

Christmas 2013

Dear Friends,

Before I sit down to write the Christmas letter, I re-read past year's letters, listen to Christmas carols, read the appropriate Scripture passages (this year Matthew 1:18-25) and commentaries. Something surprising occurred: have you ever realized how few hymns and carols speak of Joseph? Somehow Joseph has not captured the poetic imagination and perhaps not ours.

We know very little about Joseph from Scripture, and tradition tells us little more. He was a carpenter who was legally married to a young woman named Mary. That he was not well off we know from the sacrifice offered after Jesus' birth "a pair of turtledoves". According to the writer of the Gospel of Luke, Joseph is still alive when Jesus is 12 years old. After that, nothing. Tradition has it that Joseph was considerably older than Mary and that Joseph died before Jesus' ministry; this would explain why he doesn't figure in any of the stories.

But we can know quite a bit about Joseph's spirituality – his relationship with God and the way he lived that out. Matthew's Gospel says he was a righteous man, another way of saying he was in right relationship with God and faithful. When he learns of Mary's situation, one commentator translates, "he agonized over" what he should do. The appearance of the angel and his obedient response are further proof of his closeness to God

While the story of Joseph doesn't move us the way the narratives of Mary and the birth of Jesus do, he is perhaps more like us. He isn't immortalized in song and leaves the stage before the action begins. Caught up in the wider sweep of the divine plan he struggles to find his place, to make his response.

This Christmas may we find a Joseph-like faith – ready to struggle before God and obey God's direction.

May you experience all the blessings of Christmas

The Rev Fran Kovar

The schedule of Christmas services is enclosed.
An envelope is included for your Christmas offering.