

RECTOR'S REPORT

God of Many Faces and Names: *Teach Us to Know and to Love You.*

Oh God of a thousand names and faces, Mother and Father of all life on earth, You who live in the cells of all life, Teach us to know and love You. Lady of Peace, of Love, of Wisdom, Lord of all the stars and planets, Best consoler, inward guest, Teach us to know and love You. Giver of gifts and light of our hearts, Fill the inmost depths of our hearts, And teach us to know and love you. Wash what is soiled, heal what is wounded, Bend what is rigid, warm what is frigid, And teach us to know and love you.

Sharon Owens

The prayer I have found on my lips and in my heart during 2008 has been around the theme of this poem, "Teach us to know and to love You, O God." I write this with a card describing a quality of the Illuminated Life beside my computer. It says Prayer: One prayer at a time, the contemplative allows the heart of God to beat in the heart they call their own. Prayer does not change God, but changes the one who prays. (Soren Kierkegaard) Never pray in a room without windows. (Talmud) Prayer and love are learned in the hour when prayer becomes impossible and your heart has turned to stone. (Thomas Merton) Whether invoked or not God will be present. (Carl Jung) Prayer has been my focus this year. It has been the foundation of all that I have done for myself and for all of you at Epiphany.

I have continued studying the Rule of St. Benedict with topics like: Assessing the Monk in Each of Us; Justice: Working for the Common Good; Leadership and Authority: What Kind of Boss Should I be?; Silence: The Language of the Sacred; Forgiveness: The Pledge We Make to Each Other. A young man asked me recently why I was studying the Rule of St. Benedict. I believe I do so because the Rule is about life themes: the presence of God, the foundation of relationships, the nature of self development, the place of purpose. As Joan Chittister writes about the Rule, "To the wise, it seems, life is not a series of events to be controlled. Life is a way of walking through the universe whole and holy." So I have been practicing this way of life. I have been practicing how to listen with my heart. Benedict said "Listen with the ear of your heart." So I have been walking one step at a time practicing faithfulness.

My practice continued with Michael as we committed to rising at 5am every morning to walk 3-5 miles a day in anticipation of a hiking trip through the National Parks of the Southwest. Teach me to know and to love You, O God was my mantra on most of these hikes as the darkness turned to light each morning, as the heat of the days in the southwest deserts turned to cold evening mountain air.

It has been a whirlwind of a year. Lots of adult Christian learning opportunities: Dinner Speakers, Writing the Sacred, A Psalms Workshop, Spiritual Gifts Class, Soul Banquets, daytime and Sunday Companions in Christ studies in the winter and spring. I also met with three moms for an Episcopal Church 101 course as their children practiced songs with Kaori Hongo Moyer. Autumn found us focused on Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Healing with the movie, *Power of Forgiveness*, and an opportunity to host our new Bishop, Eugene Sutton, to hear his passion about Communities of

Reconciliation. Adults participated in a study of the Way of Prayer. Linda Lewis and Nicki Ridenour have given unending support to these programs.

As our music program was growing broader and richer, Jonathan and Kaori were called to a large Presbyterian church in Cleveland. As the saying goes “While we are making plans, God is laughing.” God was there with Jonathan and Kaori as they transitioned from Epiphany and God was with us as Mary Hamlin-Spencer walked through our doors on the Moyer’s last Sunday. Mary and her family have continued to bring us great music along with Mary’s great experience with choirs both adult and children and her fine people skills. So our worship continues to glorify God and offer us a sacred space to encounter God.

We have baptized ten children this year. We have helped families celebrate the lives of eight loved ones. I remain honored to be asked to bury parents of parishioners. The memories of Nicholas Mallis, Terri Trainor, Cynthia Reith and Pat Burnside still bring joy and sadness.

Your staff continues to bless and serve Epiphany. Your vestry and officers serve you with their many gifts and time. I give thanks for all of you who make worship happen, run our finances, teach our children, lead our youth, plan for adult education, welcome newcomers, reach beyond the walls of our building to bring food and clothing and housing and education to those God calls us to serve.

I have come to enjoy the poetry of the 13th century poet, Hafiz, so I will end with this.

WHEN YOU CAN ENDURE. *When the words stop and you can endure the silence that reveals your heart’s Pain of emptiness of that great wrenching-sweet longing, That is the time to try and listen to what the Beloved’s Eyes most want to say.*

Blessings to You,
Kathryn