



Church of the Holy Comforter

January 2016

THE DOVE

The Rector's Column *by The Rev. Dr. Jason Parkin, Rector*

The Time Being

Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle
the tree,
Putting the decorations back into their
cardboard boxes --
Some have got broken -- and carrying them up
to the attic.
The holly and the mistletoe must be taken
down and burnt,
And the children got ready for school. There
are enough
Left-overs to do, warmed-up, for the rest of
the week --
Not that we have much appetite, having drunk
such a lot,
Stayed up so late, attempted -- quite
unsuccessfully --
To love all of our relatives, and in general
Grossly overestimated our
powers. Once again
As in previous years we have seen the actual
Vision and failed
To do more than entertain it as an agreeable
Possibility...
To those who have seen
The Child, however dimly, however
incredulously,
The Time Being is, in a sense, the most trying
time of all.

For the Time Being, W.H. Auden

By the time this newsletter reaches mailboxes, Christmas Day will be past, and the Christmas Season perhaps half over. We will be standing on the threshold of a new season—Epiphany—and the new secular year will have begun. It is so easy to return to our regular routines and rituals and rhythms rapidly after Christmas Day. The challenge, as the closing selection above from the magisterial poem oratorio by

W.H. Auden indicates, is to allow ourselves to be transformed by the Incarnation of divine Love in human form not just for a few hours or a few days, but throughout the rest of life. It is trite to say, “I wish Christmas could last the whole year,” and yet, that is precisely the call of the life of faith: to see the “actual Vision” of the Child come among us to bring new life, and not to walk away the same but, rather, somehow and indelibly new.

The Epiphany Season soon to begin is the time when we celebrate liturgically the unfolding revelation of Christ's identity and mission: from the visit of the Magi through his baptism in the river Jordan; from the manifestation of his first works of wonder to the Transfiguration on the holy mount, this season unpeels, layer by layer, just who this Jesus is: the Holy One of God. But Epiphany also affords us the opportunity to manifest just who we are, as well: to show how we will use this Time Being to reflect and shine with the light and love of the God who is within us and around us; to reveal that we do not think the presence of God within our world and our very lives is simply an “agreeable possibility.”

How will we shine this month? How will we use the Time Being to grow, love, care, heal, and offer God's holy reign and peace?

On Sunday morning, January 31st, we will celebrate our **Annual Parish Meeting**.

Established by the Canons and Constitutions of the Episcopal Church, the Annual Parish Meeting is always an important day in the life of any congregation. We use this time together as an opportunity to reflect on the year past, and to ponder the year just beginning. We will elect new members of the Vestry and adopt the annual parish budget. Just as importantly, we will also ponder matters spiritual, the ways in which we are fulfilling, or hope to fulfill, God's

call to us in our ministry, fellowship, worship and outreach. **This year, the Wardens will report on the result of the simple parish survey performed last summer**, and discuss ways in which the Vestry will engage those findings in 2016. In addition, other parish leaders will provide a variety of perspectives about our various ministries and programs. In short, at the Annual Parish Meeting, we reflect on the directions in which God is nudging us, and, in general, hear and retell together part of the story of Church of the Holy Comforter.

The Annual Meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the Great Room following a slightly abbreviated 9:00 Eucharist. I encourage you to make every effort to participate in order that our deliberations and reflections might include as much of the wider congregation as possible.

Please note that there will be no 11:15 Eucharist on January 31.

Visitors from Distant Lands

For some time now, we have heard rumors around Holy Comforter that we were going to be treated to a visit by some special guests early in the New Year. We

now have more information, and are delighted to be able to pass on word that on Sunday, January 10, we will be privileged to host three Magi from exotic Eastern lands during the 9:00 Eucharist (we *think* they're Magi: they might be kings or magicians or astrologers or sages. We're just not sure yet. We will simply have to wait until they arrive to learn more). So please come and welcome our special visitors and guests on January 10 at the 9:00 Eucharist! (*For those keeping score, the Feast of the Epiphany actually falls on January 6, but we are observing it on the 10th—and moving the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord to the 17th—because our special visitors couldn't make it to Holy Comforter until the 10th....*)

Holy Baptism: Sunday, January 17, 2016

The next celebration of the sacrament of Holy Baptism will take place on Sunday, January 17, 2016. January 17 is the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord, and, thus, is one of the preeminent days on which to welcome people into the household of God. If you are interested in baptism at the 9:00 Eucharist on the 11th for yourself or a child, please contact the Rector at your earliest convenience (jlparkin@holycomforter.org or 847/251-6120, ext. 115).

Adult Forum in January *by Chris Hardman*

This month we have a real treat for all those who love the season of Epiphany. On Sunday, January 10th, we will open the season with a celebration of the wise men from the east coming to visit the Christ child. This has always been one of my favorite stories and may be one of yours as well. If you have done any studying of this story you know that the “wise men” were most likely adherents of the Zoroastrian faith. On Sunday, January 24th, a real live Zoroastrian, Robinton Revetna, will speak to us. You won't want to miss what this “wise man” has to say!

On January 10th after our Epiphany celebration we will hold a discussion on Epiphany and the “nature of light.” This will include an outline and explanation of all the “light” that will shine in Lent. (That means an explanation of what our educational programs will be about.)

A baptismal reception will be held on the 17th with a mission trip discussion following. Our annual parish meeting will be held on the 31st.

January 3	No forum
January 10	What is the nature of light? Where is the light?
January 17	Baptismal reception followed by a short presentation about the Adult Mission Trip
January 24	Robinton Revetna will present on the Zoroastrian Faith.
January 31	Annual Parish Meeting

Please join us as we spread the light of Epiphany. It will be a fast and busy month.

Wednesday Adult Class—Lenten Program—New Movie Group

by Chris Hardman

In our Wednesday adult class this fall, we deepened our understanding of God as three “persons” in One Love. As we did so, we began to discern five basic concepts of a Trinitarian Spirituality that we would like to share with others. This initial sharing will take place in our Lenten program starting in February. In that **Reel Spirituality** series we will introduce to them five basic concepts and illustrate those using movies. This will give us all a better understanding of God and how God works in our lives. It will also provide a Christian basis for understanding movies, that is, life.

We will then use these concepts in a new “movie group” that we will form here at Holy Comforter. This group will meet throughout the year using at least three different meeting models. We will go to see a movie together and then discuss the movie afterwards at a local restaurant. Or, we will schedule a time for people to go to a movie together and then discuss the movie at a later date. This would give people who can’t go an opportunity to see the movie at some other time, but still discuss the movie with us. Or, we will show an older movie at church and then discuss it together over pizza. Our plan is to meet every couple of months using one of the above plans or some other plan that we haven’t thought of yet. We will discuss

this further at our first session of Reel Spirituality on Wednesday, February 17th.

Beginning January 13th, the Wednesday Adult Class will begin to focus on the Bible, specifically the Gospels of Matthew and John. Does a deepening understanding of God as a relationship of unconditional self-offering love change the way we understand Jesus and what he said and did? That is the question we will continually ask during our sessions this winter. First, we will look at Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew’s Gospel. We will take a look at Matthew’s understanding of “household,” and Jesus’ use of parables. Next, we’ll examine the mystical aspects of John’s Gospel with a focus on those events that take place in Holy Week. This should be an excellent preparation for Easter.

This Wednesday class is open to anyone. But, since not everyone can meet on Wednesday mornings at 9:45 am, we do hope you will consider Wednesday nights in Lent with our Reel Spirituality Series. Then, if you are so moved, continue with us with our “Movie Group.”

Adult and Family Mission Trip *by Chris Hardman*

At our adult forum a few weeks ago, Sister Alicia Torres outlined her understanding of Franciscan Spirituality in a most energetic way. All of us were captivated by her enthusiasm as well as her heartfelt way of living out the Gospel Life. One particular quote of hers stuck with me. She said something like this: it is a Gospel mandate to serve the poor and that is not negotiable. We are called to serve God not with just our gifts, but with ourselves.” If you take that biblical mandate seriously like she does, do I have something for you—a mission trip to the Lakota and Dakota tribes in North Dakota!

We have been looking for an overseas adult mission trip for several years now, but with the present political climate in foreign countries, we decided to look at home. The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota has a number of opportunities for us to help the Native American tribes in North Dakota and for them to help us!

Standing Rock Reservation is just south of Bismarck, and is one of the poorest areas in America. Our plan is to build one or more wooden decks for the small 9 by 20 foot trailers they call home. This will increase their living space, as well as provide a way to connect them to electricity and plumbing. In turn, they will teach us about their history, their native spirituality, and welcome us to a regional Pow Wow. Our work will be centered in the town of Cannonball which is adjacent to their diocesan retreat center. The Rev. John Floberg, Rector of St. James Episcopal Church, will be our guide. This mission trip is not only for adults; it can be for families as well.

If this sounds interesting to you, please join us at 10:35 a.m. on Sunday, January 17th, following the baptismal celebration in the library. We will begin to discuss dates and possibilities. If you cannot make the meeting, but are still interested, please let me know at jchardman@holyccomforter.org.

"A Baby Does Indeed, Change Everything!" *by Heath Howe*

A CHC friend introduced me to Faith Hill's song, "A Baby Changes Everything," and I listened to it daily during the last two weeks of Advent and well into the twelve days of Christmas. It made me cry every time as I listened to the way the Christ child changed not only Mary's life, but Joseph's, the shepherds', and everyone's life in general. If you have not heard it yet, please do.

Now that the New Year is here, I find myself wondering exactly how the gift of the Christ child will change our family lives. If we have dared to say "yes," as Mary did, then we know that our lives will never be the same. A baby changes everything. There is no going back.



I suppose we could pack up the Christmas story with the rest of our holiday decorations and simply wait to pull it out again in December. If we do that, we really have not said "yes." We have only recalled Mary's "yes," and the story remains sweet but still.

However, if we have really said "yes" then we have a whole new way of life available to us, and it calls us into action. It is a way of life that enables us to see everyone as an equal; that knows personal connection to all of creation; that believes love is more powerful than anything else. Our "yes" is our "no" to a life of self-loathing, of abusing another for personal gain, of exclusion and cruel competition, of denying the needs of another, of anxiety and negative talk, of choosing to be the victim. When we really say "yes" to a life with the Christ child, we say "yes" to follow his lead of self-offering love. In fact we are part of bringing that love into the world each day.

This can sound challenging, grand or even confusing at first. How do we love this way? Can our family life really change or grow? What does it look like practically, in our day-to-day lives, when we claim the "yes" we said to God last Christmas? The answer, of course, is different for each of us, but the starting place is the same: love. When we start each day, decision or moment with the intention to, and awareness of, love, we show up differently to the task or conversation at hand.

For some of us this may be a new practice. We may be used to starting from a place of defensiveness, doubt, or fear; however, a baby changes everything. We have said "yes" and He is here. Just like Mary and Joseph had to learn to trust their gifts as parents, so might we have to learn to trust the power of love and our ability to offer it. We have our whole lives to live into this new life in Christ.

To make this all the more real, I invite you all to gather as a family or with trusted friends and share with one another one practice each will adopt this month that will remind all of our one true motivator, Love. It might be a mantra one will commit to saying each morning. It might be a new prayer tool one will use or a new scholar one will study. Someone may decide to volunteer at an organization that helps those in need or to visit a lonely neighbor. Maybe someone will give up gossiping or judging others. Whatever is chosen, share it with another. Practice it for the month of January, and at the end of the month see what was learned.

Finally, commit to gathering as a family or with close friends and sharing with one another how each person gathered is an example of love. Really acknowledge each person and the love they bring. This love that comes from the baby who changes everything and our courage to say "yes."

"Wakey-Wakey, Eggs and Bakey!" *by Charlotte Long, Youth Minister*

By the time you read this, it will not be Advent anymore; however, at the time of my writing this, I'm thinking that my Advent feelings are allowed into the Christmas season and Epiphany and beyond. Because Advent is charging me right now; as, in handing me a charge. It's not a clear one, but it's certainly an ACTIVE one. And I partly know why. Every year, I think about Advent as a dreamy, sleepy time. It feels like it should be a quiet kind of waiting, a hushed sort of looking at a manger in order not to wake the baby. But really, I think it's about paying attention. Because how on earth will we find the baby, this miracle, in a dirty, cold barn, unless we are paying attention!! And this brings me to: I suppose then that my paying attention needs to be more aggressive.

HEAR YE: A call to paying attention! No longer will it be a soft sort of gazing about and being pleased by leaves and nature! Because if I'm really paying attention, I will sometimes be horrified. Sometimes I will be filled with Joy with a capitalized J, and this is a gift from God. But too often, I will also have to see the hate and terror in the world; I will see that there is a baby born in winter to poverty and I will be stunned that I am not saving him; and if I am truly paying attention, then I will fall on my knees and weep.

We don't want Advent to be this. Heck, we don't want any season to be this. But as C.S. Lewis proffered, don't come to Christianity for comfort. Or something like that.

Rebecca Solnit writes, "This paying attention is the foundational act of empathy, of listening, of seeing, of imagining experiences other than one's own, of getting out of the boundaries of one's own experience. There's a currently popular argument that books help us feel empathy, but if they do so they do it by helping us imagine that we are people we are not. Or to go deeper within ourselves, to be more aware of what it means to be heartbroken, or ill, or six, or ninety-six, or completely lost. Not just versions of our self-rendered awesome and eternally justified and always right, living in a world in which other people only exist to help reinforce our magnificence..."

"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Ephesians 5:13-14

Sometimes paying attention is torture, because we must admit less than pleasant things about ourselves. But listen! We don't have to feel torture! We can see the icky thing in us and laugh and go, oh yeah –I'm just a human messing about sometimes. And that can lead us to DO something about it. Paying attention can be a fast track, a highway to feeling better about our icky. It can be a highway to hearing God, which is super great, although not always pleasant. It can show us the solution to the icky, which can lead to the Joy – and I want that; I want that solution, that forgiveness, than deep J-Joy more deeply than I want to stay safe and sane and unaware.

So let Christmas charge us! Let us open our eyes and awake!

Ephesians 5:13-14: *"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

And, in other news: here's a picture of Caroline, Ryan and Natalie from our Rite13 at Church of Our Saviour's Food for Friends homeless lunch program! Green Beans for days!



Love to Learn, Learn to Love *Mary Johnson, Children's Ministries & Director of ATB&B*



At All Things Bright and Beautiful, our hope is that the children realize that they are lifelong learners. While the teachers have a profound influence on their acquired knowledge at this young age, the goal is to instill in them the desire to continue to learn about the people and the world around them throughout their lives. This became applicable to me as I learned of a faith tradition I had never heard of before until I attended a meeting of the Winnetka Interfaith Council.

At a meeting this year, I learned that the three Wisemen, the Magi, were probably of the Zoroastrian faith. I had never ever heard of this tradition. Perhaps I have never heard of them because there are so few Zoroastrians throughout the world: 125,000 worldwide and 25,000 in North America. You cannot convert to this faith: you are born into it. This tradition is known for its industry, integrity, and respect for the earth. Some have called them the first environmentalists. One speculation is that the Magi were really magicians (the term magic comes from Magi) and thus were able to escape pursuit undetected.

"And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road."

Matthew: 2:12

The story of the Magi coming to the manger to give their gifts to the Christ Child is familiar to all. We celebrate their arrival at the manger on Epiphany and we sing "We Three Kings." The truth is, the Magi were not kings at all. They were priests and astronomers. Perhaps we would not have the tradition of giving gifts on Christmas if not for the story of the Magi.

There are so many interesting details of various faith traditions that I am continuing to learn about as I attend the interfaith presentations. For those in this parish who attended the Thanksgiving service here, you had the opportunity to hear scripture and sacred texts from the faith communities who participated. Did you know that the Baha'i faith is led by the lay members of the community, as there are no ordained clergy? Something else I learned is that the fundamental differences between Orthodox and Reformed Judaism is the interpretation of the Torah: the Orthodox believe that it comes directly from God and cannot be changed, and the Reformed view it as a reflection of the time and a way to deepen their relationship with God. I am excited about all the opportunities ahead this year to learn and understand more fully the essentials of the faith traditions in our community.

On January 11, at 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of the Winnetka Congregational Church, there will be another presentation of the Winnetka Interfaith Council that you are welcome to attend. The presentation entitled "Islam vs. Radical Jihad" will be given by Mr. Kamran Bajwa, a corporate attorney who leads the Middle East practice for the international law firm, Kirkland Ellis. Mr. Bajwa also teaches a course at the University of Chicago Law School on Islamic Law and modern political constitutions. He has been very active over the past 20 years with think tanks and civic organizations. After the presentation there will be time for Q and A.

In this New Year, I hope each of you will find a way to embrace the "lifelong learner" in you. There are abundant opportunities in our community. Perhaps the presentation on January 11 will be a place to start.





STEPHEN MINISTERS ARE HEALING PEOPLE

Here

Stephen Ministers are *here* for you when you need them. They are willing to be with you and make time for you.

Empathetic

No one can truly understand what you are going through but people with empathy will do their best to understand and let some of your pain touch them.

Accepting

Stephen Ministers do not judge you, try to change you or tell you what you should do or feel.

Listening

Stephen Ministers focus on what you have to say. They let you share your feelings and let you tell your story as many times as you need to tell it.

If you would like to learn more about **Stephen Ministers**, please contact:

Jean Britt, Stephen Minister Coordinator, (847) 256-2372

or

Carrie Smart, Stephen Minister Referral Coordinator, (847) 501-3954



In the Vineyard

JANUARY

- 10 Epiphany, transferred: Visit from the Three Magi
- 17 Baptism of Our Lord, transferred: Baptisms & Reception
- 22 Family Movie Night
- 31 Annual Parish Meeting 10:00 am; no 11:15 Eucharist

FEBRUARY

- 6 Vestry Working Retreat
- 7 Commissioning of the New Vestry
- 9 Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- 10 Ash Wednesday: Eucharists at 7:00 am., noon & 5:30pm
- 17 Lenten Program begins: each Wednesday at 6:00 pm

MARCH

- 19 Kids Against Hunger
- 20 Palm Sunday: Liturgies at 7:30, 9:00 and 11:15 am
- 21 Lenten Evensong and Reception 5:00 pm
- 24 Maundy Thursday Dinner and Liturgy 6:00 pm
- 25 Good Friday: Stations of the Cross at noon
Good Friday Liturgy at 7:00 pm
- 26 Holy Saturday Liturgy: 9:00 am
Great Vigil at 8:00 pm with Baptisms and Reception
- 27 Easter Day Eucharists: 7:30, 9:00 and 11:15 am

MAY

- 8 Mother's Day, Youth and Recognition Sunday
- 15 The Feast of Pentecost, Baptisms & Reception

JUNE

- 5 Alleluia on the Avenue: Parish BBQ Picnic 10am
- 11 Youth Group ASP Service Trip

AUGUST

- 28 Alleluia on the Avenue: Ice Cream Social & Blessing of the Backpacks 10 am

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To read more about our parish or to register for a parish event, please visit www.holycomforter.org.