



CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

A Christian Liberation Community
in the Episcopal Tradition

CROSSROADS



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Could You Consider Becoming an Episcopalian?

by the Rev. Phillip Wilson

I am an Episcopalian because it allows me to hold onto the ancient traditions of Christianity and at the same time see and interpret them through the lens of the world of the 21st century. The Episcopal Church is not defined by doctrines or creeds but by communities of people living out their experiences of God, using metaphors and symbols, ancient and modern, to celebrate those experiences. There is a freedom in the Episcopal Church that honors parishes as diverse as a Redeemer and a St. Anthony of Padua, two parishes that could not see the past and present through more different eyes. I am an Episcopalian because it has taken the lead in social justice issues, from dealing with racism to ordaining gay and lesbian priest and a bishop. The Episcopal Church is one that invites us into struggling with questions rather than giving us a pat set of answers.

On Sunday afternoon, April 24, 2005 the Bishop will come to Redeemer for an area wide service to confirm and receive people who want to claim their identity as Episcopalians. I will have four Sunday morning classes to help people understand what it means to be an Episcopalian so that they can make an informed decision. These classes will be held in my office on March 13 and 20, 2005 and April 3 and 10, 2005. There is ample opportunity to sign up for these classes in flyers in the Service Guide on Sundays. Could you consider becoming an Episcopalian?

Episcopal Church Facts:

1. The Episcopal Church in this nation grew out of the Church of England which grew out of the Roman Catholic Church. We have not rejected our Anglican and Catholic heritage, but interpreted it in the current era, always breathing new life into it.
 2. The national Episcopal Church is divided regionally into Dioceses. Ours is the Diocese of Newark and is composed of the seven northern counties of New Jersey.
 3. The chief pastor and overseer of each Diocese is called a Bishop whose job it is to ordain new clergy, confirm and receive new members and support local congregation to be the People of God in their communities. Our Bishop is John Croneberger.
 4. Other clergy, called priest and deacons, lead parishes where the primary ministers of the church are found, who are called the laity.
 5. The priest responsible for a parish is called a rector who works and shares leadership with the elected officials in each parish, called the Vestry.
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From the Pastoral Assistant

by L. Edwin Hamil

As you receive this edition of Crossroads, depending on the efficiency of the postal service, Ash Wednesday and the solemn Lenten Season should be fast approaching. If you are like me, you never quite know in advance what the focus of your Lenten experience will be. However, I am often surprised when a piece of literature, a conversation, a movie, a musical composition, or an unexpected personal awareness suddenly jolts me into a realization of that focus. This year the realization came from a poem by Bill Wallace, a native of New Zealand.

Crosses

*Almost all the crosses
I have ever seen
seem much the same
despite their differing
size, shape, texture -
some are empty
others bear
cosmetic
Christs
but few
if any
present
the crosses of our world
crosses of plants and animals
under the threat of extinction
crosses of people suffering
unjust imprisonment,
starvation, torture,
personal and institutional
violence.
Sometimes I wish
I could place
real bodies
upon these crosses
bodies of dead whales
dead native birds and trees
bodies of dead, dying, emaciated
and mutilated people;
for at the intersection
of the horizontal
and vertical
elements of life
there is always a body
and in the body of Christ*

The Fabric of Our Journey

by a Member of the Congregation

You know something, God has a plan. People do not enter your life by accident, or by some random selection process. I believe that the people that touch your life do so because God intends for it to be that way. He (or she, if you prefer) knows we are all on a journey, one that is fraught with many a twist and turn-most of which can be very unexpected. I choose to believe that it is his/her way of helping us cope, helping us succeed. For this reason, and perhaps others that I am at a loss to properly articulate, it is so vitally important that we never take these associations lightly-or even worse-for granted.

For each person that crosses your path-the people of Redeemer, your neighbors, your friends, and even your family-can provide you with insights and perspectives about who you are and where you are headed that you could have never otherwise imagined. Endeavor to take from each of these individuals a little piece of who they are-and what they stand for-for your journey onward. Because if you believe like I do, they were meant to be there.

Think of each person as being represented by a thread-some thicker than others perhaps, because of what they mean to you-

that you can collect and weave together into a warm and comforting blanket that will shield and protect you from the perils of your journey--prejudice, close-mindedness, hate, and rejection.

Once joined in this way, the fabric that has been created will never fray or be torn apart because it is YOU who will always hold them together: close to your heart, your soul, and your spirit.

For me, as a transgendered woman, my "journey" to embrace my true self is a deeply personal and spiritual one that would be next to impossible if it were not for the people who I have encountered along the way that have given me strength, inspiration and resolve through their non-judgemental love, support and caring. These ideas actually arose from a discussion I was involved in during one of my support groups around this topic--I hope it provides a fresh perspective regardless of the journey you find yourself on.

A Letter to the Editors

Dear Editors,

I am writing to tell you I enjoy receiving Crossroads very much, but how could you print the May/June [2004] issue and not mention the "Passion Play" that our church so successfully preformed in 1970-71. It was a wonderful "joint" effort by all members of Redeemer and all nights were a "sellout" crowd. How could we forget Preston R. as the blind man and Elinor as the Mother of Jesus? And there was Bill J. as Simon of Cyrene and Ann J. and I did makeup as well as programs with Virginia B. Of course, stealing the show was Ed M. as Simon the Beggar.

Another memory very dear was the Junior Choir, usually about 10 in number and watched over very motherly by Mrs. Davis for many years, before Mrs. J., Bill's mother, took the responsibility. The highlight of the year for those youthful singers was a picnic and swim at the Jersey shore.

Like Florence H., I had an embarrassing experience as president of E.C.W., and sitting on the stage with Bishop Spong in front of approximately 150 ladies at a luncheon when I introduced him as Bishop Moore. Well, Paul was a good bishop.

Another memory very dear to me is Elinor R., every Sunday for many years, arranging the fresh flowers for the altar in the sacristy. She would "shoo" people out if they just came by to chat. But we loved her and her decorating the church for Easter by gathering forsythia while the snow was still on the ground and pounding the stems to force it to bloom.

Brev Cannon was a different rector, but everyone love Anne, his wife, much better. She always did a bridal style show every year that made a tidy sum. He was definitely a Princeton theologian and his sermons were dull.

Yes, I remember planning the reception in 1987 when Phillip and Susan and those two beautiful sons - Jane too, came to Redeemer. It was a low time in Redeemer history but as Pres said "With Phillip's leadership the church survived."

God Bless,

Margaret L
10/25/04

Crossroads Book Review

Ordinary Wolves written by Seth Kantner

Every once in a while we come across a book that on the surface appears interesting because of its subject matter but that after reading ends up having meanings to us that take a while to discern.

This book is an example of that. The book is fiction, though it is semi autobiographical. The main character, Caleb Hawcly was a white boy who lived in northern Alaska well above the Arctic Circle. He was raised by his dad in a traditional Inuit mud igloo along with his older brother and sister. The father was an artist who wanted to chuck the trappings of modern society, and with his family did exactly that. The mother is not in the story and apparently could not take to living that kind of existence. They lived a two-day dog-sled journey from the nearest town, so they pretty much did everything in their 16' by 16' underground home.

There are the descriptions of how they lived; hunting caribou and moose to survive, attempting to go to the bathroom in -60 degree F weather in an outhouse, and surviving the seemingly eternally dark winter months. The struggle for survival does

play a big role in this book, but it is not the main theme.

The main theme is about the journey towards self-acceptance. Growing up Caleb idealized the local Inuit people, who ironically enough totally eschewed the lifestyle he and his family were living for the government provided houses in town, and felt inferior to them because of the way he looked and lived. This was reinforced by the often cruel way the local people treated him, both for being non-native, and because he didn't fit into their mode of living.

Once Caleb becomes a young adult he journeys to Anchorage to try and find himself. He is in a white majority for the first time, and has the expected problems with trying to fit in with modern things like ATM's. In this portion of his life, he comes to realize that neither the Inuit world he left behind nor the white modern society he finds himself in fits himself very well. The realization dawns on him that neither society is totally bad, nor worth mythologizing.

There are other subtexts in the book. One is the surprisingly stark view of the destruction of native Inuit culture by otherwise well meaning people. Between government housing and state welfare payments they create the same sort of ills seen in many low-income communities. The alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, cruelty, and abuse that is all too common is contrasted to the traditional lifestyle that is rapidly dying out. This also highlights the dangers of trying to make other cultures fit our own expectations and the destruction it can cause, or in forgetting that human beings are not myths.

If our reactions are any indication, it is the type of book that has impact well beyond the initial reading and thus is highly recommended.

PS - If you want a window into what life is like in the area described in the book we recommend <http://kotzpdweb.tripod.com/city/index.html>. This is the web site of the town where the author currently resides and contains images of the town that tell a story without words. We also heartily recommend <http://www.kotz.org/> where you can stream the broadcasts of the local radio station live (note: they are five hours behind est.)

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