photographed by David Lee and the photographs are now on the church's website, stjohwn.org.



The paintings are for sale; a commission on the sale of the paintings will be donated to St. John's. The paintings can be seen by appointment, 518-329-0530.

The exhibition statement ends with the artist's view of the creative process:

*All the Arts and especially Visual Arts provide a necessary spiritually transformative function in history like nothing else. The arts push the edge of our perceptions. They push issues in a way that help us to confront them and live within them and change them. This is so important in a largely secular society. For people of faith there is a close connection between Religion and Art and faith in a loving, merciful, and ever creative God who shares this dialog with art. In each of our individual faith journeys we are pushing the edges of our own perception trying to live with God's inclusive grace into truth and wholeness. Contemplating and living with the Arts help and enable us in our journeys.*

--Lucy Eldridge

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## Capital Campaign Survey

A survey was taken in the first half of 2018. The objective was to ascertain parishioners' priorities, in terms of potential improvements financed by a future capital campaign. It was stated at the outset that the Rectory porch repair and painting were already planned for the Fall of 2018 and hence not included. It was also mentioned that deferred mechanical and electrical maintenance, as determined by last year's engineering report, would be top priority and hence not optional.

The improvements suggested were the following:

1. Permanent Church handicap access;
2. Proper egress from Church undercroft;
3. Improved parking;
4. Upgrade of Church interior; and

## 5. Church air-conditioning.

It should be noted that this survey was generated before the Master Plan was developed. In Jamie Purinton's vision, other elements are planned, such as an outdoor pavilion (replacing the existing shed, with added amenities such as water and electricity); an entry court at the entrance of Burke Hall; a pastoral walkway from the road to the Church; a rain garden; and a gathering circle in the woods at the East end of the property.

We received 36 survey responses. The results are as follows:

1. Handicap accessibility was deemed top priority.
2. In second place and evenly apportioned were improved parking, undercroft egress and interior Church upgrades.
3. Trailing very last was air-conditioning of the Church.

I want to thank everyone for their participation. The results are revealing. Let's hope we can generate funds to accomplish everything that our wonderful St. John in the Wilderness campus deserves.

*Marjorie Hoog*

## Winter Walk

Copake Falls, December 2, 2018

Preparations for St. John's participation in this year's Winter Walk, Copake Falls, Sunday December 2 are underway. We will hold the Winter Boutique in Burke Hall, Sunday December 2 from 12 noon-4pm. Our Boutique will feature scrumptious Christmas cookies in festive boxes and tins, lovely evergreen table arrangements, gorgeous swags, hefty bundles of kindling, and handsome holiday boutique items. Come, buy these wonderful holiday offerings and enjoy!

In preparation for the Boutique, there are three opportunities to help – everyone is welcome! On Thursday evening, November 27 at 6 pm, we will gather in Burke Hall to make the holiday evergreen table decorations for the Boutique. Then on Saturday morning, December 1 at 10 am, bring your favorite Christmas cookies for sale at the Boutique. We will pack them in boxes and tins for the Sunday sale. Lastly, if you have holiday items in good condition that you are no longer using, please bring them to Burke Hall by Saturday morning so they can be included in our Boutique.

Looking forward to seeing you.

*-Lucy Eldridge*

## Church Calendar

November 29, Thursday, Holiday Evergreen Table Decoration, Burke Hall, 6PM

December 1, Saturday, Packing Christmas cookies, Burke Hall, 10AM

December 2, Sunday, Winter Walk, 12-4PM

December 12, Wednesday, Blue Christmas, 6PM

December 15, Saturday, 10AM, Community Christmas Pageant

December 24, Monday, Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 7PM  
 December 25, Tuesday, Christmas Service  
 January 20, Sunday, Annual Meeting

### **A Voice in the Wilderness**

Newsletter of the Church of St. John in the Wilderness (Episcopal)  
 Copake Falls, New York 12517  
 The Rev. John Thompson, Rector

Karen Flynn (1/19) Warden  
 Marjorie Hoog (1/20) Warden

#### *Vestry*

Jane Shannon (1/19)  
 Rebecca Garrard (1/19)  
 Susan Massarella (1/20)  
 Zita Kobos (1/20)  
 Elen Freeston (1/21)  
 Wendy Langlois (1/21)

Richard Peck, Clerk of the Vestry (1/21)  
 Louise Peterson, Treasurer (1/19)

#### *Eucharists*

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

[stjohnw.org](http://stjohnw.org)

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