

I wish to share with you a Christmas reflection, written and delivered by The Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor:

“Once upon a time – or before time, actually, before there were clocks or calendars or Christmas trees – God was all there was. No one knows anything about that time really because no one was there to know it, but somewhere in the middle of that time before time, God decided to make a world. Maybe God was bored, or maybe God was lonely, or maybe God just liked to make things and thought it was time to try something big. Whatever the reason, God made a world and filled it with the most astonishing things: with humpback whales that sing and white-striped skunks that stink and birds with more colors on them than a box of Crayola crayons. The list is way too long to go into here, but suffice it to say that at the end when God stood back and looked at it all, God was pleased. Only something was missing. God could not think what it was at first, but slowly it dawned on him. Everything he had made was gorgeous and interesting and it all fit together really well, only there was nothing in the world that looked like him, exactly. It was as if God had painted this huge masterpiece and then forgotten to sign it, so God got busy making his signature piece, something made in his own image, so that anyone who looked at it would know who the artist was.

He had one single thing in mind at first, but as he worked God realized that one thing all by itself was not the kind of statement he wanted to make. He knew what it was like to be alone, and now that he had made a world he knew what it was like to have company, and company was definitely better. So God decided to make two things instead of one, which were alike but different, and both would be reflections of him – a man and a woman who could keep him and each other company. Flesh was what he made them out of – flesh and blood – a wonderful medium, extremely flexible and warm to the touch. Since God, strictly speaking, was not made out of anything at all, but was pure mind, pure spirit, he was very taken with flesh and blood.

Watching his two creatures stretch and yawn, laugh and run, God found to his surprise that he was more than a little envious of them. He had made them, it was true, and he knew how fragile they were, but their very breakability made them more touching to him, somehow. It wasn't long before God found himself falling in love with them. He liked being with them better than any of the other creatures he had made, and he especially liked walking with them in the garden in the cool of the evening.

It almost broke God's heart when they got together behind his back, did the one thing he had asked them not to do and then hid from him – from him! – while he searched the garden until way past dark, calling their names over and over again.

Things were different after that, God still loved the human creatures best of all, but

the attraction was no longer mutual. Birds were crazy about God, especially ruby-throated hummingbirds. Dolphins and raccoons could not get enough of him, but human beings had other things on their minds. They were busy learning how to make things, grow things, buy things, sell things, and the more they learned to do for themselves, the less they depended on God. Night after night God threw pebbles at their windows, inviting them to go for a walk with him, but they said they were sorry, they were busy. It was not long before most human beings forgot all about God. They called themselves “self-made” men and women, as if that were a plus and not a minus. They honestly believed they had created themselves, and they liked the result so much that they divided themselves into groups of people who looked, thought, and talked alike. Those who still believed in God drew pictures of him that looked just like them, and that made it easier for them to turn away from the people who were different.

You would not believe the trouble this got them into: everything from armed warfare to cities split right down the middle, with one kind of people living on that side of the line and another kind on the other. It was just too much! God would have put a stop to it all right there, except for one thing. When God had made human beings, he had made them free. Freedom was built into them just like their hearts and brains were, and even God could not take it back without killing them. And God didn't want to kill them, so he left them be free, even though it almost killed him to see what they were doing to each other.

God did everything he could to get their attention. He shouted to them from the sidelines, using every means he could think of, including floods, famines, manna, and messengers. He even tried more personal approaches. He got inside people's dreams, and if that did not work he woke them up in the middle of the night with his whispering. No matter what he tried, however, he came up against the barriers of flesh and blood. They were made of it and God was not, which made translation difficult. God would say, “Please stop before you destroy yourselves!” but all they could hear was thunder. God would say, “I love you as much now as the day made you,” but all they could hear was a loon calling across the water.

There was one exception to this sad state of affairs: babies. While their parents were all but deaf to God's messages, babies didn't have any trouble hearing God at all. They were all the time laughing at God's jokes or crying with God when he cried, which went right over their parents' heads. ‘Colic,’ the grown-ups would say, or ‘Isn't she cute? She's laughing at the dust mites in the sunlight.’ Only she wasn't, of course. She was laughing because God had just told her it was cleaning day in heaven, and that what she saw were fallen stars the angels were shaking from their feather dusters.

Not only did babies hear and understand God, they had other advantages. Babies did not go to war. Babies never made hate speeches or littered or refused to play with each other because they belonged to different political parties. Babies were crazy about God and they hung on his every word. Perhaps best of all, they depended on other people for everything necessary to their lives so a phrase like “self-made babies” would have made them laugh until their little bellies hurt. While no one asked babies' opinions about anything that mattered (which was too bad because it would have been a smart thing to do), almost everyone seemed to love them, and that gave God an idea. If God was a baby, they would all love him! Why not create himself as one of these delightful creatures?

He tried the idea out on his cabinet of archangels. At first they were all very quiet. They looked down at their feet and they exchanged sidelong glances with each other, but none of them looked back at God, and for a long time none of them responded. Finally the senior archangel stepped forward to speak for all of them. She told God how much they would worry about him, if he did that. Why, God would be putting himself at the mercy of his creatures, the archangel said, and they were extremely unpredictable and unreliable and they could be down right mean. People could do anything they wanted to him, and if he seriously meant to become one of them there would be no escape for him if things turned sour. ‘Couldn’t he at least create himself as a magical baby with special powers?’ the archangel asked. It would not take much – just the power to become invisible, maybe, or the power to hurl bolts of lightning if the need arose. ‘The baby idea was a stroke of genius’ the archangel said, ‘it really was, but it lacked adequate safety features.’

God listened to the archangel because God always listens, and then thanked the archangels for their concern but said no, he thought he would just be a regular baby. How else could he gain the trust of his creatures? How else could he persuade them that he knew their lives inside out, unless he lived one just like theirs? There was a risk – he knew that. Okay, there was a high risk, but that was part of what he wanted his creatures to know: that he was willing to risk everything to get close to them, in hopes that they might know that he loved them and that they would love him again.

It was a daring plan, and once the angels saw that God was dead set on it, they broke into applause. Despite the danger to God, they could see it was a brilliant plan and they clapped and praised God with the kind of applause that goes on and on when you have seen something you know you will never see again. While they were still clapping, God turned around and left the cabinet chamber, shedding his robes as he went. The angels watched as his midnight blue mantle fell to the floor, so that all the stars on it collapsed in a heap. Then a strange thing happened.

Where the robes had fallen, the floor melted and opened up to reveal a scrubby brown pasture speckled with sheep and – right in the middle of them – a bunch of shepherds. sitting around a campfire drinking wine out of a skin. It was hard to say who was more startled, the shepherds or the angels, but as the shepherds looked up at them, the angels pushed their senior archangel to the edge of the hole. Looking down at the human beings who were all trying to hide behind each other (poor things, no wings), the angel said in as gentle a voice as she could muster, ‘Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’ And away up the hill from the direction of town, came the sound of a newborn baby’s cry.”

Shared by Fr. Bill+



**Come, O Come, Emmanuel
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lowly splendor here
until the Son of God appear.**

Hymn 56

**Advent begins Sunday December 3rd
with a return to Holy Eucharist Rite I**

CARDS FOR A CAUSE

Come, have fun and support a child. Delicious snacks will be served!

When: Saturday, January 27, 2018, 1pm to 4pm

What: Card Party and Silent Auction to benefit Education=Hope

Where: Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, 108 E. Liberty Street, York

Cost: \$25 per person

Bring your friends and card club and play Bridge, Euchre, Canasta, Uno, Mahjong, etc. and help deal a child a better hand in the game of life with education. Education Equals Hope is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide for the education of children in desperate and difficult places. During the 2016-2017 school year, our donors gave hope to more than 3,000 children. Your \$25 can send a child to school for a month in Ecuador, Haiti, Rwanda or Kenya.

Your support is greatly appreciated! Let's give them HOPE!

***Register by calling: Joyce Sanders: 803-984-0319
or register online at our website.***

Website: educationequalshope.org

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TAIZÉ SERVICE

December 5th — There will be a Taizé service at 6pm followed by a light supper and a speaker. Our speaker this month will be Jason Broadwater, Economic Development Consultant for York.

We will have a Taizé service the **FIRST TUESDAY** of each month (The next Taizé service will be on January 2nd).

A **sign-up sheet** will be available in the parish hall, so we can prepare enough food for everyone.



We can share Communion with you even if you can't get to church



If you or someone you love is ill or unable to attend church, we have Lay Eucharistic Visitors who can bring Communion to them. This is a servant ministry of our church and those who are involved would be pleased to come to you.

Please call the Church Office at 803-684-4021 or talk to Father Bill, 803-818-8257.

BAPTISM AT GOOD SHEPHERD

If you or a family member wishes to be baptized, please contact Father Bill at:

billgreeley@gmail.com or call 803-818-8257

Email: thegoodshepherd@comporium.net or call 684-4021.



GOOD SHEPHERD SUPPER CLUB

Our Church Supper Club is back! The Supper Club is a great way to get to know each other better and to enjoy a great meal. **Our first Supper Club event will be December 2nd.**

We are gearing up for the first Supper Club and looking forward to all who signed up and who will be attending. Your host will be calling you to ask you to bring something to make your first supper club dinner a memorable time. Be prepared to have fun and get to know folks better.

Best wishes,

Libby Bradford



DECEMBER**Birthdays**

12/1	Lilly Duncan
12/1	Emmeline McNeil
12/4	Betty Sanders
12/4	Tom Sanders
12/7	Jeanne Ferguson
12/9	Jim Velez
12/10	Maiah Whitehead
12/15	Bill Greeley
12/18	Joyce Ballard
12/19	Diane Hanlon
12/19	Morgan Ray
12/19	Eli Elam
12/21	Debbie Weinzierl
12/22	Wendy Neff Nyberg
12/31	Thressa Elam

Anniversaries

12/6/1968 Renae & Ike Waters
12/14/2013 Mary Catherine & Ben Cotter

(If your birthday or anniversary is not listed, call or email the parish office with the information.)

**2017 Vestry Members****Libby Bradford, Junior Warden**

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MEETING SCHEDULE FOR GOOD SHEPHERD

ECW

The ECW meets as called on Tuesdays at 5:30pm in the Conference Room.

Second Sunday: Finance Committee

The Committee will meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month at Noon in the Conference Room, unless otherwise notified.

Third Sunday: Building & Grounds Committee

The Committee will meet on the 3rd Sunday of the month, when called.

Fourth Sunday: Vestry Meeting

The Vestry's new meeting times are on the 4th Sunday of each month at Noon in the Conference Room, unless otherwise notified.

STAFF

Barbara Wilson, Parish Coordinator

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Randy Neff, Treasurer

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Lilly Duncan, Parish Nurse

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The Rev'd Dr. P. William Greeley

Priest in Charge

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Church of the Good Shepherd

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Office Hours: 9am to Noon Monday through Thursday

ALTAR GUILD FOR DECEMBER:

Team #4: J. Ferguson & T. Whitehead
And others as needed

ADVENT 1 12/3

8:30am LEM John Ness

9:30-10:30 BISCUIT BREAKFAST
Host: Joyce Sanders

11:00am LEM Randy Neff

Acolytes: NA

Lector for Lessons & POP: Ron Carter

Ushers: Gail & Ron Carter

Greeter: Beatrice w/Ron

Nursery: Sara & Tonya Whitehead

Alms: John Duda & Randy Neff

Vestry Person: Mickey Peake

ADVENT 2 12/10

8:30am LEM John Duda

9:30-10:30 BISCUIT BREAKFAST
Host: Shay & Craig Wilkerson

11:00am LEM Glenn Gilbert

Acolytes: Quaid, Aydan & McKenna Lawler

Lector for Lessons & POP: Barbara Wilson

Ushers: Debbie & John Shiflet

Greeter: Beatrice w/John

Nursery: Sara Whitehead & Susan Mason

Alms: Libby Bradford & Glenn Gilbert

Vestry Person: Kelly Tiblier

ADVENT 3 12/17

8:30am LEM Randy Neff

9:30-10:30 BISCUIT BREAKFAST
Host: Elaine & John Ness

11:00am LEM Henry McMaster

Acolytes: April & Heidi Weinzierl

Lector for Lessons & POP: Selina Woodard

Ushers: Gail & Ron Carter

Nursery: Sara Whitehead & Debbie Shiflet

Alms: Henry McMaster & John McNeely

Vestry Person: Michael Weinzierl

ADVENT 4 12/24

NO BISCUIT BREAKFAST TODAY

11:00am LEM Ike Waters

Acolytes: NA

Lector for Lessons & POP: John Earls

Ushers: Bob Ballard & Michael Weinzierl

Greeter: Beatrice w/Michael

Nursery: Sara & Tonya Whitehead

Alms: Ron Carter & Jim Knubel

Vestry Person: Meade Wilson

CHRISTMAS EVE 12/24

10:00PM Choral Prelude

10:30PM Holy Eucharist, Rite II

LEM Glenn Gilbert

Acolytes: Quaid, Aydan & McKenna Lawler

Lector: Lori Ray

Ushers: John Duda & Randy Neff

Vestry Person: Libby Bradford

CHRISTMAS I 12/31

8:30am LEM John Ness

9:30-10:30 BISCUIT BREAKFAST
Host: John Love

11:00am LEM John Duda

Acolytes: NA

Lector for Lessons & POP: Tonya Whitehead

Ushers: Glenn Gilbert & John McNeely

Greeter: Beatrice w/John

Nursery: Sara Whitehead & Libby Bradford

Alms: Libby Bradford & Glenn Gilbert

Vestry Person: Ron Carter

NA HOSTS

12/4 KEVIN DUNCAN

12/11 MEADE WILSON

12/18 KEVIN DUNCAN

12/25 JOHN DUDA