

Dear Companions on the Way...

Advent has arrived and with it its message of watching for Christ. The season invariably poses a number of questions for me as I get carried away in thought: What would Jesus look like? What would I say to Jesus? What would Jesus say to me? Could I miss Jesus? How would my life change if I met Jesus face to face? How would my understanding of God change if God were standing right in front of me? I can't say I spend much time or pursue these questions with much serious thought, but perhaps you also wonder what it is that we are supposed to be preparing for in this season of preparation.

I recently read a couple of books that got me thinking a bit more about these questions. The first, Wm. Paul Young's *The Shack*, was given to me with instructions that I had to read it, and the second, I bought myself, called *How Starbucks Saved my Life* by Michael Gates Gill. These are two very different books but with an odd thread tying them together, at least in my mind.

The Shack is a best seller and is generating a lot of attention; as I talk to people who have read it, they either love it or hate it. I myself was torn between emotions; after the first few pages I was unimpressed, but kept with it knowing I'd have to talk to the people who gave me the book. I'm glad I did. The book is a fantasy along the lines of perhaps *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. A person who had a tragic event in his past is invited to go back to the scene of this tragedy (the shack) and there meets God in the form of three persons of the Trinity. They interact with the main character (Mack) to help him recover from the deep sadness he has carried and to see God's purposes and intentions for him (and all humanity). I ended up liking the theology presented in the book, and found some of the passages to be saying things I have tried to say to people who had suffered a tragic loss or who were burdened by profound grief. I was reminded by some sections of Paul's letter to the Philippians and other sections in the Bible that attempt to reveal the depth and extent of God's love for humanity. These are good things to be thinking about, especially as Advent is now upon us.

How Starbucks Saved my Life is subtitled *A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else* and could be described as a riches to rags and then to dish-rags to happiness story. This is a true account of a person's fall from wealth, power, and respectability and after "hitting bottom" finds meaning and happiness in serving others (coffee, in this instance) and doing a simple job well. I was reminded of Job of course, but also of Brother Lawrence's classic on Christian Spirituality: *Practicing the Presence of God*.

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Michael Gates Gill never talks about spirituality or God in the book, yet I wondered about the Starbucks coffee shop offering a kind of sacrament that for this person was transformative (but that would be heresy!).

The fascinating thread that tied these two books together was the figure of transforming authority and grace in each book was a powerful black woman. In *The Shack*, the figure we might call God the Father, or in the book is called Papa is revealed to Mack as motherly but omniscient black woman. In the *Starbucks* book, his boss is a young black woman named Crystal who instills (or should I say “percolates”) in him the simple values of the company about customer service, working as part of a team, and creating a positive environment where people are treated with respect and dignity. In each book, they lead these white men to new insights about themselves and the world they live in that enable them to find wholeness and grace.

Advent is a time for us to be reminded that God is coming to us all the time and in forms we may not recognize to be God. I must say that I am an orthodox Christian and value in my deepest core the sacraments and scripture that reveal God’s deepest and truest essence, but Advent might be a time to explore the idea that God might come in ways and forms we might find unlikely. I pray that I might welcome all, especially the dark guest in my soul and I couldn’t help make that connection reading these books. Keep Awake! Be Prepared! God is coming.

Shalom,



Andrew

- December 1 World AIDS Day Service
- December 5 Our day at Manna Soup Kitchen
- December 6 Annual Holiday Bazaar
- December 7 Durango Choral Society Concert
- December 12 Blue Christmas Service
- December 14 Shelley Mann and Scott Hagler’s Annual Christmas Recital
- December 16 Caroling at Sunshine Gardens
- December 17 St. Mark’s hosts ecumenical Advent service and soup supper
- December 18–20. Amahl and the Night Visitors
- December 24 Four Christmas Eve Services

Advent Adult Education

The Sunday Adult Education class will begin an Advent study on November 30 at 9:15 a.m. The class will feature a video presentation called “The Exile Experience in Babylon and America” by Walter Brueggemann of Columbia Theological Seminary. The class will be facilitated by the Reverend Carol Tookey. From the Foreword of the course: “There can be little doubt that the church in the United States now finds itself in a radically changed situation, a new situation that holds out new opportunities and that makes new demands. This new situation is variously characterized as disestablishment or as “the end of Christendom.” While the new situation admits of careful, in-depth historical and cultural analysis, there is no doubt that it also has a direct impact on the daily practice of the church. The new locus of the church is in a context of relative marginality and the loss of ‘clout’. While this crisis goes by many names, it is no doubt one of strange and difficult demand for Christians.”

World AIDS Day Service: December 1



St. Mark's will host a non-denominational service of remembrance, hope and healing commemorating the 20th World AIDS Day Monday, December 1 at 12:15 p.m.

Advent Service Schedule

The annual Wednesday night Ecumenical Advent gatherings will begin on Wednesday, December 3 at 6:00 p.m. It's a wonderful way to worship and break bread with our brothers and sisters as we prepare the way for Christmas. The service, led by the hosting congregation, is followed by a soup and bread supper, furnished by the hosts. The schedule is:

December 3 – First United Methodist Church,
2917 Aspen Dr.

December 10 – First Presbyterian Church,
1159 E. 3rd Ave.

December 17 – St. Mark's Episcopal Church,
910 E. 3rd Ave.

Since St. Mark's will host the gathering on December 17, we will need soups and breads for the supper that will follow the service. There is a sign-up sheet posted in the Parish Hall for those who would like to share their culinary talents by offering a delicious pot of soup or loaf of bread.

Drop and Shop: December 7

There will be a Drop and Shop for pre-school through 6th graders on Sunday, December 7 after the 10:30 a.m. service. If you would like to go to lunch or get a little shopping done without your helper please take advantage of this opportunity! The kids will be having lunch, making Christmas cards and cookies! Plan to pick your child up no later than 2:00 p.m. If you would like your child to attend, please call Renée Knight at 259-6109.

ST. MARK'S COMMUNITY Christmas Bazaar

A colorful illustration featuring a gingerbread man in a red and white Santa suit holding a candy cane. He is surrounded by several wrapped gifts in purple, green, and red, and a brown teddy bear.

**Saturday, December 6
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

We could still use some help in the kitchen on the afternoon of Saturday, December 6, as well as some help with cleaning up and breaking down tables at the end of the bazaar (2:45 p.m. until about 4:00 p.m. or earlier if there is lots of help). The Bazaar is one of our most successful fundraisers each year, and the money made goes toward several missions of the church.

If you are unable to help, you can still support the bazaar by dropping by St. Mark's between 9:00 a.m and 3:00 p.m. on December 6 and buying some cinnamon rolls or other home-made goodies. Come early if you want cinnamon rolls (they sell quickly!) There will also be chili available during lunch.

Choral Society Christmas

Durango Choral Society's Christmas concert, Holiday Fiesta, is Sunday, December 7 at 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. at the Community Concert Hall. Shelley Mann and Scott Hagler conduct the children, women, and

Holiday Fiesta!

mixed choirs. Tickets are available at the concert hall box office, by phone (247-7657), or online at durangoconcerts.com. A holiday gala before and between the two performances at the Center for Southwest Studies, a fundraiser for the Children's Chorale, will include a silent auction, holiday gifts, refreshments and live music.

Daughters of the King Offers "Quiet Time"

On Thursday, December 11 The Daughters of the King will be sponsoring a "quiet time" for anyone interested, with the church open from 4:00–6:00 p.m. This quiet time will include short reflections to read and will offer "an oasis in the storm" of the commercial Christmas. Stop by on your way home



Enjoy a Holiday Gift of Music

Shelley Mann and Scott Hagler's annual Christmas recital is Sunday, December 14 at 2:00 p.m. and will feature Danielle Menapace, oboe. Go out to lunch following the Sunday service then come back to the church to enjoy a variety of arrangements of Christmas music using flute, oboe, organ and piano. Admission is free; a free-will offering will be accepted.

Their 2007 Christmas recital is available on CD at the St. Mark's office or you can purchase one at the holiday bazaar on Saturday, December 6 at St. Mark's booth.

from work or shopping and rest a while in a peaceful place. Stay as long as you like.

Blue Christmas Service: December 12



Many people experience sadness over the holidays. Loss of a loved one, children moving away, losing a job or a pet, divorce and the many changes that we struggle with, can all make this holiday time seem more like a burden than a joy. The Blue Christmas service is a place to gather together and allow that sadness to be in a setting of remembrance, prayer and music. St. Mark's service is Friday, December 12 at 5:30 p.m. If you are

unable to attend the St. Mark's service, Mercy Regional Medical Center is having a Blue Christmas service on Thursday, December 18 at 5:30 p.m. in the Hospital Chapel.

Amahl and the Night Visitors Comes to St. Mark's

St. Mark's is staging four performances of Amahl and the Night Visitors, an opera in one act by Gian Carlo Menotti on Thursday and Friday, December 18 and 19 at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday, December 20 at 2:00 p.m. The opera was first performed on

Amahl and the Night Visitors

OPERA IN ONE ACT BY GIAN CARLO MENOTTI



December 24, 1951. It was the first opera specifically composed for television in America, and is now a popular Christmas classic. The cast includes Daniel Sandner as Amahl, and

Nan Wagner as his mother. Amahl is a crippled boy who has a reputation for telling tall tales. When Amahl tells his mother about seeing an amazing star, his Mother does not believe him. The story unfolds with the Magi stopping at Amahl's home for a place to rest. The Kings are Dan White, Bradley Sharp and Chandler Jackson, their page will be played by Steve Blaylock, and the St. Mark's Choir will sing the role of the Shepherds. The production is directed by C. Scott Hagler and Fr. Bob Seney. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. Advanced ticket purchase is recommended; call the office at 247-1129 for reservations.

All-Church Caroling on December 16!

Mark your calendars! We'll gather at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16 to carpool to Sunshine Gardens, sing some carols and spread some holiday cheer, then return to the church for a spaghetti supper.

Christmas Eve Cancellations

There will also be no Wednesday noon healing service, Soul Break or Philippians study on Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24 or New Year's Eve, December 31. Please plan to attend one of the four Christmas Eve service offerings on December 24.

CHRISTMAS EVE 2008

Schedule of Services

Wednesday, December 24

5:00 p.m.

Children's Christmas Pageant and Eucharist
(Childcare provided)

7:00 p.m.

Candlelight Choral Eucharist with Choir
(Childcare provided)

9:00 p.m.

Candlelight Choral Eucharist with Choir
(Childcare provided)

11:00 p.m.

The Midnight Mass of Christmas
(With incense. No choir or childcare)

New Faces: Carol Tookey

By June Hahl

You've probably noticed a new face in the sanctuary, the choir, and in a neighboring pew lately. The Reverend Carol Tookey (rhymes with Cookie) has quietly emerged as an assisting volunteer priest, helping wherever she can. In addition to occasional preaching and participating at the altar for the Sunday Eucharist at both services, she is a member of the Caring Community Ministry and the worship team for the Wednesday Healing Eucharist.

Carol was raised in Rangely, Colorado and spent time in Durango and St. Mark's in the late '70s. She even began organ study with former rector Don Warner while here. She earned nursing degrees and a master's degree in social work from two New Mexico schools, where she specialized in Gerontology and Mental Disability nursing.

While she was working as a nurse in Farmington, she began preparation for the Diaconate and was ordained in 1988. She served in churches in Farmington, Las Cruces, and Las Vegas while pursuing her Masters in Social Work. In 1991 she was ordained to the Priesthood having moved to Iowa. She served at a "Trinity Cluster" ministering in three churches, and working as a nurse and hospice social worker.

One day at a Bible study, she picked up a newsletter advertising the need for clergy in Navajoland. Her background in the Southwest and her love for people moved her to apply for the job. She served seven years as Regional Vicar of four Navajo congregations, before they combined and went from four to two. The time came when she realized she wanted to work more closely with people and less with administrative details. She resigned and, with her husband of 33 years Les Lundquist, realized the dream of building a straw-built house

on a lot north of Aztec. Les works for a solar installation company and Carol says her passion and part of her theology is Ecological Spirituality... living sustainably.

Durango beckoned, when she realized that it took just as long to drive to church in Durango as to Farmington and she felt it was like coming home. Seeing the familiar face of Peggy Glasco sealed the deal. Having known Fr. Andrew for years, she mentioned that she would be interested in filling in where there might be a need. Sadly, Mike Darmour had just died and Mary Hardy was leaving, so it didn't take Fr. Andrew long to find a niche for Carol. In addition to her obvious talents, Carol fits in beautifully with the music ministry of St. Mark's; she plays the guitar, flute, piano, and the organ, as well as singing alto in the choir. Her background will be useful, as the vestry has been reviewing plans to establish a Health Ministry out of the congregation, geared toward education, advocacy, health counseling and making a connection between health and spirituality. Carol and Lynn Emerson, who has special training in Parish Nursing, will be presenting more information to the parish soon, in an upcoming article by Lynn and when Carol preaches in January.

So, give a warm welcome to Carol and Les. When she has time to be at home, she is protected by Mugsie, their "Res" Attack Cat, who keeps a good lookout for other wild critters, but loves people and tolerates the family's two house cats and two dogs. Sounds like they'll be safe and happy, living "Green" in their little new house of straw.

From the Library

Image: Art-Faith-Mystery is “a journal devoted exclusively to contemporary literature and art...published by an organization interested in the cross-fertilization of art and faith, and the ways that these two fundamental human experiences can renew lives and communities.” (Greg Wolfe, editor)

St. Mark's Library has subscribed to this quarterly journal for the coming year. Our first copy is here and includes contributions by Kathleen Norris, Thomas Lynch, Nicholas Samaras, Daniel Siedell, and Pattiann Rogers, to name just a few. These journals can be checked out, just like books, but the library asks you to return the journal within two weeks. After four journals, a one-year subscription, the library will decide whether or not to renew based on parish response, so please let the library know if you are blessed by *Image*.

The library also has a copy of *God With Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas*, which is edited by the *Image* editors. This advent book of meditations and prayers is richly illustrated with classic and contemporary art. Contributors to *God With Us* include Scott Cairns, Emilie Griffin, Richard John Neuhaus, Kathleen Norris, Eugene Peterson, and Luci Shaw.

Richard Rohr on Audio

Thank you to Paul Lemon for donating more CDs to the St. Mark's Library. New CDs feature works by Richard Rohr and other authors including Jim Wallis, Anne Lamott and Richard Keating. The upstairs library now has an entire shelf dedicated to Rohr CDs; take a look and see if there might be something for you.

Cathy Donahoe Mission Update

Dear Partners in Mission,

Thank you for your prayers for Cursillo and for the congregation of Santa Cruz! We had eight candidates from Santa Cruz at the Cursillo. With a total of 47 candidates there were many blessings and challenges over the weekend. The women who went from Santa Cruz are enthused about their experiences and the director of Las Chicas Nices will be introducing some of the songs into our repertoire. I believe this will help continue the positive energy for the congregation as well. There are still mini-retreats every other week and daily prayer groups meeting. Both of these were jumpstarted by the Campaña in September.

Work in the clinic is going well. There are now five of us treating patients with one gal starting to train for occupational therapy in the capital. The departmental in-services which we started last year have fallen by the wayside, but I hope to encourage their resumption during an upcoming meeting. My neighbor, who is the patient (partially paralyzed) I mentioned in the June newsletter, has been making progress slowly. He has been walking some for a few months and this past week walked into the clinic, having left his wheelchair at the house for the first time! He continues to struggle with headaches and his hands have not regained their mobility very well. He has improved his independence in the house though still is unable to care for his two young children without assistance.

Please pray for the congregation of Santa Cruz and the efforts to reinstate local in-services. Please pray for Rafa and his continued recovery from his neck surgery from almost a year ago. I pray you have a blessed Advent and Christmas season!

Poet's Corner

Advent Prayer

By Scott Cairns

Taken from *God With Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas*, Pennoyer & Wolfe, editors.

Holy God who is with us, may we lean into every moment of our days to redeem the time, to make the most of our every moment. May we prepare the visible Body of Christ, our community, to receive your eternal approach and your loving embrace. With our faces turned to you, we await your holy descent, and ask, Lord, that you hear our prayer, offered in humility:

That despite the roar of our days, our hearts might grow still.

That glimpsing the quiet cove, we may seek you in that stillness.

That resting in your presence, our hearts might be prepared to hear you.

That the angel of God might visit the chambers of our hearts.

That the angel of God might say to us, "Rejoice."
That we might hear, and truly respond in joy.
That the angel of God might say to us, "Receive."
That the servant of God might respond, "Let it be as you say."

That our hearts might become fertile wombs
in which new life begins.

That we may apprehend the infant lie within.

That we might embrace that infant life.

That we may walk with care to bring about
new birth.

That we may witness the seed of God bearing
Holy Fruit.

As the season of Incarnation approaches, as we prepare to receive Life himself, may we taste and see how our own lies, the life of the world, and the very breath of the universe flow to us from the Holy One made flesh.

Lord, hear our prayer.