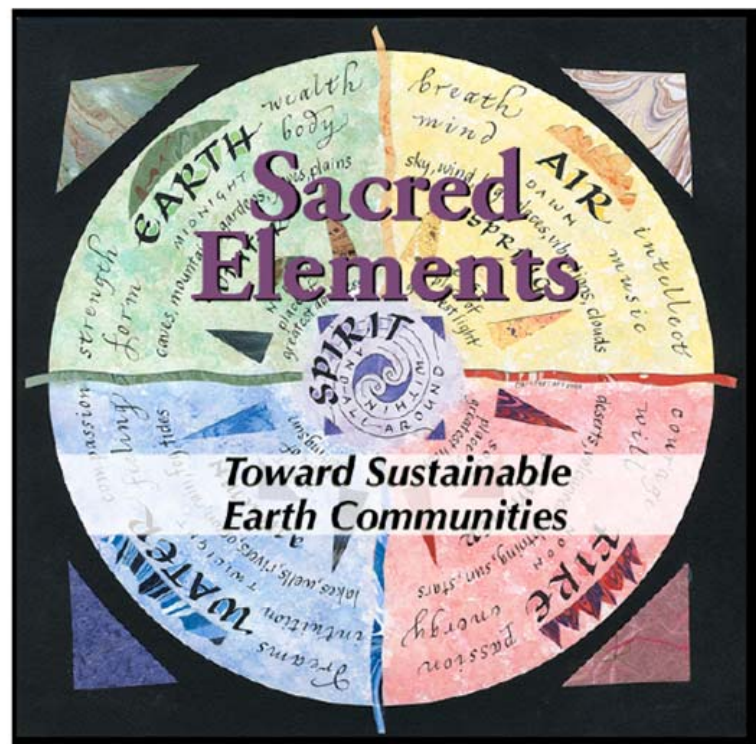


Epiphany West 2010
 January 25-29 • Berkeley, CA



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What role does religious belief play in creating economic and environmental sustainability?

What can communities of faith do to model practices of sustainability and extend them in the wider world?

Epiphany West 2010 gives you the opportunity to explore these and other critical questions for communities of faith with more than 18 remarkable scholars, educators, writers, artists, activists, and worship leaders from Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, and other faith traditions.

Join us for a week, a day, an afternoon, or evening of abundant conversation and committed planning toward meaningful action on the Church Divinity School of the Pacific campus in the lush Berkeley Hills.

More information and online registration is available at

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Marion Grau
Keynote Speaker



Safei-Eldin Harred
Plenary Speaker



Isabel Mukonyora
Plenary Speaker



Mark Collins
Workshop
Facilitator



Phina Borgeson
Workshop
Facilitator



Mike Schut
Preacher



Marc Andrus
Eucharist
Celebrant



Patricia Watts
Plenary Speaker



Wherever you find yourself on your journey of faith, there is a place for you here.



Heaven, Peace and Joy

I give my love and prayers to everyone for a blessed Christmas and a joy-filled 2010. Given the fullness of this past year, all its wonders and the many sorrows, words fall short. Our common life has been abundant, and my regard for each one of you deepens at each passing day.

I have a 'clippings' drawer which is overflowing with words, poems, cartoons, sermons and essays gathered over the decades. Musing my way through it, I came across this lovely piece. It's five centuries old, and is part of a letter from Fra Giovanni to a friend at Christmas time. I share it with you now:

"I salute you. There is nothing I can give

you which you have not; but there is much that, while I cannot give you, you can take. No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today: Take heaven. No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in the present. Take peace. The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach, is joy: Take joy. And so at this season I greet you, with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away."
Lovely. At least I think so. I offer it to you as a small but lovely gift at this season. A Blessed Christmas to you and your families.

Jeannette

Christmas Message from Presiding Bishop



The mornings are dark, pitch black until after most of us have begun our days. The hints of dawn in the eastern sky, those streaks of rose and pink that promise more and brighter light, bring hope even in the dark mid-winter. Where do you look for that kind of hope borne on slim rays of light?

Jesus is already abroad, even in the darkness. The hungry one fed, the street people who have their feet cared for, the humble and honored guest at your dinner table – each one offers a glimpse of that dawn, if you look closely enough.

What we have waited long for, ages and eons for, has been born among us. He comes among us quietly, almost stealthily, in an obscure barn, long

ago. This child holds all our hope for light. This tiny frame seems too frail to bear our yearning. Yet the nations come streaming to this light even before he is weaned. The divine has come to dwell in our midst, and God's eternal promise of peace, restoration, and home is made flesh.

Where and how will you seek out this light of the world? In what other frail frames will light expunge darkness? The light grows with our own eager searching, light reaching out to light, divine reflection yearning for its source. May the light of Christ light your way in the darkness, may his light spread through nations besieged by war and hunger, may we continue to search out his light in the dark places of our own hearts.

The Most Rev. ++† Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church

Services for Advent and Christmas

December 20 *Advent 4*

Regular worship times (8:45, 11 and 5 pm)
Pageant Rehearsal for all ages
Sabbath Celebration: Family Service at 5 pm

December 21 *Longest Night, Blue Christmas Joint Service at 7 pm*

December 24 *Christmas Eve Family Service at 4 pm*

Children's Pageant & Holy Communion

Christmas Eve Festal Eucharist at 11 pm

Come early, music begins at 10 pm

December 25 *Christmas Day*

Holy Communion at 10 am

December 27 *Christmas 1*

Regular service times: 8:45 (Rite 1)
11 am Christmas Lessons and Carols
No Sunday School
Sabbath Celebration: Quiet Meditation at 5 pm

January 3 *Christmas 2*

Regular Worship times (8:45, 11 and 5 pm)
No Sunday School
Sabbath Celebration: A simple Communion
at 5 pm

January 10 *First Sunday After Epiphany: Baptism of Our Lord*

Regular Worship times (8:45, 11 and 5 pm)
No Sunday School
Sabbath Celebration: Prayer and Meditation at 5 pm

Christmas

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze,
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze,
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'.

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.
And Christmas-morning bells say 'Come!
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

(John Benjamin British Poet Laureate 1972-84)

The Best Christmas Present Ever

Christmas is hard. There's all that shopping and decorating. It wears us out. No wonder many of us are glad when it's over.

There is a solution to this problem. Concentrate on what Christmas is really all about: God gave us His Son Jesus to live, die and rise again for us, giving us eternal life. There will never be a greater Christmas present than that.

See you in Church!
☞John Bogart†



CHRISTMAS THEN AND NOW

Then: Anticipation of presents
Now: *Anticipation of how presents will be paid for*

Then: Excitement of decorating Christmas tree
Now: *Excitement of watching children decorate tree*

Then: Enjoyment of eating cookies, candy canes and other holiday treats with abandon
Now: *Enjoyment of eating cookies, candy canes and other holiday treats in moderation*

Then: Relaxation during Christmas break
Now: *Relaxation after all Christmas bulletins are completed*

Then: Wonder at what awaits next Christmas.
Now: *Wonder at the Christmas miracle of the birth of Jesus.*

Now and
Always: Gratitude, Humility, and Hope

☞JoAnn Souza

Looking for a Sign

While Christmas shopping, I saw a sign that said "Such a big Miracle in such a little child." I bought it. It's hanging at home as a reminder of that small "aha" moment as I shopped for Christmas gifts instead of preparing for the big Miracle.

*SUCH A BIG MIRACLE
IN SUCH A LITTLE CHILD.*

I remember feeling that I was experiencing a miracle each time I held a newborn granddaughter. Each child who comes into our lives is a new beginning. Each new life includes the challenge to take on a brand new relationship that will change with time and age, a new opportunity to learn and to teach, a new view of ourselves because of the new roles we fill, and the requirement to live up to new and significant responsibilities.

Every Christmas Day, we have that challenge, opportunity and responsibility presented to us as we welcome the little child who is to teach us how to be God's people.

As we welcome the new baby, Jesus, on Christmas Day, we have a brand new chance to reevaluate our spiritual relationship with God. We have a new opportunity to learn from Jesus and to spread his wisdom and word to others. We can look with fresh eyes at how well we follow the teachings of a loving God. We can renew our commitment to the responsibilities inherent in being a follower of Christ's teaching – help, share, pray and demonstrate love.

Lately, I've had the pleasure of hearing my husband practice the Christmas song, "Mary Did You Know." Imagine a young woman, visited by an angel, who accepts the invitation to be part of this miracle. "Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'..." LUKE1:38 Actually, God has invited us all to be part of this miracle even if we haven't been visited recently by angels. Have we accepted as decisively as Mary?

The sign of Jesus' arrival was seen in the sky over 2000 years ago. We as Christians can follow that star repeatedly to a rebirth, renewal and revitalization of our relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

May your Christmas be about the big miracle in our hearts that the little child offers to each of us individually and to all of us as the community of Christ.

Wishing you Joy,
Lee Anne Bundesen
Senior Warden

Divine Midwifery



At this season, and as a woman who has herself given birth at Christmas, my mind is cast back to that time: I wonder when the waters left Mary's body, calling her child to the next stage of his journey. Was he too soon brought on by the jarring movement of the beast clambering up the winding road, carrying her to Bethlehem?

In my heart, I know that she would have turned to other women, older wiser women. What gentle experienced hand served her need by the roadside? What voice counted the hours and quietly told Joseph he had just so much time to find shelter for the coming birth? Whose hand felt her body and saw the outline of the child as he turned for his coming into the world?

Each one of us is a midwife to the divine birth. Often unaware, we travel with others on our journeys and constantly find ourselves called on for help. There is that voice on the phone, tremulous, revealing fear or depression or loneliness, to which we give our sometimes grudging half-hour. The business colleague, half broken by the pressures of the day, with whom we must curb the temptation to be short, our very shortness being itself our own tension. Then there is the neighbor with the sale sign at his front door, crushed by finances, to whom we must attend with a meal, a glass of cheer, our own monetary worries side-lined for the moment.

These are the companions on the road who suddenly lurch to the side, their vulnerability revealed. Sometimes, from our gesture of concern given from our own weariness and our own weakness, there is born in them the things which are divine, the things of hope, courage, of love itself.

Without realizing it, we tend their needs and so become the unwitting midwives of God's life and love.

✞Jeanne†

Meditation on Matthew 1:18-25:

*“They shall name him Emmanuel,
which means God with us.”*

Joseph didn't name him Emmanuel, and neither did the angel who appeared to Joseph in his dream. “Emmanuel” is the church's name for Jesus. Our name for Jesus. “Emmanuel” is what Jesus means to us: “God with us.”

As we rush toward our celebration of Christmas, we tend to focus our imaginations on that child in the manger—the helpless child of poor parents, the infant king disguised in swaddling clothes. But when the church calls him “Emmanuel,” it is looking backward from the risen Christ. Only then—after the life, the ministry, the betrayal and death, and the rising again—only then can those whose lives have been transformed by Jesus connect the dots and proclaim him God.

This is always how we make meaning, isn't it? Almost never right at the time, but afterwards, when we wake up, look back, and find that our hearts have been touched or our lives turned around. “Ah,” we say, “that was God's work. God was with me. Of course, now I can see it.”

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” we sing. The ancient chant bids us look forward, into the darkness where the dayspring will soon bring back our light. We look forward to a new coming of Christ. We look forward in hope.

But let's take this moment to look back, too. Flip through the pages of the past year's calendar. Meditate on the pictures in our parish directory. Where and when have I known that my life has been touched by God? When did that friend or acquaintance say just the right thing—or even just the wrong thing—that pulled everything together for me? Think about a day with the kids during KVA, a chance encounter at Peddler's Fair or a Wednesday Community Meal, a casual conversation at coffee hour. That is “God with us,” too. Connect the dots. Give Christ his name again: Emmanuel.

✞Linda Lee Clader†

