

#14 ANSWERING THE CALL: 150 years and counting...

150 years ago, Nativity was born to answer the call for an Episcopal presence in the 19th century RAG TOWN called Lewiston, Idaho. One hundred years later our priest, Gretchen M. Rehberg, was born-- a cradle Episcopalian. From the beginning, she knew she would answer the "call" to be a priest, but first, she had to fill her plate with life experience. Many references to Gretchen M. Rehberg in Google attest to the beginning of that life experience. Check it out—be sure there is an "M." as middle initial.

Growing up on the rural Palouse, one day Gretchen and her father were tearing the shingles off a barn. Gretchen expressed fear in the endeavor. "Deal with it," her father instructed. That model served her well, when later she was an EMT, a fire-fighter, and in triage during the 9-11 crisis at the World Trade Center.

Life experience included getting doctorates in chemistry—and theology, teaching at Bucknell University, living and teaching abroad, serving in New York and finally answering the call to come to Lewiston—a latter-day Rag Town that was in need of some "dealing with it"—and there has been a lot to deal with!

The last ten years, under Gretchen's passion for Christian formation and teaching, she had led the parish to encounter God in worship and in community service. She has experienced a life-threatening wound to her breath, but not to her spirit. Today Nativity offers two Sunday morning services, one Wednesday morning and often Compline service. Nativity feeds body, mind and spirit, Salvation Army lunches, Snake River Clinic (where Gretchen sits on the Board,) six or seven days a month distributes Idaho Food Pantry to area people. Nativity works with Family Promise, planning for housing the homeless, and feeding over 60 persons at each Saturday Supper, twice a month. Nativity hosts Lenten noon luncheon and study for the community prior to Easter. Gretchen leads a regular Tuesday evening supper and video discussion. Nativity hosts an ecumenical Tuesday Book Study group, knitting on Thursday, Bible study and Sunday book study and has excellent musical events and choir, as well as an occasional afternoon of movies and popcorn!

Nativity's face to the world is open, loving, and caring—all are welcome in this place. We come in to study, pray, worship, meditate, walk the Labyrinth, drink coffee and sometimes horse around. We celebrate the three legs of the Episcopal Church and our Christian roots: Roman Catholicism, our heritage from the Protestant Reformation and yes, the Celtic connectedness to creation. We seek deep relationship to all life; one doesn't have to go to a different religion to find God, the Episcopal Church celebrates all paths to God. The liturgy literally feeds body, mind and spirit—every Sunday we take in Christ, share the bread and the wine to experience at-one-ness, atonement. We practice in-reach as well as out-reach—with intentionality.

We are all members of the body of Christ, sometimes fearing, sometimes serving, sometimes receiving. The parish, as well as our beloved priest, becomes pallet carriers; and sometimes we accept that we are being carried on the pallet. As in Luke: *"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus."*--Luke 5: 19 KJV

So as this last month of our 150 years of celebration closes with lights, music and the incarnation of Jesus in the manger – under a Christmas tree, we hear the words of the angels: *"On the night of the Lord's birth, when the angel appeared to the shepherds, they were "sore afraid." And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11 KJV "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."* Isaiah 41:10. KJV

We celebrate yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And here's to the next 150 years and to our beloved priest, Gretchen and her ten years and counting...



Dr. Dr. Gretchen M. Rehberg
and Lena



Episcopal
Church of the Nativity
150 Years in Lewiston
2015

--Deloris Jungert Davisson and Margaret Cole 2015