

Cluster Chronicle

"A community of Episcopal congregations sharing the love and power of the Risen Christ in our communities through worship, evangelization and apostolic service."



Rev. Charles E. Wilson, Jr.

Dear Friends,

And just like that it is December. With freshly fallen snow to boot! It was with deep envy my family learned that relatives in Cleveland were buried with a huge amount of snow. Being out of the snow belt in which Delaware sits, any flurry of snowflake crumbs are welcomed at our house.

Of our two dogs, Franklin, whom you may have seen at the Noonday Prayer scene, loves it, too. And as the snow came down, he came in bounding covered with flakes. The other, a Rhodesian Ridgeback mix named PJ, is true to his genes and daintily and shiveringly goes in and out from the mess. (as I write this PJ has burrowed into a comforter to hibernate if we let him).

Like the dogs we have our own opinions, don't we? The current focus is on the snow and her brother the cold. And we freely make and mark our thoughts about it until the next thing draws our attention and comments on what is happening in the world out there.

I would like us to linger with this snow for a bit. Consider where and how it falls. It may not be comforting as the comforter in which PJ huddles and snores. But it does blanket almost everything it touches.

Snow has its purpose. Aside from its job of watering the planet (or at least where we are) differently, its very nature physically and literally lends itself to the Advent season. This snow, falling so close to the beginning of Advent, has some purpose for us to tease out and consider.

The hallmarks of Advent are to watch and wait. Something we certainly do as any winter event approaches. But recall those moments when you are out there and the whole thing around you caused you to stop and listen. That is Advent.

Outside and in the park the vista of covered trees and open spaces made me think of the blank slate presented

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Dear Friends

(Con't from page 1)

to us. Seeing that was beautiful. But the very same image is out on your front lawn. (or un-shoveled side-walks!). As the new church year has begun, a blank slate is welcomed. And allows us to put aside what we want and need to put aside. That's Advent.

So, too, does this vision of beauty appear in unexpected ways. That is, snow is gonna do what snow is gonna do. The vision and the glory of its appearance recalls this time of waiting for Jesus. We know its going to happen. But not quite how it looks. That is Advent.

With sister snow comes, as I noted, brother cold. Cold causes us to slow down. A slowness however, not determined by age, or size, or others. But determined by us. Our movement is ours that offers a freedom to see and sense and take in the sounds around us. That is Advent.

As I write this, Franklin is gazing longingly at the snow outside the windows. PJ no doubt (if he moved) has shifted to get warmer. Each of us, I bet, are somewhere along the continuum of those two points.

That is okay. This essay is not to swing anyone's varied opinion about snow to my side. It is to encourage each of us (I try to practice what I preach) to look and see how G-d's Creation is connected and that the Holy One speaks or shows us how to get out of our habits hibernating in our heads and engage with the world and our faith in a wholesome way. That is, not to fir in as wholesome might mean, but to see where we fit in the world and place G-d has led us into.

One of the favorite and repeated anthems in my house whenever a flake appears is the song "Snow" from 'A White Christmas'. The refrain goes "It won't be long until we sing a song of snow". That too, has an Advent aspect. It will not be long before we song a song to the returning Jesus.

May we use this time with purpose, patience, practice, and piety to see where Jesus might be and go to that place.

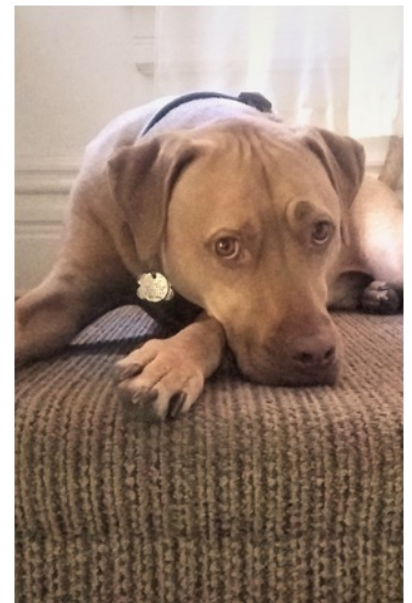
See you in Church.

Peace,

Charles +



Introducing Franklin, left, a Labrador Retriever and PJ Wilson, a Rhodesian Ridgeback mix. As Father Charles notes, they have distinctly different views of life in general and the seasons, in particular. Franklin, while posing with a much-used (dogeared?) copy of St. John's gospel, was not bred to be a fisher of men, but the shrewd retriever of fish (and game birds) caught by men. PJ's mixed lineage produced his soothing taupe color and appears to have reversed the characteristics of his ancestors, who were bred to hunt lions in Africa. PJ prefers a peaceful habitat, regular meals and the comfort and comforters of trustworthy friends.



A new chapter for the Diocese

Deacon Nicholas Ferrar of the Standing Committee recently reviewed the first steps to be taken when a diocese is without a diocesan bishop. Bishop Breidenthal's November 29 retirement created that situation and the Standing Committee is now the ecclesiastical authority.

Deacon Ferrar said that Bishop Kenneth Price will work as part-time Bishop in Southern Ohio officiating when occasions such as confirmation and ordination require the ministry of a bishop. Bishop Nedi Rivera and Bishop Wendell Gibbs will also do occasional visitations.

Before proceeding with the transition to our next bishop, Deacon Ferrar said the Committee believes it would be useful to have a time of reflection and assessment of diocesan life and ministry. "We want to hear from lay people, clergy and, perhaps expertise from outside, to determine the state of the diocese and its needs," he said. This work may begin as soon as January and involve listening sessions, surveys and meetings. This could lead to a longer search period (24-36 months) and a provisional bishop. Or we could continue with a more traditional timeline (about 18 months). In either case, a bishop search committee will be appointed. If we have questions, we may contact Standing Committee President Larry Hayes at standingcommittee@diosohio.org.

Returning to Morning Prayer

Fr. Charles has known the Cluster for only a short time, but he soon felt the kinship of the Episcopalians in Champaign County.

"You treasure your sense of community and routinely express gratitude for it. In recognition of this and out of care for one another, we are going back to online worship with Morning Prayer.

"You may have wondered about this as Covid numbers creep upward. It's best to remember what Jesus said, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.'

"Instead, we are living into what the Christian faith calls for: community, care and cooperation with, and for, one another. Hopefully, the tide will turn soon. It always does.

"Send prayer requests and announcements for the good of the order and we will share them when we gather online." Peace, *Fr. Charles*

Waves from the same sea

People around the world are still struggling to cope with Covid. But, beautiful things have happened in the midst of sorrow. Chinese sent medical supplies to Italy with an excerpt from an ancient Roman poem: "We are waves from the same sea." *Minda Cox, Forward Day by Day*

Bible study during Advent

In keeping with the meditation, penance, prayer and investigation that mark the Christian season of Advent, Fr. Charles is offering an Advent Study immediately following his Wednesday noon prayer service.

Fr. Charles notes that the focus of the sessions will be mainly on the Gospel lesson with participants invited to respond to a series of questions and reflections. He added that the study is the work of the Episcopal Church Education//Formation staff.

"It's not so much teaching as it is teasing out what we already know and think about these things, Fr. Charles said.

The Advent Study will be made available via Zoom technology, and each week Cluster Administrator Amy Boeck will email the instructions for accessing both prayer service and Advent Study.

Wednesdays together can deepen our understanding and help us to more fully appreciate Advent's special opportunities.



Souper supper on Thanksgiving Eve

In the tradition of the season, Our Saviour prepared homemade vegetable soup, tossed salad, cranberries, rolls and luscious brownies made by Susie Westfall for about 50 November Community Meal guests served on Thanksgiving Eve.

“Many hands made light work,” remarked Amy Boeck. In addition to Amy’s, the hands at work included the ever-faithful Emily Rozmus, Sarah Bradford, Dusty Hurst, Greg Kimbell and Todd Boeck.

After the pick-up period ended, the crew packed up the remaining food and delivered it to some of Our Saviour’s homebound members, residents of the Village Apartments and surprised several others, not on the list, with the rest of the hot meals. It’s blessed to give and to receive.



Coated with love Winter has begun in earnest and Our Saviour’s boutique of gently used outerwear is meeting the needs of area residents. Two of Our Saviour’s November Community Meal guests not only took home satisfying suppers, but warm coats from the church collection---all free of charge. The donated clothing includes heavy jackets, rainwear and windbreakers, tailored and dressy coats in adult sizes, gobs of hats, gloves, mittens and scarves in bright colors and hooded snowsuits, fleecy jackets and hats for the nursery set. Garments may be viewed during Community Meal hours or by appointment. Call Jodi Compton, 937-689-3986, or Amy Boeck, 740-610-5234.

Gender specific

“So where did Jesus get so many followers?” asked Shirin McArthur in her October Forward Day by Day devotion. “We tend to just think of the twelve disciples. But there were women following him, too—and they weren’t there to cook and clean---several of them had money of their own and helped fund his ministry.” That thought gave pause. Couldn’t women who cooked and cleaned also qualify as followers?

Of course. You know generations of them. They have hallowed the tasks of homemaking and shared time and resources with Christian endeavors. But Ms. McArthur speaks of a different culture and women disciples were not so plentiful or may not have been so visible. However, Ms. McArthur is right to call attention to female leaders in every facet of society. In a Wednesday prayer service, Fr. Charles noted the November 17 feast day of one of them, St. Hilda of Whitby (614-680).

“A ray of light in the dark ages” is what Susan Abernathy, a student of medieval history, called St. Hilda (614-680), leader of the Celtic Christian party and founder/administrator of Whitby Abbey, one of the great religious centers of Anglo-Saxon England.

At that time, there were two main Christian bodies operating in England. Hilda led the Celtic, a more loosely organized system of abbeys and monasteries with an Abbot the supreme leader.

Most other Christians followed the Roman strain, a formally structured system of cathedrals headed by Bishops.

Variance in such things as liturgical practices and clerical hairstyles were ignored, but one major difference, how the date of Easter was calculated, couldn’t be resolved.

It was agreed that Easter should be celebrated in the third week of the month in which the full moon fell on or after the vernal equinox.

But the Celtic Christians considered the twenty-fifth as the

equinox while the rest of Christendom said the equinox occurred on the twenty-first. This sometimes resulted in two Easters a month apart.

King Oswy, favored the Roman system and decided this matter must be reconciled. He knew of Hilda’s benevolent power and influence within the Celtic community whose political backing he needed.

So he asked Hilda to host a meeting (Synod of Whitby) to end this controversy. She agreed and, with Bishops Colman and Cedd, represented the Celtic Christians at the synod.

The King convened the gathering and after several acrimonious presentations, declared that he must choose the Roman calculation as Christ had given St. Peter the keys to heaven. Hilda cast her vote with the King that there might be a bipartisan reconciliation.

Her compromise marked a vital turning point in the development of the church in England and sealed Hilda’s place in Christendom as a leader of courage, charity and love.



An icon of St. Hilda of Whitby holding the abbess staff and her Abbey.

Ancient rose still blooming

Another Advent tradition first came to light five centuries ago. A manuscript with the text of the beloved hymn, “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming,” was discovered in a 16th century German monastery in Trier entitled, “Es ist ein Ros entsprungen.” The tune in most contemporary hymnals is attributed to composer Michael Praetorius (1571-1621).

The flower metaphor has intrigued scholars---why a rose in midwinter? Apocryphal (unauthenticated) legend says that while walking in the woods on Christmas Eve a Trier monk found a blooming rose and placed on the altar to the Virgin Mary. Others suggest that Mary was the “mystical rose” in the Song of Solomon: “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”

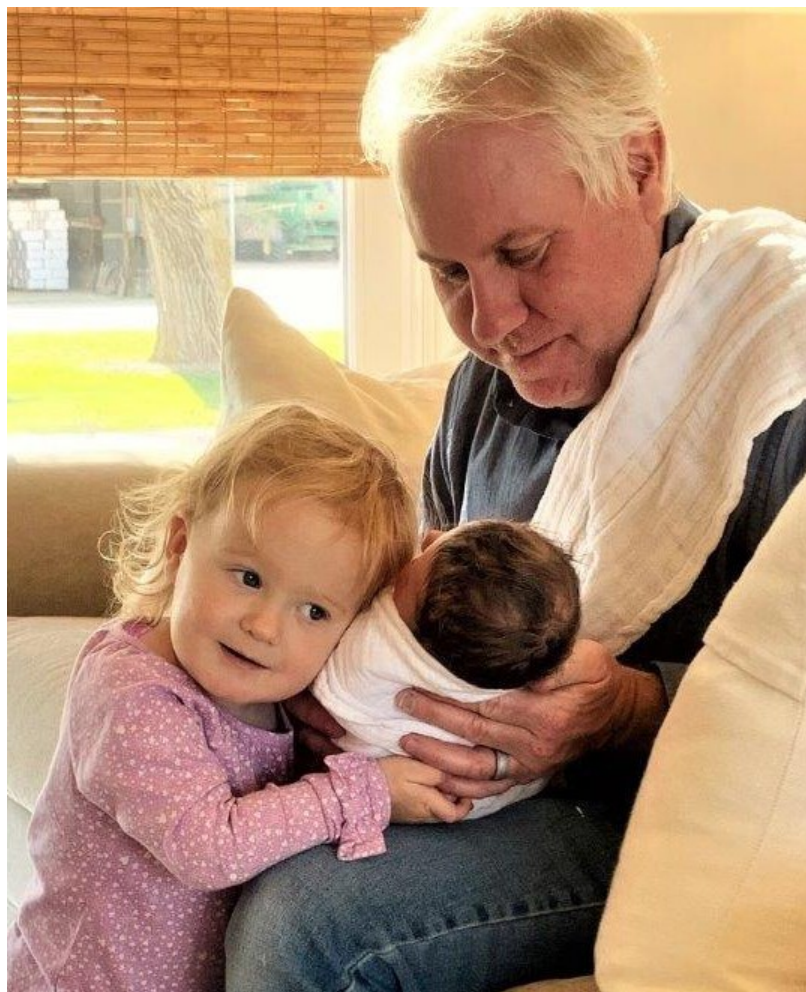
In later years, Protestants appear to have shifted the central character from Mary to Jesus, citing Isaiah, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” This stirred controversy about the original German word. Was it *Ros* (rose) or *Reis* (branch)?

Another passage from Isaiah gives weight to the biblical basis for the rose: “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

The original work had many stanzas, at least 19 and possibly 23, but the first two, translated by Theodore Baker, are most commonly sung today. Another version by Friedrich Layritz added fragrance to the rose image. He further requests the “flower” to “dispel in glorious splendor the darkness everywhere,” representing Christ as the light of the world. Still not satisfied, Layritz adds an allusion to the Nicene Creed: “True man, yet very God,” and asks that the flower “from sin and death now save us and share our every load.” A crushing assignment for one of God’s most glorious creations whose beauty seems purpose enough.

Our Christmas Rose

A child is a gift from God and Isabel Eliza Wing, born November 16 to John and Elizabeth Wing of Our Saviour was welcomed with special joy in this season of gift-giving. Almost two-year-old sister Amelia is, likewise, delighted, perhaps visualizing a playmate and confidant. While pandemic restrictions prevent meeting Isabel in person, we do congratulate John and Elizabeth and Amelia, Wing aunts, uncles and cousins, and rejoice with them.



Stewardship revisited

It has been said that stewardship might more rightly be called discipleship. In this season of pledging our resources for Christian service we can do no better than to hear once again Christ's oft-repeated instructions to his disciples to become diligent, caring, conscientious shepherds, providing nourishment in every form, modeling God's truths.

Christ's directions when addressed to 21st century disciples becomes a plea for conscientious observance of protocols for preventing the spread of Covid, diligent care of the sick, supply of nourishment in every form for the hungry, homeless, unemployed and hopeless, and speaking God's love at every opportunity.

The pledging process is being improvised this season. Our Saviour Treasurer Susie Westfall has mailed pledge forms to congregants and they are to be returned, if possible, before the end of the year so a realistic budget can be prepared for 2021. Completed pledge forms may be sent to Our Saviour, 56 S. Main St., or to Treasurer Westfall, 84 S. Main St., Mechanicsburg. Contributions to be credited to 2020 pledges must be received by December 31.

Conventionally speaking

The legislative body of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio met for the 146th convention November 7, but it was anything but conventional. Pandemic protocol ruled out meeting physically, so business was transacted via a Zoom webinar (a seminar conducted over the internet).

Diocesan business included adoption of a budget and passage of four resolutions: delegates said yes to canonical changes that would allow the diocese to join a regional disciplinary board to consider Title IV issues (discipline of canonical offensive conduct by bishops, priests and deans).

Also passed were resolutions advocating political change through non-violence; confirming authority of the Standing Committee's transition plans; approving a mission share incentive plan and holding an online convention. Finally, elections filled vacancies in clergy and lay leadership positions.

First quarter honors

Students from Our Saviour are among those named to Mechanicsburg Middle and High School first quarter honor rolls. They include Emily Westfall, 8th grade; Gwen Westfall, 9th grade and Will Boeck, 11th grade. Emily and Gwen are granddaughters of Jim and Gloria Westfall and Will is the son of Amy and Todd Boeck.

At this time, all Champaign County schools are using the "hybrid" system. Students are divided into two groups. Half attend the first two days of the week and the other half the last two days. We are proud of our students, their families and school personnel for sharing responsibility and making sacrifices for the common good.

Ed working hard in Troy

Ed Hardin is continuing therapy at the Koester Pavilion in Troy, a facility which offers short term rehabilitation and long-term care. He is aiming for full recovery and is making progress. Rev. Nancy reports that while the virus is rampant, guests are limited to window visits---patient inside, guest outside. Not ideal, but visual contact is safe and can be satisfying. You can, however, bypass the window by sending mail to the Hardin's home: 116 Lafayette Ave., Urbana, 43078. Or what are friends for?



Our Saviour Christmas 2012



Cecilia Bradford, Sophie Boeck, Leo Compton, Grace Rozmus, Charlie Bradford and Will Boeck.

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*Fear not
for behold, I bring you
tidings of great joy
which shall be to all people*