



New Year, Old Memories

When I wrote our annual family Christmas letter this year—you know, the one where you brag about all your travels and your children's accomplishments—I left out one of the major events of my life in the past year. It wasn't that I considered it unimportant. It was actually one of the highlights of the year. But when I sat down to write I simply forgot about it. Maybe I'm just getting old. But I also think that I am generally more interested in telling people about what is coming up than what has already taken place. (That may be especially true this year, with my sabbatical just over the horizon.)

As a rule, I prefer premiers to reruns, a new CD to an old album, a new city to a place I have visited before. That's why I always like celebrating the New Year. Even though it is only an arbitrary date on the calendar, there is always a whiff of fresh possibilities in the air. On the hinge of December 31/January 1, the future is open, and we are invited to dream, if only for just a moment, that this year can be different than years past, in ways that really matter. (Perhaps that's another reason I like working in the church. We actually mark three new years: The liturgical calendar begins with Advent; we celebrate a new calendar year in January; and we launch a new program year every September.)

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.... I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"
(Isa. 43:18)

The Bible does not always share this future oriented perspective. The gravest sin of the people of Israel is that they forgot who they were, where they came from, and what God has done for them. So the Psalmist exhorts the people, "*Remember the wonderful works God has done, the miracles, and the judgments God uttered, O offspring of God's servant Abraham, children of Jacob, God's chosen ones,*" (Ps. 105).

At the same time, Biblical hope is grounded in the faith—as we celebrated during Advent—that God is about to do a new thing. So the prophet Isaiah surprisingly invites the people to forget: "*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*" (Isa. 43:18).

Isaiah is not urging the people to forget what God has done, but rather to forget God's judgments. In a context in which they believed their past sins had foreclosed any future, Isaiah declares that the future has been reopened. This is a God of second chances. Or, as we often declare in worship, "The past is gone, the future is open, a new life has begun."

Happy New Year!

Jeff

Begin
the
Year
with

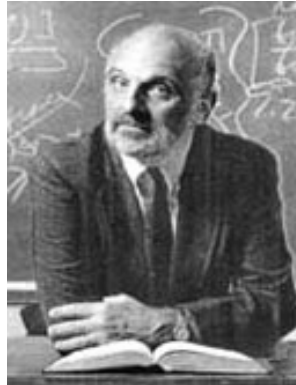
ADULT EDUCATION IN JANUARY**“Nellie McKay, Walter Brueggemann, and Prophetic Imagination”**

January 14, 21 and 28

Led by Gerry Hendershot



Is 19-year-old singer-songwriter Nellie McKay a 21st C. prophet? Does she have what 73-year-old Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann calls “prophetic imagination?” In this three-week series we consider the meaning of “prophet” and “prophecy” in our times by discussing the



work of Brueggemann and viewing video interviews, listening to the music, and studying the lyrics of McKay, who writes “*what does it matter if I change the world at all?*” †

**New Year Intentions
January 14th and 21st**

Led by Ashley Goff

The New Year is traditionally a time to set resolutions or goals. Goal making is a valuable tool; it involves envisioning a future outcome in your world or in your behavior. One plans, applies discipline, and works hard to achieve New Year goals.

Setting intentions is somewhat different. Setting intentions is not oriented toward a future outcome but, instead, it is a path or practice that is focused on how you are “being” in the present moment. Intentions call your attention to the “now.” You set your intentions based on what matters the most to you and make a commitment to align your actions with your inner values. You live your intentions every day.

This two week series will call us to set New Year intentions and create ways, or actions, for keeping those intentions alive. What values do we want to see blossom in our lives this year? What values need our highest priority in 2007? Come to reflect on 2006 and to set your own personal intentions so you can live more fully in 2007. †

Choir Retreat

On January 13 from 9 AM to Noon, Rob Passow will lead a Choir Retreat, starting in the choir room, and ending in the sanctuary. They will begin preparing both old and new music for the next few months of worship; and we will have some social time, too. For anyone interested in joining the choir, this is a great time to get started. Coffee, tea and water will be provided, and everyone is encouraged to bring a snack to share (try to get there around 8:45 so you can get coffee and a snack before we get started). †

**Friday Club Christmas**

With accompaniment by Dick Gigax on piano and Jeff Krehbiel on guitar, the attendees at the December 8 meeting of the Friday Club joined voices in carols and other Christmas songs from *The Presbyterian Hymnal* and its supplement, *Sing the Faith*. Some songs were new to everyone, but the songfest concluded with the perennial favorite, “Silent Night.” Nikki Felix reminded the singers that according to legend, Fr. Joseph Mohr wrote “Silent Night” in haste for guitar accompaniment when he discovered that his church organ had been damaged by mice! Others present were Alice Gigax, Marilyn Lutter, Gloria Liberatoro (a guest of Nikki’s), Gene Stossel, Gerry Hendershot, Mr. Van Heusen, and Pat Goeldner, who prepared the meal that preceded the caroling.

The Friday Club meets on 2nd Fridays each month at noon for lunch and a program. Call the church office if you’re interested in participating. †

Looking Ahead: February

Looking ahead, Sacred Circles, the National Cathedral’s biennial spirituality event for women will occur February 16-17. They have a terrific line-up, including Roberta Bondi, who will give a keynote address and give a workshop, and Esther de Waal, among others. For more information see

www.nationalcathedral.org/sacredcircles †

Meet a Member: DeLania Hardy

DeLania is a self-identified "Army Brat" who lived outside of the US (Germany and Panama) during her youth. She fondly remembers Christian youth trips in Europe: "How about a \$25 youth fellowship retreat weekend while skiing in the Alps?"

Her religious upbringing was eclectic: "On the whole, I think my parents tended to think of themselves as Southern Baptists but the reality of living overseas on a military base is you go to the Protestant service. One week your minister could be Lutheran, the next Presbyterian, and the next Baptist, all of whom would operate under the generic style of a military religious service."

DeLania's undergraduate studies were at Virginia Wesley College and Bath College (England), and she earned an MA at George Washington University in Political Management. Since graduation from GWU she has worked with several DC organizations involved with national policy issues related to the environment and transportation.

DeLania's eclectic religious background prepared her for Pilgrims. She says, "Many folks we worship with come from a variety of religious backgrounds, I do like that about the church. I believe the inclusiveness does lend itself to a level of honesty that many churches don't convey because folks are trying too hard to be something they are not."

DeLania coordinates the volunteers from Pilgrims and elsewhere who prepare and serve Sunday lunch to hungry people in our area, a program called "Open Table." †



Pilgrim John Afedu Becomes A U.S.A. Citizen

On December 12, at the US District Court in DC, Pilgrim John Afedu publicly affirmed that he would "support and uphold the Constitution of the United States," and thereby became a US citizen. John was one of 86 immigrants from 46 countries who were awarded citizenship in an ornate court room with wood- and marble-covered walls, statues of ancient law-givers (including Moses), and scores of portraits of US judges.

The principal speaker, a former DC judge, encouraged the new citizens to be proud of their cultural heritage, and to participate actively in every aspect of American life. As the Clerk read the names and countries of the applicants, each stood and responded "present." Observers were moved to see these mostly-young men and women of nearly every race and national origin standing side-by-side as new citizens of the US.



John came to the US in 1998 after winning a US visa lottery in his native Ghana, found work in DC, and soon became a Pilgrim. John attends worship regularly; participates in worship leadership as a lector, choral speaker, and communion server; and has served on the Pilgrimage Board. John has two jobs to support himself and send remittances to his relatives in Ghana.

Following the ceremony, John treated the other Pilgrims present--Jeff Krehbiel, Doris Hendershot, and Gerry Hendershot--to lunch. That afternoon he planned to visit Jan Pederson, his immigration attorney (and sometime Pilgrims worshiper), and the staff of DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, who intervened to overcome a legal problem during the process.

John will soon move to an apartment in Hyattsville, apply for a passport, and plan his first visit to Ghana since arriving in the US eight years ago! There he will be reunited with his mother and other relatives in their new home—made possible by John's hard-earned US dollars! †

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Nancy Lee Head, following her recent surgery, is now at the Potomac Center-Genesis Elder Care Network: 1785 South Hayes Street, Arlington VA 22202; telephone: 703-920-7383.
- Jerry McPike continues to improve at home after his recent surgery.
- Please remember in your prayers: Jim Carlson, Chuck Dynes, Jean Gilpin, Olive Holbrook, Jack Noble, the Pike family, Jeff and Penny Sandora, the Seppala family, and Virgil Smith.

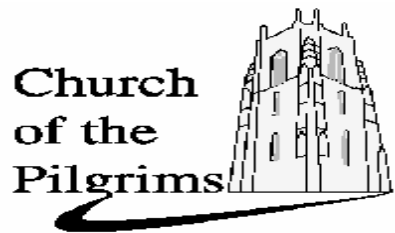


BEST WISHES! Three Pilgrims were married in December here at the Church: Pat Schlueter to John Harris on December 9; and, Melissa Rosenblatt and Jeff Pittman on December 31.



Congratulations to Bonnie Coe and William Noonan on the birth of their daughter, Phoebe Andrea Noonan on December 12, 2006. She weighed in at 6 pounds 14 ounces! Parents and baby are well.

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www.churchofthepilgrims.org

*If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please e-mail,
fax or call in your request to the church office.*

Join us
on Sundays for
Worship, 11:00 A.M.

Hospitality for Darfur Vigil Participants



On Sunday, December 10, International Human Rights Day, 20 refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan joined in worship at Pilgrims. They had come from their homes around the US to participate in a vigil that afternoon outside the Embassy of Sudan, which is on Massachusetts Avenue, a short walk from the church. Similar vigils were held in more than 40 cities around the world. At Pilgrims, representatives of the vigil sponsors, the American Jewish World Service and the Save Darfur Coalition, spoke during the worship service, as did Mohamed Yayha, a Darfurian who was an early and now well known leader in the movement. Jeff Krehbiel asked the Darfurian refugees to stand and be recognized, and then asked the other worshippers to stand also, as a sign of solidarity with the people of Darfur.

Following worship, the Darfurian visitors and about 50 other vigil participants were provided a free lunch in Fellowship Hall, prepared and served by Pilgrim volunteers (photo shows servers Jeff Fox, Nancy Daugherty, Mary Ellen Player, and Pat Goeldner).

After lunch, the 150 vigil participants who had assembled at Pilgrims were given blue berets, white scarves, rape warning whistles, and instructions, and then they processed from the church to the Embassy. They were joined there by other participants, swelling the crowd to several hundred. Jeff Krehbiel and other Pilgrims joined the vigil to hear speakers from Darfur and elsewhere call for the US and the United Nations to take immediate action to stop the suffering of the people of Darfur.

Organizers plan a continuing vigil at the Sudanese Embassy until a successful resolution to the Darfur situation is achieved. Pilgrims will continue providing hospitality to the groups maintaining the vigil.

To view an album of photos of the Darfur vigil activities at Pilgrims, go to <http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=8AZuWTJq5atmI-> †

