

We lost a beloved parishioner last week. Cyril Wismar served Trinity church as an informal Interim rector in 2006, and as a parishioner here formally, with Sylvia for the last year. We were, and are still honored, that they decided to call Trinity home. I know how much Cyril loved his Lutheran church and I know he was proud of the Episcopal and Lutheran church in Sheffield joining together to worship. Cyril preached his last sermon here on February 6, 2011, and since I was here that day too I remember watching him in the pulpit. He leaned on the desk and looked out and spoke directly and effortlessly to us all about the Gospel of Luke. He was loved and will be sorely missed. We look forward to celebrating his life in the spring. Sylvia will let us know when the plans are arranged.

Today on the church calendar we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, and also the first Sunday after Epiphany. In olden days we all would have been in church on Friday, January 6<sup>th</sup> to celebrate Epiphany and sing “We three Kings” on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas. But, instead, we end up combining the two feasts which makes for a sort of schizophrenic Sunday. We are singing songs about the Magi visiting a tiny baby in a manger in Bethlehem, and at the same time our readings are about creation and baptism and Jesus is a grown man.

So, what am I to do? I want to talk about Cyril. I want to talk about baptism, both that of Jesus, and our own baptisms. I want to talk about our upcoming visit from Bishop Ahrens and what we can expect from that. I want to talk about three wise men who somehow knew to travel a very long distance to find a new king and honor him. How the heck can I fit all of these things together? Well, you all know me by now....where there's a will there's a way!

**My** way to connect all these dots is to let God do it through the Spirit of Creation. We only heard a very small portion of the creation story that Roy read for us. But it recalls all that God has done. A wind from God blew across the waters. That wind is God's Spirit, and that wind blows where it will. And that wind tore apart the heavens and God's Spirit rested as a dove on Jesus at his baptism.

That wind, that Spirit, blew through Paul and propelled him all the way to Corinth and Ephesus and eventually as far as Rome. Paul made sure that everyone to whom he ministered knew about the Holy Wind of God that drives, empowers, supports, and inspires and leads us to continue God's creative action in the world.

That clear, clean breeze blew through Cyril's life and inspired him to carry the Good News which he had received to others in all that he did. He, in turn, inspired people, parishes, and, along with many, the whole Lutheran Church. While he was serving as a Bishop, three Lutheran denominations came together to become one on January 1, 1988. He unfortunately, lost his job in the process since he had been a bishop of one of the smaller groups of Lutheran church. But does God stop inspiring us when change happens? Does the creative wind of God stop blowing when we think we've been sidelined, or left out? Cyril was 69 at that time and he certainly did not just retire to a rocking chair. You all know that! Have a look at the article from 1988 that I have pinned up on the bulletin board. Cyril said that, although it was personally painful to have to hang up his crosier and miter, he had been working, dreaming and praying for the unity of the church since he was a child.

Cyril founded Trinity Lutheran Church in Great Barrington in 1986, and in the beginning they worshipped in the Great Hall of St. James Episcopal Church. I know he was very happy to see that, 20 years later, his intrepid band of Lutherans joined with the Episcopal congregation in Sheffield to worship in one place.

Here is the message in all of this. God's Spirit propelled Cyril to do this. The Spirit will not be pinned down, will not be managed or domesticated. God will keep working through each one of us, through Cyril, through Paul, through you and me, in whatever way **God** chooses (for as long as we allow).

The magi, travelling hundreds of miles from the East were propelled by god's Spirit. They had no GPS or turn by turn navigation....but so what? Paul's disciples in Ephesus didn't know what the Holy Spirit was....but so what? The Lutherans in Great Barrington had no building....but so what? We have our challenges here at Trinity.... But...so...what? God tears open the heavens, and rips through boundaries, and propels us to **do** more and **be** more.

scizome,nouj tou.j ouvranou.j Mark 1:10 (skiz-a-mén-ous) The heavens were torn apart. I mentioned earlier that my sermon today might seem schizophrenic. **Skiza**. The Greek root of schism, and schizophrenic. Torn apart. That's what God does to get directly to us. God is no longer hidden safely behind the curtain of the Temple. And this appearance of God at the Baptism of Jesus foreshadows what happens at his crucifixion. We hear Mark tell us at the end of his Gospel:

Mark 15:38 " And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."

It's a very significant little detail that the curtain is torn from top to bottom. This is the work of God, and not of humans.

The reason Bishop Laura Ahrens is coming to see us on Saturday January 21<sup>st</sup> is to give God a chance to blow through the life of this parish. I know we were **all** thankful that we didn't have to go through a lengthy search process when you asked me to be your priest in charge. So why do we need a Bishop to come now and tell us we need discernment? What's there to discern? You like me and I like you. Let's let well enough alone!

God's Spirit will not let well enough alone. Bishop Ahrens is looking forward to coming here, not to "skiza" you and me!!! She's coming to see what works so well here at Trinity Church that you now want to call me as your rector. And, she wants to see why other churches are struggling here in the NW Corner, and we are thriving. She needs YOU to tell her that, not me... and so we need you to be here on Saturday morning, January 21<sup>st</sup>.

You and I are going to see in this Gospel of Mark this year that one of Mark's main themes is that Jesus crashes through boundaries that people and institutions have set up in order to keep God at a distance. Things have never been the same since God came to earth in Jesus the Christ. God's creative energy has blown clear through any walls we try to set up to keep God at bay. You'd better believe that these stone walls right here won't keep the wind from blowing through us either. Hold onto your hats, or your hair, and be prepared to let God's will and God's Spirit propel us through this new year.