



# Reflections

The Voices of St. Margaret's  
Volume III, No. 1  
Lent, 2012

**I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
(Isaiah 43:19)**

Dear People of St. Margaret's,

These well-known words from the Book of Isaiah seem to rise up from time to time in the life of St. Margaret's, and are appropriate words to capture the theme of this issue of Reflections – the idea of “emergence.” Emergence, simply put, is the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and when you put parts together, new things emerge that are not predictable from looking at their components. Emergence in the Bible and in science was the subject of the fourth in our “Stories of Creation” series during Epiphany.

William Brown, author of *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, helped us to see emergence in Second Isaiah with the Israelites in exile. The prophet conveys a message of hope that even when all seems lost, God is with them, creating and recreating, and “about to do a new thing.” As it happened, the theme of emergence came up for me a few days later when I participated in Bishop Steve's book group on Phyllis Tickle's book *The Great Emergence*, which takes a grand sweep of human history and sees us in a period of emergence socially, culturally, and spiritually.

As Paul's article inside shows, emergence is a recognized phenomenon in science. In the life of the church we might see it as the grace of the Holy Spirit doing a new thing, as we see from Sheila's article on the emergent church.

When we look around us we see new things happening that are birthed from the old, and bring new energy and vitality to our common life together. We are teaming up with the First Church UCC, the First Baptist Church and the Game Loft, together with the youth in our church, to develop a program we are calling “encounters,” for teens to explore what faith means for them, and to have a safe place to ask questions. Asking questions is the theme of this year's Lenten series Kate Winters and I are doing, using the program *Living the Questions*®, which explores faith in contemporary society. The Bay Area churches' Lenten luncheon series will be on the theme of “leaps of faith.”



And the churches together are strengthening our mission work in the community through our general assistance support, the food cupboard, ideas for a soap closet, and the soup kitchen, to name a few.

These are just a few of the many ways we are reaching out to the broader community and living into what it means to be a Christian today, in the changing, unpredictable, and sometimes frightening world we live in. History shows us we've been here before, and new life comes out of it. Community gives us companions to share our questions, our uncertainty, and our hope, and energizes us for action. And our faith reminds us that in this great adventure, God is bringing all things to God's good purposes.

## Two Lenten Offerings

The month of March in Maine seems like a particularly good time to gather with friends, share a meal and ponder life's deeper mysteries. This year Martha and Kate Winters (First Church, UCC) will once again be collaborating to facilitate a weekly adult ed where we explore what it means to be a Christian in today's world. This year the theme is "Living and Loving the Questions," using a program called "Living the Questions."®

LtQ is a series of DVD and web-based small group studies "aimed at helping people explore beyond the conventional theologies of traditional Christianity" and wrestle with basic questions that are often, frankly, avoided by the church. It does not offer a systematic theology, but rather is born out of the day-to-day conversations confronting local parishes that involve mysteries of faith and life. Some of the

contributors to LtQ include Marcus Borg, Walter Brueggemann, John Dominic Crossan, and John Selby Spong, to name just a few. As of this writing the curriculum had not been firmed up, but some possible topics include: "an invitation to journey"; "taking the Bible seriously but not literally"; "evil, suffering and the God of love"; "debunking the rapture," and "embracing mystery."

### "Living and Loving the Questions"

*Fridays, 5:30 – 7:30 pm*

Living and Loving the Questions meets **every Friday evening in March (five sessions), and like last year will begin at 5:30 with a shared bread and soup supper, followed by the program from 6 – 7:30.**

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Randy Curtis, Treasurer  
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#### VESTRY

Nan Cobbey  
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Amanda Littlefield, Senior Warden  
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Lou Pelletier, Junior Warden  
Sarah Tarpley  
Peter Taylor  
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### "Lenten Luncheon Series: Leaps of Faith"

*Wednesdays, noon–1 pm*

Take a break in the middle of the weekday and join the Greater Bay Area Ministerium for its "Lenten Luncheon Series" on **Wednesdays during Lent at the First Baptist Church.** This year the theme is "Leaps of Faith," and each of the presenting pastors will have their own particular take on what this means! **We gather promptly at 12 for a brown bag lunch, sing a song or two, have a presentation and discussion, and finish promptly at 1.** Presenting churches provide sweets to finish the meal.

As of this writing, some of the planned subtopics include "master and slave," "call stories in scripture and legend," "into the silence," and "dancing on thin ice." Sound interesting? Come and see! The dates for the Lenten luncheon series are February 29, and March 7, 14, 21 and 28.



## Meditation: The Benefits of a Contemplative Life

The focus of scientific interest is at present the brain. This creates the availability of abundant research funding, and in turn considerable press, some very sensational in nature. The result of this publicity has been a surge in interest and the desire to be involved with this new venture. An easy low-cost introduction is through the simple act of personal meditation.

During my time in college, I stumbled onto and practiced, with moderate success, self-hypnosis, a form of meditation minus the New Age connotations. I became able to improve my concentration by blocking ambient distractions, improve sleep efficiency and decrease required sleep hours. This was indeed helpful during school and postgraduate training. My active professional and academic career was fueled by endorphins generated by frenetic activity, and I forgot about meditation until moving to Maine in 2000, where I downshifted to a less kinetic lifestyle. Here I was introduced to the practice of centering prayer by the Rev. Kent Tarpley, and this I practiced in a rather dilatory manner for two years. I found I could empty my mind – not a big step from what I did in college – but I was not able to construct on the blank canvas of my mind new constructs, nor was I able to peruse new insights.

Late in 2011 I read *Beyond Religion* by the Dalai Lama, in which I found a section on meditation and the benefits possible. It stated that directed meditation was possible, but the nuts and bolts required were not obvious to me. Nevertheless, the book further flamed my interest. I next pur-

chased some CDs from the Silva Life System self-help series, which outlined meditation methods, approaches and programs which I found useful as an introduction. Less appreciated was the encouragement to purchase a seemingly endless amount of “helpful” material.

In January I joined the meditation group at St. Margaret's led by Martha and the Rev. Bonnie Versboncoeur, a Buddhist monk, and attended a workshop led by Bonnie at the New Forrest Institute. All this was at first a bit New Age for me, but I am beginning to get the picture. I can again relax more fully, quickly return to sleep if wakened, cat nap effectively and wake



after a short rest period with early-morning energy. In addition, I now understand that meditation as practiced by aesthetes such as the Dalai Lama is not goal-oriented, but rather encourages the empty mind to live in the “now.” Here we can sense our uniqueness and also form closer associations with individuals already near to us. Then, extending out from this center, like the ripples formed by a stone dropped on still water, we include progressively all of humanity, the collective unconscious and on until the entirety of God's creation becomes part of our “now,” and we part of it.

As a neophyte, my circle of closeness is quite constrained, but I see this as a work in progress, and I am content to replace the endorphin high of younger years with a sense of peace, relaxation and the potential for continued growth. I also feel this is an opportunity to become involved with

–cont. on p. 7

## Anglimergent . . . Discerning the Path Forward

Jesus said, "Every religious scholar who has become a student of the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who can bring from the storeroom both the new and the old." (*The Inclusive Bible*, Matthew 13:52) You do not need to be a religious scholar to know that the church is ever in need of renewal.

In our lifetimes, the world around us, the cultures in which we live and contribute, even our beliefs and understandings are in great flux. Where all this will lead we cannot know until after we arrive. In the midst of all this upheaval, those of us in the Episcopal Church are all too aware of declining membership, living in a culture that no longer is overwhelmingly Christian. There is sense of loss, confusion, deep questioning about "why persist in following Jesus?" There are also "students of the kingdom of heaven," described by Jesus in Matthew, who search carefully through the storehouse of traditions and of new possibilities to bring forth what is needed for our day. All who question and who seek and who already practice following Jesus have an opportunity to participate in prayerfully discerning the way forward. The storehouse is abundant, and we are in need of this abundance in discerning God's call forward for us and our world.

"Fresh Expressions" is the term used in the Church of England for such bringing forth from the storehouse the old and the new in seeking the way forward in faithfulness. In the United States the word "Emergence" or "Emerging" is the expression. There is an informative web page called Anglimergent [<http://www.anglimergent.org/>].

I was delighted to hear Rev. Karen Ward speak in January about her work with

Church of the Apostles in Seattle. She is an Episcopal priest who founded this church and is now developing a "pop-up church" (i.e., has no fixed address, meets in various places) in Oregon. She also keeps the Anglimergent web page. Church of the Apostles renovated an old abandoned church and opened it as the Abby Art Center. The center is home and space for many arts groups:

music, dance, yoga for all ages. It is also worship space and chapel for the church community in a neighborhood where there are young artists and lots of young people

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with no prior experience of church.

The faith community is continuous with the many groups who just come for the arts practice and performance space. The faith community is formed in an explicit rule of life, drawn from the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible. They work out their life together with reference to this rule. Among the ongoing activities are discernment groups; anyone can join in to address questions such as "Should I go to school?" or "Who am I?" or "How can I cope with caring for an aging parent?" Worship follows the forms of the Book of Common Prayer, with adaptations in music and structure in response to the lives, needs, and cultures of the members.

I find "Anglimergent" a helpful word to address Bishop Lane's challenge to us in Maine to attend to the calling of the Holy Spirit to find a way forward into a world that has profoundly changed and is still changing.

And what is pop-up church? Feel free to ask me. Do you have ideas about "Anglimergence?" I would love to hear them.

 Sheila Seekins

"The universe is either a confusion and a dispersion, or it is unity, order and providence."  
 –Marcus Aurelius

"The Big Bang, the formation of stars and planets, the origin and evolution of life on this planet, the advent of human consciousness and the resultant evolution of cultures – this is the story, the one story, that has the potential to unite us, because it happens to be true."  
 –Ursula Goodenough

## Theories of Everything?

During this winter's adult education block, we have been concerned with Biblical narratives mirrored in contemporary science, each revealing wonder in creation – not only all creation, but all ongoing creation. Perhaps Marcus Aurelius' lament stemmed from an inability to grasp the ongoing part. Even up till modern times, received wisdom guided perceptions of the universe – infinite, eternal, and a done deal. Western science in particular has had spectacular success in studying the universe as-is, "deconstructing" it into its individual parts, to "see how it works". This is the reductionist method, so fruitful, and manifest in all technological advances ever since human forebears adopted tool-making as a way of life, or "niche".

As the word itself implies, reductionism works by looking backward from some finished whole into its constituent parts, into its hierarchically-ordered "mechanisms." Chemical compounds are deconstructed into elements and chemical formulas; these tell you what needs to be in the tool kit, if not necessarily the assembly instructions. In turn, the very elements may be deconstructed, ultimately, into rearranged multiples of the most abundant element in the universe (hydrogen), forged into larger blocks in the furnaces of



the stars themselves, then dispersed back out into the universe in the explosions that mark stellar death – the novas and supernovas. In our time, the atom in turn has been deconstructed into the baffling array of wave-particle dualities we learn from quantum theory. ("If I could remember the names of all these particles, I'd be a botanist." – Enrico Fermi)

Nature, at least in part, may be analyzed in reverse, but it unfolds in the forward direction, upwards into ever greater complexity, or emergence, the flip side of reduction. Conceptual appreciation of emergence is a philosophical foundation of contemporary science, from quanta to cosmos, and we are likely to hear it expounded more and more over time.

Consider the following. Take the chemical formula for water: H<sub>2</sub>O: if you knew everything there was to know about hydrogen, and everything about oxygen, could you then predict water, and its properties – as we know them – from their combination? The answer, of course, is No. Similarly, combining sodium and chlorine into NaCl yields common table salt – it has benign properties, fundamental to life, utterly unexpected, given the "toxic" properties of its parent elements. Thus, water and salt both share the characteristic features of emer-

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gent dynamics – interacting in accord with well-established, “deterministic” physical laws, but generating unpredictable and novel properties and behaviors along the way.

Going further up the evolutionary ladder: Salty water, the “primordial soup”, a chemical matrix for accreting other minerals and organic material (“organic” = carbon-based), leading to self-perpetuating, -organizing, and -replicating organic crystals. Membranes form – thin films that separate fluids, selective barriers that allow some particles to pass through, but not others. Membranes pinch off, isolating the material within from that without, the minimal set of components to form candidate proto-cells: unpredictable and novel – emergent. Undoubtedly, false starts and failures are far more numerous than “successes”, but once success emerges, it perpetuates, grows more complex; and when it acquires capacity for information-transfer (a “genome”), it crosses over into Life, a most astounding emergence – matched only by the emergence of consciousness.

Life from non-life burst exuberantly into all the past and present forms of Creation, each step emerging in complexity, diversity, and novelty from that which came before – single-celled life, then multicellular life, down to Archaeae, plants, and animals, including ourselves. In this brief essay, important intermediate detail (reductionist!) is of course omitted, but the one key idea is that at each level (in Ursula Goodenough’s words), “something else” emerges from “nothing but”. But “something else” conserves that which came before – once Nature invents a wheel, it is retained. Think DNA. Consider for example, the physical appearance of human embryos during gestation – we all looked like fish or frogs before we looked like babies; this gen-

eral observation is captured in the phrase “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”.

A caveat: even though emergence (or evolution) has directionality, it lacks a destination; bottom-up, not top-down, orderly but not mechanical, deterministic but not predictable. Survival and perpetuation is contingent upon adaptation, the difference between what survives and what survives not. This was Darwin’s main insight, and misunderstanding of this humble and profound insight has led to misguided and destructive concepts like “nature red in tooth and claw”, “social Darwinism”, and environmental exploitation.

We are not alone in the tool-maker’s niche. Some birds, other primates, and even ants have their local versions of tools, but, so far at least, we alone excel in their use, devising increasingly novel ones. Nor are we unique in possessing social and moral sensibilities. Many of these have been passed up to us from those “below”: imitation,

teaching, and learning; planning and cooperative behaviors (including conducting warfare); empathic behaviors; sense of fairness; altruism; reciprocity; competition; retribution – all are emergent, hard-wired into our genomes, and should remind us of our continuity with the rest of a co-equal creation.

Herein may be the resolution of Marcus Aurelius’ dilemma. Lacking destination, the universe does not slip into confusion and dispersion, because it is emerging, but never arriving, hence never really complete. Our awareness, our consciousness of this positions us squarely in the swirl of ongoing creation, and we share in that emergence along with every other blessed thing! We belong! Mere metaphysics? Hardly. That understanding, that awe and wonder cannot ever be “mere”.

 Paul Mazur



*Spiral galaxy, from Hubble telescope.*

*Meditation, cont. from p. 3*

emergent studies regarding how and where information is stored in the brain grey matter and how to obtain stored memory from areas that don't have pre-patterned access routes. New approaches hopefully will allow us to experience memory that goes on to include our collective unconscious.

Computer brain interfaces are now used routinely to restore hearing and experimentally for vision recovery. I am intrigued by the possibility of an implanted terminal that would allow brain memory downloads onto a computer disc, or allow an upload to

the brain of, for instance, Wikipedia. This would allow the brain to integrate memory with information transmitted by a computer. Also intriguing is the possibility of combining meditation and aerobic exercise. An hour of each is recommended daily. Perhaps I am not as mellow as I could be, but there is so much to do and so little time for us to explore, become at one with, conserve and appreciate this creation that God has chosen to share with us, that a little time conservation seems a good thing.


 John Gregory

## *St. Margaret's on the Move*

**S**t. Margaret's thrives as a community when parishioners are connected and involved. Relationships and service bring us closer together, provide opportunities to explore our faith, and allow us to respond to the needs of others. What does this look like?

- Dozens of parishioners, guests and visitors gather for Saturday evenings full of conversation and potluck offerings from around the world.
- Children serve at the altar as acolytes.
- St. Margaret's takes the lead coordinating relief activities for the Greater Bay Area Ministerium.
- Robust education programs led by lay leaders, Martha and Margaret working together are offered for all ages.
- A series of conversations on the meaning of mission engages the Outreach committee and vestry members.
- Parish support for community service organizations such as the Food Cupboard increases.
- Award-winning communications keep us informed and help to attract newcomers.
- Fun and fulfilling fellowship thrives through the Women's and Men's groups.
- A fund-raiser and friend-raiser at last summer's Belfast street fair brings calls for another.
- New finance, budget, and buildings and grounds committees help the vestry steward the church's financial resources and physical plant.
- Many volunteers come together to serve on committees, host coffee hours, and participate in fall clean-ups.

This impressive list doesn't encompass all that we did in 2011. But it illustrates how our church community is emerging in exciting ways through new ideas, new awareness, and new energy. And there is always room for more! Let's take stock of the wonderful place that is St. Margaret's and continue to be creative, expressive, and committed in how we actively support the mission that brings us together.

 Peter Taylor

# Holy Week & Easter Schedule of Services

## April 1: Palm/Passion Sunday

9 a.m. Single Service, Liturgy of the Palms with Reading of the Passion and Holy Eucharist

## Morning Prayer: Every morning of Holy Week, April 2 – 7

8 – 8:20 a.m. Gather in the Parish Library for reading, meditation and prayer

## Wednesday, April 4

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Healing Service

## Thursday, April 5 – Maundy Thursday

6 p.m. Agape Meal, followed by Maundy Thursday service and Stripping of the Altar

## Good Friday, April 6

12:15 Good Friday liturgy – Stations of the Cross

6 p.m. Greater Bay Area Ministerium Taize Service, St. Francis, Belfast

## Holy Saturday, April 7 – Easter Vigil

6 p.m. Vigil service at St. Margaret's, shared with St. Thomas', Camden, St. Peter's, Rockland and St. John the Baptist, Thomaston

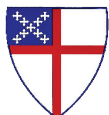
## April 8, Easter Sunday

6 a.m. Easter Sunrise Ecumenical Service, Belfast Boat House

8 a.m. Festive Holy Eucharist

&

10:15 a.m. Festive Holy Eucharist



## St. Margaret's Episcopal Church

95 Court Street  
Belfast, Maine 04915

### St. Margaret's Episcopal Church

#### WORSHIP SERVICES

Sundays	8 a.m. & 10:15 a.m. Eucharist
Tuesdays	5:30 p.m. Evening Prayer
Wednesdays	9 a.m. Eucharist and Healing Service
Saturdays	5 p.m. Contemporary Service with Eucharist

#### OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.-noon.