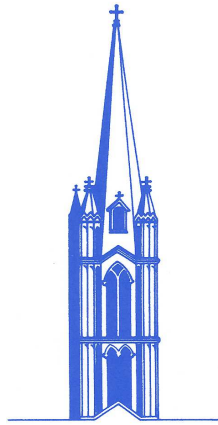


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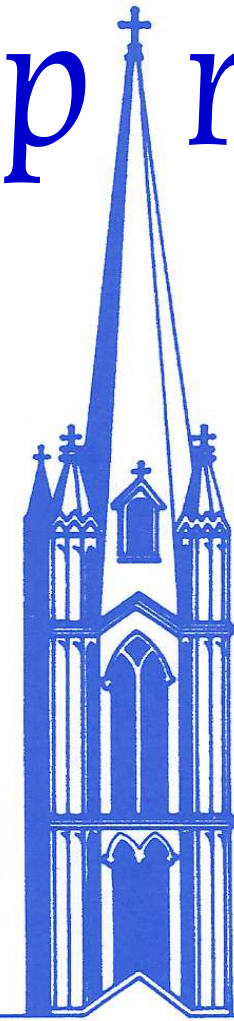


Spire

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~ Volumn I, Number 1 ~

In-Sp re



A Thought-ful Journal

Pentecost Edition 2010

A Publication of
Trinity Episcopal Church
Southport, CT

Recommended Books

Prison Transformations: The System, the People Inside and Me

by Stephen Chinlund, published 9/30/09 by Xlibris Corporation, ISBN: 1441561381, 252 pages, \$19.99 in paperback.

Stephen Chinlund, a former Rector of Trinity Church, wrote this book from his deeply personal and direct experience. He tells of countless people who have transformed prison into a place of new life and hope. This is a story rarely told: from the point of view of those locked up, and also officials who seek to provide safety inside, a responsible re-entry process, and thereby fewer victims on the outside.

Especially for those in our parish who remember him, this book is a must-read.

Reviewed by Ann Januski



The Wisdom Jesus

by Cynthia Bourgeault, published by Shambhala Publications, Inc., ISBN 978-1-59030-580-5, 223 pages, \$14.95 in paperback.

Cynthia Bourgeault is an Episcopal priest, retreat leader, and an early proponent of the practice of Centering Prayer. The book, *The Wisdom Jesus*, grew out years of notes and lectures, which were first recorded and made available on CDs, but that have since been developed further and expanded into book form.

Taking as a spring-board The Gospel According to Thomas, discovered in Nag Hammadi in 1945, the author invites us to examine the life and teachings of Jesus in a new light, urging us to look with fresh eyes and to strip away the “mythology” that centuries of cultural and religious dogma have woven around Christ. You are, in effect, led back to meet and listen to Jesus, and helped to perceive his teachings in a liberating new way.

Reviewed by Cassia Ward



In-Spire ~ Pentecost 2010 A Thought-ful Journal ~ Volume I, Number 1

From the Editor . . .

Odd how things happen . . . what plants a seed, sparks a notion, makes something click. The “inspiration” for *In-Spire* grew out of discussions about how to cut down the bulk and postage weight of the *Spire*. The result is that we now publish a chattier *Spire* with fewer pages, focused on current news and notices of upcoming events, and . . . now, here is *In-Spire*, which holds more food for thought. *In-Spire* is planned as a bi-annual publication, coming out in May for Pentecost and in November for All Souls & All Saints. Both of these seasons are significant for their celebration of a multi-voiced body of peoples and souls, and our hope is that *In-Spire* will be a source of different ideas and thought-provoking, inspirational pieces from many voices, about varied subjects that will enrich our understanding of each other and the ways the Holy Spirit can work in our lives.

Now, to return to the “seed,” the problem that germinated this idea, and be true to it, we will not incur postage in getting this to its readers. We are sending it electronically to the list of those with email, and we will have printed copies in the narthex and other locations in the church buildings, for those who want to pick up a hard copy.

I hope you enjoy *In-Spire*, and I invite—yes, I’ll say it stronger—I exhort you all to dig around in those articles, books, notebooks, manuscripts, and files of things that you may be working on, or that have inspired or intrigued you, and *share them!* What little tongues of flame have ignited *you* lately?

Cassia Ward

In-Spire Editor, Designer & Publisher



The Sun Coming Forth

*A Selection from The Rev. H. Boone Porter's book, **A Song of Creation**, submitted by Ann Januski*

The first article of the Christian faith, our belief in God as the maker and creator of all things, affects our view of anything and everything. It is not easy to picture God existing by himself from all eternity, beginning to make everything out of nothing. Nor is it easy to picture any alternatives. To imagine that everything that now is has been from all eternity, this is also to dumbfound the mind. Neither poetic imagination, nor common sense, nor the science of physics find it congenial to speak of an ever-existing universe. Neither is it easy to join our atheist friends and suppose that everything just happened to come into existence because of an accident. It is hard to picture an accident occurring before there is anything to have it!

For our ancestors long ago,

and for our spiritual forebears who wrote the Bible, it was also difficult to picture how everything came into existence at the dawn of time. For them, as for us, it was helpful to consider those entries into existence which we ourselves can see or feel. The most obvious personal experience of something like creation is the return of day every 24 hours. This is one of the most characteristic events on the surface of the planet. After the death-like non-consciousness of sleep, we awake, we find ourselves alive again, and we enter a new day. If we awake early enough, we will see the dawn. After the darkness of night, a gray twilight comes first. The dawn wind stirs, The shapes of clouds become visible. Soon we can see the face of the earth spread out, and trees, bushes, buildings, and bodies of water appear. The sun itself emerges above the horizon in glory. Birds are noisy, and if we live in the country, we will hear other animals too. In due

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and attend them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture, still,
treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Welcome difficulty.
Learn the alchemy True Human Beings
know: the moment you accept
what troubles you've been given, the door opens.

Welcome difficulty as a familiar
comrade. Joke with torment
brought by the Friend.

Sorrows are the rags of old clothes and jackets
that serve to cover, and then are taken off.
That undressing,
and the beautiful naked body
underneath, is the sweetness
that comes after grief.

Jelaluddin Rumi, 13th Century ~

The Lord is my pace-setter.
 I shall not rush.
 He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals;
 He provides me with images of stillness
 which restore my serenity.
 He leads me in ways of efficiency,
 through calmness of mind,
 and his grace is peace.
 Even though I have a great many things
 To accomplish each day,
 I will not fret, for his presence is here.
 His timelessness, His all-importance
 will keep me in balance;
 He prepares refreshment and renewal
 in the midst of my activity
 by anointing my heart, body, and mind
 with His oils of tranquility.
 My cup joyously overflows.
 Surely harmony and effectiveness
 shall be the fruits of my hours,
 for I shall walk in the pace of my Lord
 and dwell in His house forever. Amen.

Be
 silent
 still
 aware
 For there, inside your own heart,
 the Spirit is at prayer.
 Listen
 and learn.
 Open
 and find
 heart wisdom,
 Christ.

~ From a plaque in an English church garden. ~

course, we ourselves, the last created, emerge onto the scene. “Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening.” (*Psalm 104:24*)

Did you ever think that this, among other things, is what the first chapter of Genesis is talking about? The dawn of all things is suggested, subtly and with restraint, in terms of dawn as we know it. Of course many of us nowadays *don't* really know it. We stay up late at night and arise under duress in the morning, more interested in getting our first cup of coffee than in seeing the sun as “it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber” (*Psalm 19:5*).

For most of us a more vivid sense of renewal and the re-experiencing of creation occurs annually, in the spring. As the short days and cloudy wet weather of winter are passed, the warmer bright days and the returning green of

plants and trees effect most people very deeply. Those in the country watch the returning birds and hear the singing of the frogs in the hollows, while city-dwellers flock to parks and public gardens. The first chapter of Genesis is talking about this too, poetically overlaying the dawn and the new year in those mysterious archetypal, cosmic seven days.

To reflect upon the Bible, to enter into the sacred history, to go through the threshold which it opens to us—to do this requires a certain give-and-take, a thoughtful and reflective exchange between our life and experiences, and the words of the Scriptures. As we do this, we discover that things are indeed made new, we are made new, and we catch a glimpse, we feel a throbbing, we hear a whisper of the meaning of that ongoing mystery of the creative power of God.

I have lived on the lip of insanity,
 wanting to know reasons, knocking on a door.
 It opens. I've been knocking from the inside! *Rumi*

God's Twenty-six Guards

Submitted by Helen White

Have you ever felt the urge to pray for someone and then just put it on a list and said, "I'll pray for them later?" Or, has anyone ever called you and said, "I need you to pray for me, I have this need". . . ? If so, may the following story change the way that you think about prayer, even the way you pray. You will be blessed by this. . . it may also give you chills.

A missionary on furlough told this true story while visiting his home church in Michigan. "While serving at a small field hospital in Africa, every two weeks I traveled by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. This was a journey of two days, and required camping overnight at the halfway point. On one of these journeys, I arrived in the city where I planned to collect money from a bank, purchase medicine and supplies, and then begin my two-day journey back to the field hospital.

"Upon arrival in the city, I observed two men fighting, one of whom had been seriously injured. I treated him for his

injuries and at the same time talked to him about the Lord. I then traveled two days, camping overnight, and arrived back at the field hospital without incident.

"Two weeks later I repeated my journey. Upon arriving in the city, I was approached by the young man I had treated. He told me that he had known I carried money and medicines. He said, 'Some friends and I followed you into the jungle. Knowing you would camp overnight, we planned to kill you and take your money and drugs. But just as we were about to move into your camp, we saw that you were surrounded by twenty-six armed guards.'

"At this, I laughed and said that I was certainly all alone in that jungle campsite, but the young man pressed the point, and said, 'No, Sir, I was not the only person to see the guards. My friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those guards that we were afraid and left you alone.'"

At this point in the sermon, a man in the congregation jumped to his feet and interrupted the missionary, asking him if he could tell the exact date this had happened. After a

It was no coincidence my pilgrimage ended at the park path and the threshold of what to me was a sacred space. My mind revealed snapshots of a young boy with blue eyes who once waited for me to arrive. In our innocent hugging and kissing I had felt awash in love, just as I had when baptized. I meditated on his voice, his hands, his face. I was again bathed in love as if the world was for me alone. A divine spark had been ignited in me in those formative days. I entered the world irrevocably changed by the sensuousness of the pure joy I felt when my

soul opened to others. Now a new flame flickered to a new form of prayer and praise. No one could have prepared me for this. My desire was to love with my whole heart. There was room for no other.

After awhile, I felt time's tug. A funeral awaited and the memories began to blur. The boy became a fleeting gift of grace that had empowered me with the passion to dream and to seek that open baptismal joy in life's experiences. I still look for it in my daily work, in people and places, in books, in art, in music. I look for it in prayer and play. I always find it in my memories.



Baptized in Love, A Meditation

by Mother Dawn Stegelmann

I had walked on this familiar park path years before. I was back, drawn by the mystery of long-ago love and its powers of transformation. This was where I learned my soul was created to love. It was a baptism for which I still yearned and desired.

The death of my grandfather brought me back home again. It was time to go through the motions of a family funeral. Entering his house, I caught the stale and familiar scent of his cigars. I passed the framed and fading images of loved ones on the walls. Like the photographs, the house had been left suspended in my memory of times almost three decades old.

Voices hushed, family members and friends murmured awkward greetings as they shuffled through rooms and hallways. Time and distance had loosened the ties that bound these mourners. Vacations at Easter time, Sunday morning church

services and lunches with rice pudding were distant memories. It was only the death that had convened this reunion.

My grandfather was present at my first baptism. Below a giant wooden cross in the Midwestern Baptist church, I willingly allowed my body to be bent backwards and immersed in the waters of Christian purification. Being pulled back up out of the water in a loving embrace, I was told I was forever marked as Christ's own and was welcomed into the family of believers.

On the day of the funeral, I began my sentimental journey by foot—past buck-eye trees and mighty Midwestern oaks. Old, familiar neighborhoods greeted me with the ghosts of childhood past. An old porch swing and a garden patch called out in my grandmother's voice. The school yard laughed with the sounds of children. Bike wheels and brakes hummed on the driveway of my first home along which sunflowers once bowed to the mid-summer sun.

moment of thought, the missionary told the congregation the date. The man who'd interrupted then proceeded to reveal this:

“On the night you made your camp in Africa, it was morning here, and I was going to play golf. I was about to putt when I felt the urge to pray for you. In fact, the urge was so strong, I called men in this church to meet with me here in the sanctuary to pray for you. Would all of those men who met with me on that day please stand up?”

The men who had met together to pray that morning

stood up, but the missionary wasn't concerned with who they were, he was too busy counting them. . . there were twenty-six.

This story is an incredible example of how the Spirit of the Lord moves on behalf of those who love Him. If you ever feel such prodding to pray, trust it and go along with it, you don't know what it might mean.

Nothing is ever hurt by prayer. If we all take it to heart, we can turn this world toward God once again. As this true story illustrates, “With God, all things are possible.”



The Legend of the Dogwood

Submitted by Jean Winton



There is a legend, that at the time of the crucifixion the dogwood had been the size of an oak and other forest trees. So firm and strong was the tree that it was chosen as the timber for the cross. To be used thus for such a cruel purpose distressed the tree, and Jesus, nailed upon it, sensed this, and in His gentle pity for all sorrow and suffering said to it:

“Because of your regret and pity for My suffering, never again shall the dogwood tree grow large enough to be used as a cross. Henceforth it shall be slender and bent and twisted and its blossoms shall be in the form of a cross. . . Two long and two short petals. And in the center of the outer edge of each petal there will be nail prints, brown with rust and stained with red, and in the center of the flower will be a crown of thorns, and all who see it will remember. . . .

The Vivaldi Gloria: What Makes it Great?

Reflections on the Baroque masterpiece that opens Trinity's Southport Summer Music Festival
by Alan Murchie

It seems hardly possible that Antonio Vivaldi's beloved Gloria, RV 589, lay buried under a pile of manuscripts for nearly three hundred years before it was reintroduced by Vivaldi scholar (and tireless advocate) Alfredo Casella at an international music festival in the 1930's. The work stands now as an iconic choral masterpiece and an essential work in the classical canon. Its immense popularity inspires a simple question: What makes it great? Why has this work been recorded hundreds of times and why, after having been given new life, has it gone on to be performed perhaps more than any other major choral work?

According to one line of thinking, the Vivaldi is more than anything else a *popular* work, winning, memorable,

loveable. Its melodies are direct, charming and appealing. It builds skillfully on popular, accessible forms and structures. Another line of thinking would emphasize its composer's mastery of his craft: the piece is written exceedingly well for choir and brilliantly orchestrated. And Vivaldi seems undaunted by complex polyphonic tasks. The last movement is a double fugue (two fugues going at the same time) but one would hardly notice it. The composer somehow makes the music sound absolutely natural and effortless, as if it never could have been anything else *but* a double fugue.

While acknowledging all that is true in these two strains of thought, I would like to put forward another. I would propose that, while Vivaldi's Gloria is delightful and immensely appealing, and while its composer was an utter master, what ultimately makes it great is its profound reading of the canticle. Vivaldi gets under-

neath the text's skin, showing us not only what it might mean objectively as we hear it, but also what it might mean inwardly as we receive it. This music is profound witness to faith: it dares to reflect something to us not only of God's call but also of the soul's response.

The first musical statement comprises the first two movements: *Glory to God in the highest* and *And on earth peace*. After a brief, jubilant opening, Vivaldi moves immediately to the heart of his argument. We glorify God as we pray for, long for and work toward peace on earth. And the longing is never quite fulfilled. One hears each section of singers in turn offer its urgent prayer for peace in melodic lines that rise and continue to rise, moving toward what seems to be an attainable end. The plea, the prayer and the effort are real. But they continue. Vivaldi wants us to see that to glorify God is not to (or at least not *exclusively* to) detach from earthly reality, but to engage it fully.

Among the work's highlights is its setting of the text *Only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ*. The movement whirls and dances, jumps and bounces, sparkles and bubbles, never coming even close to touching ground until the final chord. It is, simply, a picture of unrefracted light and unfettered joy. What is Vivaldi up to? The music is entertaining and delightful; the writing is brilliant and assured, but surely this text and its rich theological claim demands elucidation. Again, Vivaldi is pointing beyond simple depiction to a profound reflection of faith: this isn't so much Jesus as it is *the soul's response to Jesus*; it isn't so much the joy of God's self-offering in Christ as it is our joy in receiving Christ and the promise of new life. It is a glimpse, in music, of the soul's restoration; of its re-vivification.

