The Roots of Our Faith

Jesus, Judaism, & Love: Rabbi Ted Falcon
Reflections from Iona: Green, Spangler, & Reid

St. Augustine’s in-the-Woods Episcopal Church, Freeland, WA

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From your Editor

Roots are very clever biology. Of course, all of created order has its cleverness, but for now, it’s roots.

Roots are the mechanism that draws sustenance from the soil and transports it to their host plant. The soil is the storehouse, the depository of the nutrition that the plant feeds on, as well as its foundational anchor.

When thinking philosophically (or theologically) about our roots, we more often than not mean the soil that we grew in, not the transportation system that connects us to that soil.

Soil is the distillation of what has come before. When living matter dies, it breaks down into its component parts and rejoins the collection of minerals and basic chemistry that are the building blocks of all creation. Our roots are merely the means of accessing our forebears, not the forebearers themselves, or even their essence. Roots are the pipelines that move all of that good stuff into our generation of life. Actually, roots are an organism’s effort of reaching down and back for the value of what has been left for them.

I find this so incredibly mind boggling. It adds to the argument for eternal life. Not only do we inherit the genes and history of our grandparents, but in a very real way the physical component of their beings and lives as well.

Amazing,

Albert

Dear Editor, Graphics Designer and Secretary:

Wonderfully done!! Need I add “As always?” (February Light) I loved the wrap-around cover where inside, the stories flowed and the photos enhanced. The layout was always surprising from page-turn to page-turn.

I’m glad that you found a place for the waterfall (God’s Creation page). It was a kick to see that you used the second photo as well! Part of the memory. Thanks for passing this along.

Terry (Liberty), Olympia, WA
CONTRIBUTORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Rabbi Ted Falcon, PhD, a mid-week Whidbey Island resident, is a rabbi and spiritual therapist who writes and speaks on spiritual awakening. He is the Jewish component of the well known, Three Interfaith Amigos. You can find him at RabbiTed.com and at InterfaithAmigos.com.

Julie Spangler, Director of Christian Formation at St. Augustine’s, participated in a pilgrimage to Scotland and the island of Iona. She reflects here on her experience.

The Reverend Mary Green also participated in the trip to Scotland.

As did Brian Reid

FEATURES

Jesus, Judaism, & Love 5
Beloved Community 8
Reflections from Iona 10
We are All Connected 15
Light, Lite 17
Did You Know? 18
Tail Lights 27

IN HOUSE

Notes from Nigel 20
Personnel 22
Calendar/Service Schedule 23
Adult Forum Schedule 24
Getting to Know Candace Galik 26
Jesus, Judaism, & Love

Rabbi Ted Falcon

Jewish-Christian dialogue has come a long way, yet we still struggle to overcome some deeply ingrained challenges. Much of the New Testament texts read as if Jesus is not identified with those who are called “the Jews.” There were times, in fact, when my own response to reading the Gospel accounts verged on self-hate. How could “the Jews” have been so wicked?

But I knew that Jesus himself was Jewish. More than that, I knew that Jesus wasn’t even his name: there is no “J” sound in either Hebrew, the language of prayer and his Bible, or Aramaic, the vernacular of his culture. He was probably known as Yeshua, a variant of the Hebrew name for Joshua. And, increasingly, scholars are recognizing that the New Testament itself was predominantly written by Jews, and often expressed divisions between competing Jewish groups.

Even so, by the time the Gospel texts were written down, they were expressions of a community that had separated itself from its Jewish roots and its Jewish identity. Hidden within the text are controversies between those who felt one had to first become Jewish to follow the teachings of Jesus, and those who felt that Jewish identity was no longer needed. Ultimately, specific Jewish practices
fell away, and Christianity began to take on a character in many ways opposed to its own Jewish roots.

And somewhere between the crucifixion and the growth of the Christian church, Yeshua became the Christian Jesus. His baptism, probably originally a rite still known as mikvah in Judaism, translated into a ritual initiation into the Christian faith. Traditions that were once linked became estranged. From the time of Constantine onward, the divorce was not particularly amicable.

All my life I have been schooled in the ways Jews and Christians are different. I grew up as a minority in a sea of Christianity—Jews represent less than 2% of the population of this country—and learned early to appreciate why Jews tended to cluster together. As a teenager, I was beaten up and called a “Christ killer,” bullied because I was Jewish. And I remember wondering, if Jesus had to die for the “sins of humanity,” why would anyone blame those who participated in such a necessary and redemptive death?

It’s not my purpose now to probe this particular question further. I only mention it as a backdrop for my interest, perhaps really my need, to enter into meaningful interfaith dialogue. It’s been an important part of my 48 years as a rabbi. Gratefully, I have learned much. For the past 14 years, together with Pastor Don Mackenzie and Imam Jamal Rahman, I have worked as an “Interfaith Amigo,” exploring how interfaith dialogue and spirituality can provide a foundation for greater cooperation and collaboration on the critical social and environmental issues of our time.

Christian willingness to appreciate the Jewishness of Jesus has been an extremely important aspect to the deepening of dialogue and cooperation. Awakening greater appreciation within the Jewish community for the teachings of the most well-known Jewish spiritual teacher of all time has been more challenging, since the ground of distrust is profound. The history of Jewish pain at the hand of Christian power is perhaps beyond even Christian understanding.

Anti-Jewish feelings and activities constantly and consistently erupted in the Christian world where, in the Middle Ages, Jews were expelled a total of 109 times from the lands of their birth. We remember 1492 as the sailing of Columbus, but it was also the year the Jews were driven out of Spain.

Martin Luther was one who railed against persecution of Jews, based on his belief that the Jews had refused conversion because they had not been approached in the right way. But after his own methods failed to achieve the results he sought, he changed his mind and encouraged the burning of synagogues and Jewish homes. For so long, it seemed impossible for those who believed they had the “only way” to permit another faith to exist.

But things are changing. Interfaith dialogue is deepening. I can share aspects of my life as a Jew in a Christian world, and I am also able to share my attraction to many of the teachings ascribed to Jesus. I do not see Jesus as Messiah, but I honor him as a profound spiritual teacher. His parables, like all truly spiritual teachings, transcend the particular time and place in which they were delivered.
Two Gospels relate that Jesus was twice asked what he considered to be the most important (“the first”) commandment in the Torah (Mark 12:28 and Matthew 22:36). The answer is related slightly differently in each of these Gospel accounts (see also Luke 10:30), but it is clear that Jesus is quoting in Hebrew from the Torah:

“You shall love the Eternal One your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5), and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).

Jesus then says, “On these two commandments hang all the Torah and the prophets” (Matthew 22:40), and “There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31).

When these passages are cited from Matthew and Mark rather than from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, it gives the impression that Jesus was saying something not contained in Judaism.

It seems to me that where Judaism and Christianity meet is at the most profound level of love—love of God and love of persons. And this is a universal love, embracing everything and everyone. This is the love that we meet when opening our hearts to the absolute interconnectedness of all Being.

There is a common belief that spiritual attainment is revealed through wondrous visions. I believe that the evidence of spiritual awakening is always an expanded capacity to love.

Rabbi Ted Falcon will lead a meditative evening focusing on the love of God and the love of persons at 7pm on Friday, April 1, at Unity of Whidbey.
As a cultural anthropologist, I have been trained in the art of discovering what another culture means to the people living inside it. It is a long process, living within the community for a year or more. Isolated traditional or natural communities have long histories sometimes going back millennium. History is passed to the next generation through song and story. These are communities of memory, according to Josiah Royce, the first to coin the term Beloved Community and to author a philosophy of community. While traditional communities have a shared history, shared customs are taken for granted by the members of the community.

Communities today are no longer isolated. On a trip to Mexico, I met a Mayan woman at a rural farmers market wearing the same teeshirt I was wearing, not the traditional Mayan dress of her mothers and grandmothers. Cultures cross pollenate. After a number of years the new becomes part of the old.

Communities like St. Augustine’s are like stratified rock. Bedrock has been part of the community for decades. Those who have been here the longest remember the olden days. On top of the bedrock are layers of shared events and experiences: the building of the new church, beginning of Episcopal Peace Fellowship, the coming of the first full time rector and other events that are known to those who were part of those experiences. Atop these shared experiences new pilgrims from other traditions, or even other Episcopal congregations, share new ideas and perspectives about how things should and could be done. Each new influx of pilgrims brings new life into the community. Rather than having an ancient culture that is deeply imbedded in our community, we have a multiplicity of interpretations based upon our unique life experiences. Royce believed that “What matters in the end is the process of interpretation — the process of communicating and understanding one another in actual, imperfect, finite
communities of grace bound together by loyalty and striving toward the ultimate and ideal Beloved Community.” This stratified rock is the foundation upon which contemporary Christian congregations are built. This is the rock upon which Christ is building the Church for today’s world.

The bedrock of our Church is the Eucharist, the Agape feast where we come to the table in our uniqueness and become vessels carrying the message of Divine Love to the world and to each other. Even the Eucharist is the subject of differing expectations and interpretations.

As it always does, Divine Mystery presents us with challenge and opportunity. We are challenged by the differences among us rubbing off our sharp edges as we tumble together in the river of life. When community works well, when we are listening with enthusiasm (meaning God within us), we meet each other in these moments by grace, and we ask and receive forgiveness and we offer forgiveness to each other. We have the opportunity to practice compassionate listening, to each other’s stories, creating spiritual intimacy and building a shared interpretation of our common experience.

I have shared such moments with members here at St. Augustine’s. In dialogues, in our Light staff meetings, and this week in a small group called to spiritual intimacy after the Ash Wednesday morning service. I look forward to sharing many more such moments within our Beloved Community.

We here at St. Augustine’s are in the throes of putting down roots, throwing our lot in with each other. We have been welcomed by those who created this warm and healing space and together with God’s help we will dig a firm foundation and upon this rock Christ’s church will be built for future generations. May it be so.
There is a curious sight inside the nine hundred year old Abbey Church on the Isle of Iona in Scotland. Growing out of crevices in the ancient stone walls near the altar are verdant green ferns. There is no visible source of nourishment — no soil or water — to account for these thriving plants. These ferns became the inspiring metaphor for me of Celtic Christianity I experienced during my 2015 pilgrimage to Scotland.

It would have been enough just to explore the mysteriously beautiful ruins of historic sites and see the lush landscape of Scottish highlands and lochs. Literal feasts of sumptuous food and hospitality comforted my body, and the daily offerings of scholarly teaching with spiritual depth were more than enough to nourish my soul. But the real gift of this pilgrimage was being introduced to the profound witness of Celtic Christian followers of Jesus, people whose practical living faith embody Christ in this world today. Hearing their humble witness presented me with evidence of a contemporary Christian discipleship that will never get much attention or acclaim, but is surely the quiet persistent redemptive work of God. Characteristic of Celtic Christianity is that it is a faith lived out apart from the structures of an institutionalized church. As it has from the very earliest beginnings before the fall of the Roman Empire, Celtic Christianity has survived, not as a denomination, but as a movement of spirituality expressed in small communities such as the Iona Community and the Community of Aidan and Hilda in Lindisfarne. Rather than doctrine or creed, Celtic communities focus on a simple rule of prayer and worship, the study of Scripture, and inclusive Christian faith lived out in often ordinary but sometimes radical acts of social justice.
The benefit of the pilgrimage for me was experiencing a flavor of Christian spirituality that is authentic and compassionate in actively addressing the needs of today’s complex world.

The hymn we sang during Sunday worship in the Abbey Church at Iona summarizes well what inspires and compels me about Celtic spirituality: “Don’t tell me of a faith that fears to face the world around…. I need to know that God is real, I need to know that Christ can feel the need to touch and love and heal the world, including me.”* This two week pilgrimage reset some unseen roots in me that are being nourished through deep and hidden sources – nourishment that continues to renew my connection to God and myself and others, the perfect reasons for undertaking any pilgrimage.

Traveling to the UK and Scotland last spring happened during a particularly unsettled time in my life. When I signed up for the trip almost a year before, I had been in a much different place both personally and spiritually. I thought I knew how the trip would touch me—what things would interest me, how I would experience it. As it turned out, by the time it came to embark on the journey, I wasn’t even certain I liked Christianity anymore. The trip ahead of me seemed only to mock the pain that was in my heart. I wasn’t certain I would find much enjoyment in the journey at all, and I didn’t even like Scotch.

I’d like to say that all this uncertainty fell away the moment we began our time together on Lindisfarne’s Holy Island. I’d like to be able to say God revealed God’s self to me in the holy settings, in the daily readings and group devotion times. I wish I could say that by standing in centuries-old churches, and in the ruins of edifices constructed by the saints whose very existence glorified God was enough to heal my pain. While those places were awe-inspiring and moving, the dark place inside my soul was little moved by them. I felt as if my presence in that group was dishonest somehow—wouldn’t they perceive my duplicity as they experienced such deeply spiritual encounters as we traveled from site to site and I remained unmoved?

It was actually toward the end of our trip, during our time on Iona, when I began to grasp what this trip was about for me. During our five days there, we had the opportunity to really ‘settle in.’ The trip prior to that had been one or two nights in each place, with many hours of driving and touring along the way. All of those experiences were pleasurable and informative—our driver and guide was unparalleled in his care for us and in his knowledge of our surroundings. Coming across on the ferry to Iona, however, was like stepping into a refuge for body and spirit.

The community of Iona, those who live there full time, and those who serve at the Abbey, paired with the spare sense of rugged beauty and sacred purity of the island itself worked like a balm on the ache in my heart. Our days there were basically unstructured, allowing us to explore our surroundings, to attend daily services at the Abbey that were breathtaking in their simplicity, rather than in their grandeur. The inn where we stayed served us artisan food created using local provisions and organic vegetables from their own gardens. Each meal seemed a gift in its thoughtful beauty. Walking the white sands where the turquoise waters lapped, exploring the hillsides dotted with sheep, sitting quietly in sacred spaces; all of these felt nourishing to me. God revealed God’s self to me quite unexpectedly: Not by asking my contrition for what I chose not to believe anymore. Rather, God was made real to me in the sky and sea spread wide, in
the gifts of food and in the sweetness of birdsong, in the smiles of simple companionship of fellow travelers and local islanders. My experience on Iona felt like being pulled into the arms of a loving protector who recognized the rawness of my pain and held me without any expectation of change on my part. That was enough to allow me to unclasp the fist in which I’d held my heart. I began to breathe again. Thus began my journey to a new place of faith; a place of loving-kindness toward all.

As we watched from the ferry as Iona became smaller in our view, I thought about the abbeys, churches, castles and ruins we had seen in the course of our Pilgrimage. I realized that holiness and sacredness cannot be revealed to everyone in the same way. I silently honored the saints and monks that had built these communities to which millions of fellow pilgrims had since journeyed, each hoping to touch the heart of God. I had a stronger appreciation for what we had experienced; the first portion of our trip was in no way lost on me. I saw how each day’s experience had served to prepare my heart for what was to come. I reflect often on the blessings I experienced during my time on Pilgrimage, and I continue to be encouraged by all that I experience along the pilgrim’s way.

In the Footsteps of the Celtic Saints

Brian Reid

I really didn’t know what to expect from a pilgrimage to the origins of Celtic spirituality. I had vague notions of monks communing with the forest as they said their daily prayers. I knew it had to do with “thin places” where the distance between Earth and Heaven becomes almost non-existence. I had felt something like it when I walked through the old growth forest in South Whidbey State Park or when climbing Ebby Bluff. I prepared myself by reading the suggested texts such as Anam Cara and Celtic Spirituality, which gave me a deeper understanding of different aspects of Celtic spirituality and wisdom.

After an incredibly long flight from Seattle to Glasgow all I could do was eat and then go to bed for six hours in an attempt to reduce the unbelievable jet lag. After further reading when I got up and had dinner, I was able to then go to sleep at the appropriate nighttime for Scotland.

In the morning Bev Babson, who was also staying at the hotel, and I went back to the airport for breakfast then on to unite with the rest of the pilgrims. From Glasgow we took the tour bus to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, a tidal island off the northeast coast of England in Northumberland.

Lindisfarne is only accessible during low tide
on a slightly raised causeway. To travel there on foot people risked drowning if the traveler was not fast enough to make it from mainland to island between tides which for me showed the power of faith. The ebb and flow of the North Sea as it separates then connects the Holy Island to the rest of Northumbria was evocative of the nature of the connection between human and natural worlds, always in flux. While God is in all things according to Celtic spirituality, with every connection in daily life sacred, we have not always honored that in our own lives.

Next we journeyed to Durham where we toured the cathedral then visited the Whitby Abbey where the fate of Celtic spirituality was decided in favor of Roman Christianity; listening for the heartbeat of God and God in the heartbeat of life versus listening for God in the Scriptures. Fortunately Celtic spirituality proved to be more resilient than the church’s effort to stamp it out.

We traveled to Escomb Saxon Church later that day. The oldest church still in use in England, its whitewashed walls, irregular shaped stones in the walls, exposed hand hewn timbers in the roof and simple design produces a feeling of intimacy and connection to God’s essence; connection to creation just outside its windows and walls. These were feelings I had when visiting the small rustic churches, which I did not experience with the larger cathedrals, and abbeys we visited.

Although powerful in their own right and connected to Celtic Christianity through their use by or as a resting place for saints, the spirituality was not there for me. I didn’t feel the kinship between Earth and Heaven in those large and largely dark spaces. Maybe it was the darkness that made it hard for me to feel the Light, which is in all things in creation. The feeling of the elemental intrinsic space created by the smaller worship space was so much more powerful. I felt it again much later on our last night at Iona in the service led by Mary Green in which we gave each other communion inside St. Michael’s Chapel, seated around a large dark wood table.

When I look back on my pilgrimage, I am struck by the little experiences, which gave me the awareness of Celtic spirituality. Walking down the wooded path each morning in the mist to the Abbey Church for Morning Prayer; stumbling along the trail through streams and over large stones for hours to reach St. Columba’s Bay; walking through the grave yard in the early morning at Lindisfarne, allowed me to meet directly with the sights, smells and sounds of creation. In some small part, I listen for the heartbeat of God and feel his heartbeat in life as I continue my footsteps to find my spiritual roots.
A poster featuring a photo of a polar bear on Arctic ice with the proclamation “We Are All Connected” is the centerpiece for the St. Augustine’s Greening Committee bulletin board. This poster reflects our Biblical mandate to care for all of God’s creation. It would also be fitting to have posted a photo of a rhinoceros with the proclamation “We Are All Connected.”

Africa with its huge variety of animal species deserves the title of “Mother Africa.” However, human activities threaten many of its unique animals. In southern Africa, which includes the countries of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa, the “Big Five” animals - elephants, rhinoceros, lions, leopards and cape buffalo - are all endangered. The primary causes for their threatened status are loss of habitat, and the related economic, political and climate change issues.

The poaching or illegal slaughter of elephants and rhinos for their tusks and horns is endemic. Elephant tusks are sought for their ivory and rhino horns as an aphrodisiac. The trade in ivory and rhino horns is very lucrative and there is conflict between game reserve wardens and poachers. Game wardens are armed with assault weapons. People are killed as a result of this illicit trade.

Poaching is also done for trophies. Lions and leopards are shot and their carcasses left to rot while the heads are taken to be hung on walls. Africans serve as guides for European and American trophy hunters.

However, poaching is not just an African problem. The developed and developing world outside of Africa is complicit or connected to activities or markets which threaten the survival of Africa’s animals. The markets for animal parts are not in Africa. The rhino horns are prized in China while the ivory and trophy animal market exists primarily in North America and Europe. As China de-
velops economically and more of its people acquire disposable income, a rising middle class finds it can now afford the folk aphrodisiacs that formerly were only available to the economic elite. A very profitable trade in rhino horns has resulted.

Poverty also drives the poaching. In the southern African countries estimated unemployment ranges from a low of 30% in South Africa to probably at least 60% in Zimbabwe, making illegal slaughter of animals an attractive activity.

Political dysfunction in African countries also impacts animals. Mozambique is an example of civil wars endangering animals. The Gorongosa Reserve in Mozambique is finally being reborn after civil wars decimated and traumatized its animal population.

The political and economic dysfunction of African countries is another consequence of European imperialism.

As the African countries economies evolve from pastoral and subsistence agriculture to large scale agriculture, develop manufacturing and continue with the extractive mining enterprises, there is the inevitable loss of habitat for animals. South Africa, the most developed of the southern African nations, has basically eliminated habitat for the “Big Five.” Only large game reserves like Kruger National Park maintain habitat suitable for the “Big Five.”

Climate change in southern Africa, while not as dramatic as in the latitudes further south toward the Antarctic or in the northern hemisphere near the Arctic, still has had an impact. For the past four years the southern African region has been in the midst of a severe drought which has resulted in less vegetation for animals. The Republic of South Africa contributes to climate change by using its huge coal resources to generate electricity for the region.

However, not all is grim. Hope exists. The international restrictions on the ivory trade have reduced the market for elephant tusks. As a result, elephants are now under somewhat less pressure. Restrictions on the international trade of ivory, rhino horns, and animal trophies can reduce or eliminate markets for African animal parts. African governments are also beginning to make stronger efforts to combat poaching, but the most effective tactic is to eliminate markets for African animal parts.

The concern for southern Africa’s endangered species reminds us that we have a calling to care for all creation. We are all connected and at one point in the planet Earth’s history we were all out of Africa. Mother Africa.

As members of the Body of Christ, we acknowledge and embrace the divine call for us to be stewards of God’s creation. It is our sacred responsibility to respect, preserve and protect all living things on this fragile Earth, our island home. (St. Augustine’s Greening Committee Mission Statement)
We’ve been hearing through the grapevine that The Light needs to lighten up a bit. After all, we don’t want to take this church business too seriously, do we? The following are a couple of tidbits that we have gleaned from the internet. This is something that we need help with, for sure, from you. It’s no fun being funny by ourselves.

As usual, please send contributions to Albert, arose@albertrose.com. We love original experiences or cartoons. If you are sharing prepublished material, please make sure there is an attribution included so that we can get permission or credit the source. Enjoy!

My new favorite hymn:
On Jordan’s bank the Baptist cry
If I was Baptist so would I
They drink no beer they have no fun...

I’m glad I’m an Anglican.

A friend of mine said that she found this on Richard Liantonio’s Facebook page. Albert

“Okay, come at me like you don’t plan to tithe.”
The most popular root veggie in the United States is: the POTATO!

Not only that, the potato is astonishingly the most popular vegetable in the entire country. Think: french fries. Things get even more interesting with this root veggie when one discovers that between the potato and its complement “ketchup” (AKA: tomato) that the two vegetables constitute SIXTY PERCENT of the entire vegetable consumption in the U.S. (see graphic, next page).

The next most popular tuber is, of course, carrots.

The Root Not Eaten: Do you know that underneath all that parsley is a yummy root to eat? In Central and Eastern Europe, it is a very popular root veggie.

“Rooting” – a new technology thing that you won’t ever do but your grandkids probably will: this is when you’ve broken into the source or “root” code for your device, like a phone, and now have access to the main code, allowing you to manipulate and delete all that stuff which makes you ask “why is this permanently on my phone?” Related usage: one can think of “rooting” somewhat like “hacking” – you are gaining access to the source code of whateveritis.

Root Beer: So you might guess that Root Beer got its name from the lovely foam on top of a dark bodied brew making it look like a porter beer or something. Not necessarily so! Mr. Hires, who began the broad commercially available root beer niche in the later 1800’s, was a teetotaler. He is reported to have wanted to name his brew “Root Tea;” however, as some of his primary potential customers were Pennsylvania coal miners and as he was a smart capitalist and marketer, he chose instead to call it “Root Beer” which sounded more “guy drink.”

Sassafras based beverages resembling what we know as “root beer” have existed since the 16th and 17th centuries. They also had some long time use for medicinal properties due to the Sassafras. The mid 1800’s saw Root Beer become a readily available drink in restaurants and such, with most of the retail versions being sold as syrup to mix with soda water. While traditionally root beer is made with either the root (or bark) of the Sassafras tree (the basis for HIRES brand root beer), or the Sarsaparilla vine (competitor BARQ’s base for the brew), modern root beer is made with artificial sassafras due to the banning of Sassafras’s essential oil, “safrole”, because of its potentially harmful side effects.

Remember the ground-breaking television mini-series “ROOTS”? (Some of us remember watching it the first time it aired!) Well,
the History Channel, in partnership with Lifetime and A&E, is remaking this historic mini-series and the new version will air over four days this coming Memorial Weekend.

- And while we’re here at ROOTS the television mini-series, let’s get in a shout-out and root for that original young Kunta Kinte actor, LeVar Burton. Who, one could opine, has rooted the love of books and reading (might we say ‘root-words’) in more children than most any single living human being - through his over three decades of work on the PBS series “Reading Rainbow” (now an app you can put on your phone!).

I was going to go on to things like root canal, but I think we can all skip that!

So, eat your favorite root veggie, drink a root beer, and ponder the roots of civilization.

LaVar Burton
As I mentioned recently, my family comes – in part – from Ireland: my great-grandfather and grandmother were both from Kinsale, on the south coast. On the other side, my father’s family comes from lowland Scotland. I grew up in England. My roots, you could say, are bifurcated – two branches coming together in one place. So while some would say that I’m English, my family’s roots are decidedly not. I am English by happenstance, not by choice.

I am, however, American by choice, and necessarily so: I didn’t become a naturalized citizen by accident, or by the actions of others – say, by my parents, when I was a minor not able to make such a choice for myself.

For most of us, our roots often do determine some of the important facts of our lives. While some of us made a choice to leave the country of our birth, most didn’t; the language we have developed is the native tongue of the country in which we live and often (though not always) the language of our parents; we enter (and frequently remain) into a world inhabited by our ancestors before us.

Being Christian is a lot like that for almost all of us. Few of us get the happy opportunity to decide whether we wanted to be baptized – that was made for us by our parents. We are Christian – and a particular brand of Christian – by happenstance, not (at least initially) by choice.

For me, it took a long time before I stopped taking my English identity for granted and long-lived. Even after arriving in North America I continued to describe myself as “English” because that was the only experience I had growing up. Only much later did I start to wonder if there was value to describing myself that way (there is), and also if there was value in thinking of myself as rooted in both Irish and Scottish identities (there is).

That question never came up when I became a citizen here. Here I made an active choice – of course this new identity mattered, and matters – perhaps more so because I got to choose it.
That a rite called “Confirmation” still exists in, and is central to, our Church while also being theologically disconnected from its liturgical origin, is a reminder to me that we don’t often pay attention to our own Christian roots; we don’t often think about how important those roots are and how they have formed – and continue to form – us.

Our journey through Lent is an invitation to reflect on how we have been formed by our Christian roots. We might, now, identify ourselves as contemporary, Mainline Christians; many of us might go further and add “Episcopal” to that description; but what about our roots? What about our unique brand of Christian identity forged in “the New World?” What about our Scottish Anglican ancestry, how has that formed us? What about the great English compromise in the time of Elizabeth I that created a Church both Catholic AND Reformed? What about our roots in what is called the “Undivided Church” (where a part became what we call “Eastern Orthodoxy”)? What about the diverse nature of our New Testament roots, where different writers described different – and sometimes contradictory – forms of Christian identity and community? What about our Jewish Roots (surely the broadest and most influential part of our Christian heritage)?

Some of these questions form the basis of the reflections in this edition of The Light. But they go beyond this publication; these are questions that are pregnant with possibility – they offer us an opportunity to be further rooted in the traditions and identity that we claim, while helping interpret for us the path we are currently journeying on together.

In reclaiming our roots, we gain clarity about how we can engage our future in new and fruitful ways.

In this day and age of rapid, often mind-boggling change, it’s a gift to have that rock on which to plant our Christian standard.

Grace and peace to you.

Nigel
Personnel

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Nigel Taber-Hamilton, 
Rector
Molly Grimm
Parish Administrator
David Locke,
Parish Musician
Julie Spangler,
Director of Christian Formation
Rob Anderson
Bookkeeper
Sheila Foster
Childcare

SOPHIA SINGERS
Melisa Doss, Carole Hansen Coordinators

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY
Rob Anderson, Melisa Doss Mentors

CHRISTIAN FORMATION
Julie Spangler Director

GREETERS
Brian Reid Contact and Scheduling

USHERS
Art Taylor 8:00, Trevor Arnold 10:30 Scheduling

ANIMAL MINISTRY
Margaret Schultz, Brian Reid Contact

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Susan Sandri Chair

GARDENS
Diana Klein Contact

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SUNDAY COFFEE HOUR
Pat Brookes 8:00, OPEN 10:30 Coordinators

INTEGRITY
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MISSION SUNDAY OFFERING
Ron St. George Chair

STEWARDSHIP
See Office Administrator

QUIET TIME
Chris Lubinski Convener

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Melisa Doss, Carole Hansen Coordinators

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY
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ADULT FORUMS
Ted Brookes
March Calendar

**BIRTHDAYS**

2. Sarah Parker, Jan Mulder & Cleveland Riley  
   Narcotic’s Anonymous 7P

3. Gail Corell  
   Lenten Soup Supper 6:30P

7. Women’s Bible Study 9:30A

8. Megan Parker

9. Narcotic’s Anonymous 7P

10. Mic Kisinger  
    Lenten Soup Supper 6:30P

14. Women’s Bible Study 9:30A

15. Rachel Taber-Hamilton

16. Bert Speir  
    Narcotic’s Anonymous 7P

17. Kathryn Rickert, Mary Laissue  
    Lenten Soup Supper 6:30P

**EVENTS**

20. Palm Sunday  
    Bobby Drye, Diane Lantz, Joann Norman

21. Bill Skubi, Mare Chapman  
    Women’s Bible Study 9:30A

22. Sue Idso

23. Narcotic’s Anonymous 7P

24. Maundy Thursday  
    David Close

25. Good Friday

26. Holy Saturday  
    Tom & Michele Johnson

27. Easter  
    Dallas Vial, Laura Tocheny

28. Grafton Grimm  
    Women’s Bible Study 9:30A

30. Narcotic’s Anonymous 7P

**SERVICE SCHEDULE**

**Sunday**

8:00 am  Eucharist Rite I (followed by coffee/fellowship and Adult Forums).

10:30 am  Eucharist Rite II (with music, church school & child care, followed by coffee/fellowship).

**Monday**

5:30 pm  Solemn Evensong (with incense)

**Tuesday**

7:00 pm  Quiet Time Meditation

**Wednesday**

10:00 am  Eucharist and Holy Unction (prayers for healing)
March has arrived and Easter is right around the corner. The inevitable question being asked Whidbey-wide is whether we will experience this month in its lion or lamb mode. Punxsutawney Phil has spoken, but with his poor track record I wouldn’t put much stock in his shadow-based prediction. I do know we could all use some sunny and mild weather this coming Spring. So let’s pray it’s in the works. Because Holy Week is at the tail end of March this year we will have only two Sunday adult forums for the month. First, we will continue our Bible study class on the New Testament with Dr. Bart Ehrman providing an illuminating lecture on the Gospel of Luke. Next, Geri Forbes, the newly minted CEO of Whidbey General Hospital, will provide an informative power point lecture on the state of our local hospital.

Specific forum dates, subject matter, and presenters or hosts are provided below:

6 March - Luke-Jesus, the Savior of the World. The third of the Synoptic Gospels, Luke, is similar to the others in that it too presents an account of Jesus’ spectacular words and deeds leading up to his crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem. Yet it, too, has a distinctive emphasis of its own. Luke does not stress that, as the Son of God, Jesus was misunderstood by all who came in contact with him, as in Mark. Nor does Luke emphasize that Jesus was a new Moses, bringing a new interpretation of the Law for his followers, who were to keep the Law even better than the scribes and Pharisees, as in Matthew. Instead, Luke emphasizes that Jesus was a Jewish prophet much like the prophets of old - he was born like a prophet, he preached like a prophet, he healed like a prophet, and he died like a prophet. As such, Jesus knows full well what is to happen to him and is in complete control of himself and his circumstances, up to his death. In Luke, we see an increased emphasis on the social aspects of Jesus’ message, with its requirements of compassion for the poor, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. Ted Brookes presents.

13 March - The State of Our Hospital. Geri Forbes, the new CEO of Whidbey General Hospital & Clinics, will provide comprehensive, eye-opening power point presentation on the current state of Whidbey General Hospital as well as the many new developments underway there. This presentation should hold considerable interest for and generate a host of questions by the congregation. Specifically, Geri will talk about the following items:
* Construction update on the new inpatient wing.

* New providers that have recently joined the Whidbey General medical staff.

* Population health, which refers to efforts to improve health outcomes for entire communities.

* Other late-breaking news from our healthcare system.

**Ted Brookes will host.**

**20 March - Palm Sunday.** No Sunday adult forum is scheduled.

**27 March - Easter Sunday.** No Sunday adult forum is scheduled.

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**Feijoada**

National Dish of Brazil

To order Valdo’s delicious, homemade feijoada contact:

**Evangivaldo Santana**
evangivaldosantana@hotmail.com
206-387-7715
A delightful teacher of the good news recently arrived at St. Augustine’s in the person of Candace Galik. We can all attest to this from the thought-provoking sermons she has already shared with us.

Candace loves being outdoors as much as possible to hike and garden. Her indoor hobbies include baking, and reading—mostly spiritual and religious books, but she also enjoys poetry and novels. She likes creative non-fiction writing and just this month joined us on the staff of The Light. In this latest capacity she relates her own story:

The story of how I arrived on Whidbey is proof that logic is greatly overrated. Coming from New York, I visited a friend in Phoenix. Seattle, I assumed, was nearby, as both are west of the Hudson River. I knew no one, but loved the climate (yes, really) and the coffee (again, really important) and all of those big trees. And strangers and acquaintances said the place for me to live was an island called Whidbey. It will feel like home for you, they said. It did -- sort of.

I wasn’t sure what was exactly missing until one day I knew. I had to return to church. As soon as I walked through the door of St. Augustine’s, I exhaled. Home, again, to a place of worship, of friendship, of laughter, of community. Of holiness. Unexpectedly, I find myself once more called to complete my process of Holy Orders, set aside during my husband’s illness and death and a work to which I never thought I could return. But the opportunity is here, and I feel deeply blessed.

How I arrived in the priestly process is additional proof that logic plays a far smaller role in my life than the grace of God. Previous roads I travelled, all filled with bumps and beauty, include those of archeologist, organic food advocate, journalist, wine writer, and competitive squash player (the game, not the vegetable).

Most of all, I give thanksgiving for all who are St. Augustine’s for their warmth and welcome, and making a home in this glorious place.
Some of the finest tails around: Pintail ducks on Swan Lake, Oak Harbor.
Hannah and Haley McConnaughey got up close and personal with the roots of this giant conifer that toppled in their yard during one of the winter storms of 2014.