

REDEEMER REVIEW

December, 2009

VICAR'S LETTER

Advent: Don't Miss the Mystery...

“Advent is the time when we get ready to enter the Mystery of Christmas,” goes the Godly Play story which introduces Advent to the children. “Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it is there. This time of year you will see people hurrying through malls buying things and doing this and that, but they will miss the Mystery...”

Indeed: we often *do* “miss the Mystery,” don't we? How easy it is to get caught up in the consumerist trappings of Christmas! There are so many things we're sure we have to do, places we have to go, people we have to see! And then there are the memories and feelings that whirl around inside us. Yes, there is much, this time of year that can make it hard for us to “enter the Mystery.”

And this year, especially, may be stressful for many because of the economic downturn. But I wonder if the troubled economy might be a gift of sorts. I wonder whether this might be the year for you and your household to shift the focus of the holiday a bit, to recover a deeper sense of what it really *does* mean to “enter the Mystery.” I wonder how we might do this...

One way to begin might simply be to ask the question: what is it we're celebrating anyway; what does it mean that this Baby was born more than two thousand years ago? Why on earth does it matter now? John's Gospel says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” I wonder: does that *still* happen? Is the Word *still* becoming flesh? How are we to enter *that* Mystery: what would it mean -- look like, feel like -- for the Word to be incarnate in our *own* lives? Can you find a quiet moment each of the weeks of Advent to ponder this question for yourself? Could you gather your family around the Advent wreath to read the words of the prophets and wonder together about what it means to enter the Mystery of Christmas? One year I asked my children, now grown, what they liked most about the Christmases of their childhood. Their answers surprised me: all three said they loved gathering around the Advent wreath, lighting a new candle each week and learning the Christmas carols they couldn't sing at school.

Could you find ways to simplify your celebration, giving gifts that have real meaning for both giver and recipient, spending less time doing things *for* those you love and more time doing things *with* those you love? Are there ways you could share more with others this year? I've stopped sending the usual gifts to distant friends and relatives; I guessed -- correctly if they've been honest in their responses -- that like me, they have all the things they need. Instead, I picked out gifts from the Gifts for Life catalogue of Episcopal Relief and Development. These gifts change lives: a child sent to school, a woman loaned a modest sum to start a small business, a community given a well of clean, parasite-free water. I wonder, could this be “the Word becoming flesh...”?

Advent is the time to make the journey to Bethlehem: to wonder together, to be intentional about the choices we make, to stop, watch, pay attention. After all, we don't want to miss the Mystery...

With love,
Whitney +

EDITOR'S LETTER

A blessed Advent to everyone.

God called me to take over the Redeemer Newsletter, and I said “yes.” However, even though our past newsletter editor came to my home and showed me how to use the format she had been using successfully for a long time, as I begin my first edition, I can't figure out anything, so have resorted to a plain document format. The task seems daunting right now, which is why I have left the December newsletter until the very end of November. Happily I have managed to transfer Whitney's message, and I will copy the December and January birthdays and anniversaries, but beyond that, I give no guarantees! This is my trial issue to discover what I need to learn.

For everyone who lives in Glenwood, the completion of the labyrinth is not news. For everyone else, this will serve to inform you that we have a beautiful, large labyrinth that is now open to everyone, and is accepting walkers at your convenience. It was designed and built, with many other willing hands, by John Westmoreland, who has written a message elsewhere in this newsletter.

I would like to conclude by saying that the Redeemer Review is your information source, both to receive and disseminate, in all matters related to our church. Please feel free to contact me at: workadream@comcast.net to pose questions and to share information about events, brain waves or suggestions, or anything else that you feel is appropriate. Anything that you would like to have published in the newsletter needs to be in my possession by the 17th of the month for it to be included in the next newsletter. An email or a Word document should facilitate inclusion.

LABYRINTH CORNER

That title is a joke, of course – there are no corners in The Glenwood Labyrinth!

Following the heroic efforts of the “Weekend Crew” construction was finished on Saturday, November 21st - two months exactly after we started building! On Monday, November 23rd we opened the labyrinth for public use and it appears to be attracting lots of attention. If you haven't had a chance to walk it yet, give it a try!

We still have several cosmetic touches to be completed. A post to support a contributions box and flyer holders – they have just arrived and the post is sitting ready in the shed. With luck we'll get those installed in the next week or so. We still need a couple of benches and of course we need to undertake a landscaping program – mostly to create a modest barrier between the street and the labyrinth space to reduce traffic distraction when walking.

So there are still plenty of needs for funds. If you would like to make a contribution Paula Zand would be happy to hear from you. There are also contribution forms available in the church.

When I started planning this project I wasn't sure we'd get it finished this year but we have been graced with tremendous help from lots of people. I don't normally single out individuals from a team effort, but I have to acknowledge the unstinting help from Nick Clark particularly, and Jim Providenza and Mario Pamatmat. These are the "Master Builders" who helped me with the careful bricklaying. Matt Farhner, Jim's son-in-law, also made a big contribution in this area. Give them a "high five" when you see them – you'll get an appreciation for their work when you take your first walk.

And it goes without saying, as it so often does at Redeemer, that without Joe Garbarino's contribution of materials – delivered to the site, yet, we couldn't have afforded to do this project. Thank you, Joe!

Walk and Enjoy!

John Westmoreland.

GODLY PLAY

Jim Providenza has done, and is continuing to do a wonderful job with Godly Play. The materials that he and his helpers have created to help illustrate the stories are fascinating in their simplicity. We have purchased some of the story materials, but they are rather expensive, and the materials that Jim and his elves have made are excellent. The sand box is especially impressive. That is used for the desert stories. Godly Play covers old and new testament stories, and also the parables.

We are very fortunate to have a priest helping us at the moment who also is an experienced Godly Play teacher. She recently presented a story that she had written herself.

The materials for Godly Play are always available at the back of the church for children to play with. Part of the play is replacing the story in its home box or container so that it is available for the next child to take out and enjoy. New shelves have been purchased to house the story material and make it accessible. More information will be forthcoming in later newsletters, and any questions about this stimulating way of teaching children about the bible may be asked of Jim or Amma Whitney.

The following is an announcement that Jim sent out in early November:

As if the labyrinth progress wasn't enough, we also have lots of stuff going on with Godly Play! Teresa Chan, the Preschool Director, came to Kids Church this last Sunday to see a Godly Play story. I talked with her afterwards and we agreed tentatively that we would start teaching Godly Play classes at the church for Preschool children in January. Since I have Mondays off, we are talking about holding the class on Monday afternoon. Teresa will put information in her November flier and solicit interest.

We have work to do! This is so good...

First off, Sue Clark and I have searched high and low and believe Sue has found a set of affordable and durable bookcases to house our Godly Play story materials. The color will be very similar to that of the wood of the pews. This has been discussed at the last meeting of the Bishop's Committee and Sue will go ahead with the purchase. The bookcases will form a U shape along the left rear wall, left side wall, and left rear of the pews as you enter the church.

Next, we need to fill out our story materials for the winter and spring seasons. First off we will have various "stuff" available to make parable story materials at our annual wreath making get together in a couple of weeks. Bring scissors and glues, etc. I will have the "stuff".

We will need to do some training during December. Basically this will be getting together and going over the duties and interactions of the two roles - the storyteller and the door person. We will also take time to each of us work in a small group to help each other learn how to tell a story - this is a fun and very supportive way of learning how to tell a Godly Play story.

What days / times work best for folks to get together for a training session?

Jim

DECEMBER Birthdays

2	Stephanie Ortega-Kennison
5	Elizabeth Fox
6	Kit Culleton
7	Steve Zolezzi
8	Greg Poulos
10	Rudy Erler
11	Gina Chiarolla
13	Easton English
13	Julie Cassettari
18	Jon Nakamura
25	Katie Fox

JANUARY Birthdays

1	Edy Loudon
2	Susan Providenza
2	George Tuttle
3	Jay Wayne
10	Nick Clark
10	Billie Barbash
11	Ella Gerlach
18	Alexandra Thomason
18	Meg Nakamura
24	Linda Fox

JANUARY anniversaries

18	Jim Providenza and Terri Leinsteiner (1986)
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December Book Club

Women's Book Club at noon at Betty Baird's home. Book: "The Friendly Persuasion" by Jessamyn West. Call Betty at 457-8543

Well, fellow church members, I must apologize for not requesting information from our senior warden, or from the discernment committee about the search for a new vicar (ongoing), and probably a few other things. As you see, I have a steep learning curve, and "UP" is the only direction from here! One part of the curve is learning to beat my Vista operating system into submission. This will probably be a nasty battle.

My final thought for this newsletter is about STEWARDSHIP.

We have a wonderful and vibrant community of generous, thoughtful, intelligent people, and we have so much to be grateful for in our small church. We are like a family in a number of ways, and especially in the need to pull together and care about and for one another. From this position we can accomplish a great deal. We had an especially fun and fruitful event yesterday afternoon making Advent wreaths/arrangements, and creating materials for the Godly Play stories.

The labyrinth has been a productive example of stewardship, as many people gave of their energy and time to help produce a lovely structure which will facilitate space in busy lives for meditation, contemplation and relaxation.

Stewardship means so much more than just dollars, which are very important of course, but sharing ourselves and some of our time is equally important. Our altar guild is wonderful, and church as we know it wouldn't be the same without them. A few extra members in that group would make a world of difference. Keeping the property tidy and attractive with an hour here or there, our faithful acolytes, coffee hour hosts and service hosts, are examples of stewardship. I urge you to reread Eileen Erler's letter on stewardship. It is an example of generosity.

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