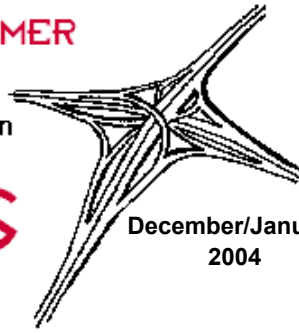




CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

A Christian Liberation Community
in the Episcopal Tradition

CROSSROADS



December/January
2004

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Convent Christmas

by Sr. Shane Margaret, Pastoral Assistant

"What do you do all day?" Many people - at Redeemer, at Daytop, and visitors to the convent - ask this question. Life at the convent is a mystery to many. In fact, our life is both similar to and different from that of our neighbors. Here's the inside scoop.

My day begins between 5 and 6 a.m. I get a cup of coffee, and I read the day's Bible readings. This is called "lectio divina" - literally, holy reading. I'll tell you about that another time. At 6 the first bell rings. By 6:30 I'm washed and dressed, and then I spend another hour in private prayer and reading before the first service of the day, Lauds, at 7:30 (7:00 on Sundays). (These services are called "offices.") At 8 (7:30 on Sundays) we have Eucharist, and then breakfast follows. At 9:30 we're back in chapel for Terce. Then we work until noon, when it's back to chapel followed by lunch. Work time runs from 1 to 5, when we have Vespers. 5:30 to 6 is more private prayer, then dinner. We have recreation from 7 to 8. This is our "family time" each day, when we relax and share our days. Then at 8:30 we say Compline, the final office of the day.

As you can see, we spend a lot of time in chapel! This is what St. Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism, called "opus Dei" - the work of God. Each office follows a pattern of psalms chanted from one side of the choir to the other, followed by a reading, a hymn, a canticle, and prayers. Terce is only 10 minutes long, while Lauds and Vespers can last up to 35 minutes - it depends on the number and length of psalms for that day.

The schedule is fixed, but each individual finds wiggle room. As a community living a "mixed life," centered both on prayer and on service, we have some people whose lives are lived mostly "in the house," and others whose work calls them out quite a bit. If I have a job or an appointment that takes me away from an office or an obligation, it's understood; the important thing is to be present enough to maintain my place in the community and my prayer life. When I'm at Daytop, I'm working from 3 to 9 - not exactly our regular work hours! The goal is a life balanced between prayer, worship, work, and rest, in which we are fully present to whatever we're doing.

What kind of work do we do during work time? Much of it is what is needed to keep the convent running. Someone needs to clean the chapel and keep it ready for the next service. Someone else is responsible for the pantry, and the kitchen. Another Sister works on the buildings and grounds. Then there is the group running the retreat house. There's an infirmarian, a clothing Sister, Bursar, library Sister, those who work with our Associates and Oblates. There's Sr. Jane's team - Sr. Mary Lynne and Sr. Linda Clare keep her records and funds in good shape. Then there's the work we're asked to do, giving retreats and quiet days in churches. We serve on diocesan committees and boards. In short, we're busy bees!

Then Christmas comes, and the busyness explodes. We're like every house in December, full of plans. We're different because we're running around giving other people quiet time. On Christmas Eve we put up the crèche and trim the tree. We

have Mass at 11:30 p.m., and then we're back in chapel at 8 the next morning. We actually TALK at breakfast - only on Christmas, Easter, and St. John Baptist Day - and we call our Sisters in England. We spend time with our guests, and we eat. It's like your Christmas. We open our presents on Dec. 26, when there's more time with "just us." We each get something simple - a nice lotion or candles.

My favorite part is seeing the chapel with extra candles and pine boughs on the windowsills. I love the peace outside, with the evergreens holding snow in their arms. Prayer comes easily at such times. I pray that this Christmas will be for all of us a time of peace, of renewal and of hope. If you're feeling a little frantic, drop by anytime: you're always welcome! And have yourself a merry little blessed Christmas.

Peace on Earth

by a Member of the Congregation

When I tuck my daughters into bed I often say a prayer that there be "peace in the world, peace in our family and peace in our hearts." There are some days-- when sibling quarreling seems endless, and wars, genocide and terrorism around the world dishearten-- when that is the only prayer that comes to mind.

Peace on Earth. Would it be so hard to achieve if we had structures in place to really focus on creating the conditions for peace?

One attempt to design such a structure is the legislation in Congress to establish a U.S. Department of Peace at the federal level. I would like to share with you why I believe a Department of Peace is an idea we can all endorse. I have been following the progress of this bill for over two years (note: the bill originally was introduced in Congress before September 11 and well before any inkling of a war in Iraq) and recently attended a conference in Berkeley, California on the Department of Peace.

The Department of Peace bill calls for making peace the organizing principle of our nation. Unique to this bill is the fact that it addresses not just international conflicts, but every kind of violence: domestic violence, school, gang and prison violence, crime and human rights violations. The Secretary of Peace would be part of the president's cabinet, providing the unique perspective of someone educated and experienced in creating the conditions for peace.

The bill indicates that funding for the department would be equivalent to 2% of the amount of funding the Department of Defense receives. (This amounts to approximately \$8 or 9 billion!) What could this money "buy?" Some possibilities are: expanded drug rehabilitation efforts, which would contribute to reducing domestic violence and other crimes; peace training for guards and inmates in prisons so individuals come out less violent than when they entered; programs for transforming gang members into peace makers; peace education at every level. There exist already many known and proven programs addressing these issues which could be expanded and funded, and new ones could be developed.

On the international front, the Department of Peace could sponsor initiatives such as ending human rights abuses in nonviolent ways and supporting a nonviolent peace force to prevent violence while the parties to a conflict concentrate on resolving their disagreements.

Just to be clear, the Department of Peace legislation does not call for eliminating the military or the Department of Defense in these times, though implicit is the burning hope that one day in the future this may actually be possible. How far in the future depends on what we do today.

The conference in Berkeley emphasized that the Department of Peace campaign is not just about passing the legislation, but also about laying the spiritual foundation for peace in our society - doing the hard work of peace in our own hearts, families and communities. Things like challenging people to look at their personal lives for places where they can be more peaceful. Things like encouraging people to use nonviolent communication to relate to others in constructive and life-enhancing ways. If hate and violence -- as well as love and understanding - begin in the human heart, then it is clear that a spiritual foundation must go hand in hand with political endeavors.

In our country today - of course this is nothing new -- people on every side of an issue often demonize others who hold a different opinion. Yet, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "You have no persuasive power over people who can feel your underlying contempt." The Department of Peace campaign is asking people to speak with, listen to, and understand people who have different, even opposite views. Interestingly, Philip said a similar thing in a recent sermon. Only by understanding, connecting and finding common ground can a real conversation begin.

Some people will say that for all its good intentions, a Department of Peace would not bring peace in the world. Yet history demonstrates that when we mobilize the will and resources to achieve a goal, our efforts bear fruit. Witness the goal in the '60's of sending a man to the moon. Certainly reaching for peace, though not guaranteed, is worth the try!

Others will be concerned about the expense of a new department. The truth is that violence has tremendous costs -- financial,

emotional and cultural. The Department of Peace, for comparatively low cost, could potentially save hundreds of billions of dollars now spent on war, prisons, and hospital care related to violence.

Finally, some people will argue we do not need a new department, that the Department of Peace functions can be given to existing departments. That might be true if this were just a bunch of isolated programs. But this effort is much more. It is a comprehensive and serious attempt to "wage peace." Just imagine if the Department of Defense were told its functions should be divided among different departments: Basic training could be covered by the Department of Education, weapons and supplies procurement by the Dept. of Commerce, strategic planning by the Department of State. How efficient would that be? Who would agree to that? Likewise, the Department of Peace needs people working together to share insights, coordinate efforts, mobilize resources and develop strategic plans to address the causes of violence. The total is far greater than the sum of all the parts. Imagine all the energy generated by people focusing on peace!

I believe the Department of Peace is an idea we as Americans could all agree on. We may not agree on how to handle the situation in Iraq, we may not agree on specific policies, but I think we all agree that in the end our goal is true peace. If that is our goal, then let's commit our energy and resources there. And if the strongest country in the world "waged peace," imagine how the world could be transformed!

Interested people are invited to an informational meeting and discussion about the Department of Peace in the parlor on Sunday, December 12 after the 10:30 service. For more information see also the Department of Peace Campaign website, www.dopcampaign.org.

Christmas Babies

by a Member of the Congregation

I'm a Christmas baby. I was born December 20, 1962 (now you can figure out my age). And, yes, being a Christmas baby can be a rip-off in terms of presents. Still, being a Christmas baby made the holiday season seem that much more special. We never put up our tree until my birthday. My birthday was the unofficial start of our holiday season for my family.

In December 1995 my partner and I finally started trying to increase the size of our family. We first decided to try at home. On my 33rd birthday, after going to mass at Redeemer, my ovulation test indicated that it was time to try. It was Christmas season at Redeemer and the altar table was draped with the image of the very pregnant Mary. I can still recall how giddy I felt as we started this journey. Coming from a family of 6 with a mother that rarely saw her feet in as many years, I was sure that I would get pregnant easily. That Christmas, my wish was for a baby.

Two weeks later, my hopes for a baby were unfounded. Although most women don't get pregnant right away, I felt that something was wrong. My partner consoled me by blaming it all on the donor sperm but I was sure that it was my fault. But we vowed to keep trying. Three more months went by with no pregnancy and I asked her if we could go to a doctor. And like so many couples, the private act of conceiving was now made a lot more public.

Tests were done (very painful tests that I am fairly sure were first invented by Torquemada during the Spanish Inquisition.) However, my diagnosis remained unexplained and I remained un-pregnant. Mothers Day at Redeemer took on a whole new meaning. While I always appreciated and am forever grateful to Redeemer for declaring that Sunday "Women's Journeys," in my heart, it was still Mother's Day, and still painful.

Infertility strikes in so many ways. First of all, there is the pain of realizing that your body doesn't do that which it is supposed to do, that which makes our body so special as women. OK, so maybe I sound unenlightened, but my inability to conceive made me feel less of a woman. My days were spent either waiting to ovulate or waiting to know if I was pregnant. If only I could have found out within a day or two, this journey would have been so much less painful. For 2 weeks each month, I'd analyze every twinge, every cramp, every gas bubble, and every other thing that was going on inside my body. After even more months of not pregnancy, the doctors put me on infertility medications. Then, not only was I trying to figure out which twinges were real and which were the result of the medications, but my hormones were so out of whack that it was like having PMS all the time.

Infertility also strikes financially. It was hard to accept that there was hope out there (IVF) but at \$10,000 a pop, the hope was too far out of reach for us. I was always amazed that I could get birth control pills covered under my insurance plan or even a drug rehab stay but not the treatment necessary to create life in my body. I'm so happy that NJ law has mandated infertility coverage now, but that was not the case back in 1999. For financial reasons, we did many IUIs (intrauterine inseminations) with the cheaper/less efficient drugs while I dreamed of doing IVFs.

In the meantime, life went on around me. Friends, who had just started trying, got pregnant. Pregnant women now became people to be avoided. And the image of the very pregnant Mary at Christmas time was too much to bear. I spent many services crying in the pew, unable to fathom why God would give me the desire to be a mom but not the ability to do so.

Finally, through some creative financial planning, we moved on to IVF (In Vitro Fertilization). Unfortunately, it was at that time

that we discovered that my eggs were basically of poor quality. I was only 34 at the time. After my failed IVF, my doctor (my wonderful, dear doctor) suggested that we use my partner's eggs and I could carry. We LEAPT at this! While she wanted to be a mom, she didn't want to carry a baby and I wanted to be pregnant. By that time, I also concluded that it didn't matter any more if I was pregnant. More than anything, I just wanted to be a mom. And it didn't matter any longer how it happened.

I recall Christmas 1997. As I stood in my kitchen, I vowed (ala Scarlet O'Hara) that by the next Christmas, I would either be a mother, be pregnant or be well into the adoption process BUT it was the LAST Christmas that I would spend without a child.

It turns out that my doctor's suggestion was a very good suggestion. While we'd had one cycle with my partner's eggs that ended in an early miscarriage, our next cycle was extremely successful. The joy that filled my heart when I finally got that long awaited call from a nurse telling me that I was pregnant will not be soon forgotten. When I started bleeding early on and feared another miscarriage, the nurse told me that it was possible that I was having multiples. My first thought was, "Yeah, like I would be so lucky as to have multiples." Man, what God has in store for us when we least expect it.

My pregnancy, besides it being a triplet pregnancy, was wonderfully uneventful. No morning sickness or anything. And although many triplet pregnancies deliver early, I delivered at almost 37 weeks (the longest that my docs would let me go) by a scheduled c-section (i.e. NO labor.) My doctor let me deliver a couple of days early so that we could be home by Christmas.

And so, on December 21, 1998, my three Christmas miracles - three years in the making - were born. We brought them home on Christmas Day 1998. I still get weepy at Christmas time and Women's Journeys, knowing that God has blessed me beyond my wildest imagination (heck, I'd only asked for ONE child!). Since that day, there have not been many quiet moments in our house or many uninterrupted nights of sleep. But after all the nights that I cried myself to sleep, I'll take being woken up over sleeping through the night any day.

My Christmas wish this year is that all women who long for a child will be as blessed as I am.

Will the Anglican Communion Split Apart?

Will the Anglican Communion split apart because the Episcopal Church in the United States ordained an openly gay bishop? Hear about what might happen at the Adult Forum on December 19th.

This fear of split is a real one as various national Anglican Churches in Africa and Asia disassociate themselves from the Episcopal Church refusing to even be in the same room with Episcopal bishops that voted to confirm the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire. In order to head off a split the Archbishop of Canterbury called together a Commission to look for a path to reconciliation between these strongly held differences.

The Commission's report, called the Windsor Report, was recently issued and laid out a path to reconciliation. Such a path involves give and take on both sides. Neither side is completely happy with the findings. What is the American Church asked to give up when the issues of justice seem so clear? Will we be able to consecrate openly gay bishops in the future? What limits are being placed on the bishops in Africa who are coming into this country to serve parishes angry at Robinson's ordination? What does it mean to be asked to put a hold on future ordinations? Is that the same as putting a hold on justice and truth?

Kim Byrum, a lawyer, member of the Diocesan Standing Committee (the Bishop's Vestry) and a long time delegate to the National Episcopal Convention will come to Redeemer at the Adult Forum on Dec. 19, 2004 at 9:00 am to explain the meaning of the Windsor Report and answer questions. Kim is a local and national advocate of justice and the full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the church.

Mark your calendars: Sunday Dec. 19th at 9:00 am.

Fun & Games for Kids of All Ages

by A Vestry Member & a Very Young Congregant

About thirty grown-ups and children gathered on Friday, November 19, for another successful Family Night. Two or three times a year, Mary Jane, Youth Education staff, and other interested parishioners plan an evening of food, games, singing, storytelling, and other entertainment for Redeemer children of all ages. Many thanks to Deb & Scott, Carole, Joyce, and Mary Jane for their able leadership and assistance. No one wanted to leave!

After arriving at the Parish House, many little hands began decorating a new "previously-owned" coffee table for the Sunday

School by covering it with strips of brightly colored cloth tape in varied hues. This was a very popular project, but the children were warned that it was not an appropriate activity for their living room furniture at home. Before the rowdiness got out of hand, the pizza arrived, and the kids eagerly devoured it and got back to play in about seven-and-a-half minutes. Salads, fruit, juice, and a variety of sinful cookies and cakes rounded out the meal.

The older kids got involved in a number of organized games and races created by Carole, Deb and Scott. Smaller children and their parents retired to the parlor for quiet(er) play with Mary Jane. The most popular activities were building with large cardboard blocks, and creating geometric sculptures and inventions with magnetic sticks and balls. These magnets provided endless fascination-perhaps more so for the parents, who explored their own "inner engineers."

Our resident professional storyteller, Joyce, arrived to enchant the little ones with stories of naughty animals who eventually, as in all good fables, get their comeuppance. We learned about the origins of the weathervane-the eternal punishment for a wicked chicken who was not at all nice to the wind, the water, fire, and other elements he met on his journeys. The chicken story reminded Dan of a chicken song (no, not the Chicken Dance), and he brought out his guitar to teach the children a song about a chicken who pops out of his bubbling soup pot to remind us what other ingredients need to be added.

A young congregant filed the following report:

"While the little kids did their thing, the bigger kids had tremendous fun playing a series of about five games, which needed an understanding of directions, teamwork, athletic skills, and cautiousness. The games included musical hats (very fun in my opinion); put on a pair of shorts, T-shirt, and cap over your clothes relay race; blindfold a person and direct them through a pre-made path relay race; and probably the most funniest of all, sit on a floor and try to take everyone else's socks off and the last person with both socks on wins-since you get out when you have a sock pulled off!"

"Everybody was excited and they were rooting for their team. It was a great team effort filled with lots of fun. Congratulations to the winners of the games! Colin tied for the pull-off-your-sock competition and won the musical hats in a dramatic ending, but even the ones who didn't win still contributed to the wonderful night. (It even was fun to root for the people cheating!)"

At the end of the evening, everybody gathered together in the parlor for more animal tales from Joyce and more songs from Mary Jane and Dan. Despite cries of "More stories! More!," the evening had to end, and everyone returned home to rest up for the Thanksgiving celebrations of the following week.

Why Singing with Redeemer's Choir is so Fulfilling for Me

by a Member of the Choir

When our Crossroads editor asked me to describe what it's like to be a member of Redeemer's choir, I was excited to get the opportunity. Many people think having to sing at church every Sunday is too much of a commitment. However, what they don't realize is that it's a labor of love. Those of us in the choir really love to sing. It's such an exhilarating feeling when our voices are joined in harmony.

I've been attending Redeemer for about three years now. I joined the choir almost from the beginning because I used to sing years ago, and I wanted the opportunity to try it again. A friend told me to talk to Alice. I thought I would have to schedule an audition to sing to her. When Alice told me to show up at 9:30 one Sunday morning, I was surprised to find out there would be no audition but instead she invited me to join the other tenors for their regular rehearsal. Everyone was so terrific to me right from the beginning.

Because I hadn't sung with a choir in over 15 years, and because I hadn't attended church regularly in just as long, I felt particularly anxious. Whenever the group started to decide we didn't need to rehearse something because "we know this", I always had to sheepishly raise my hand and ask to have Alice play it anyway. Because I don't sight read music, I depended on the expert leadership of Rob to sing the tenor parts. But Alice and the others never pointed out my shortcomings. Instead, they just helped me to sing with them. This Redeemer choir is so awesome!

Some highlights over these last years include:

- Our candlelit Advent Evensong service. What a beautiful and moving service.
- Singing pieces from Rutter's Requiem last Easter and the year before. What a beautiful voice Jen had when she sang that solo! And we sounded so good backing her up!
- Getting a standing ovation when we sang the final Reconciliation Season service this year.

Another great thing about Redeemer's choir is the depth of its leadership. Alice has been such an inspiration for me. When she recently took a leave of absence, we really missed her. But, we've been blessed to have the leadership of both John and Wayne, both accomplished organists and music directors. John, of course, has composed much of the service music we sing

at Redeemer.

I look forward to another year singing with our choir. If any of you in the congregation ever thought about joining us, if even for a trial period, this would be a great time to do it as we get into the Holiday season. I know I've heard some great talent in the aisles as we process into church on Sundays. You might find it as fulfilling as I have.

A Special Martin Luther King Celebration *presented by Redeemer's Racial Dialog Group*

Sunday, January 16, is Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday at Redeemer, and at churches across the nation. For this first Sunday of Reconciliation Season at Redeemer, we are excited that guest speaker Gregory Cobbs, a parishioner of St. Peter's, Morristown, and a founder of that church's Racism ministry, will be with us that Sunday morning at 10:30 to share his life experiences as an African-American.

The following Sunday, January 23, we are also excited to have Dr. Eddie Glaud, prize-winning author and Princeton University professor of Religion and African-American Studies, as guest speaker for the 10:30 service.

To honor both of these speakers, and to kick off our season of reconciliation, awareness and celebration of American cultural diversity, the Racial Dialog Group will host a special luncheon of African-American inspired food and entertainment immediately following the January 23 service. We especially celebrate on this occasion the life of Madge Bush, one of Redeemer's very own, who we lost this past year.

We invite you to come and worship with both of these accomplished men, join us for the January 23 luncheon.

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