

1st Sunday of Advent 2024

HOPE

Shared Moment of Awe and Wonder



Sunday, 10 AM Worship
St. Paul Lutheran Church
1123 Washington St.
Gloucester, MA 01939
www.stpaulcapeann.org

Wonders in Creation

**“The heavens keep telling the wonders of God
and the skies declare what He has done.” - Psalm 19:1-4**

Moments of wonder in my life began as they did with many of us, when I was a very young child. I had questions about things as how do birds fly, how do we get a voice through the radio, how far away the stars? Fortunately, I had a reliable ‘go-to’ person in my Daddy. When I joined him at his basement work bench, he would draw the old tall wooden stool closer to the edge of his working area where I could sit, watch, wonder and ask. His response to my, ‘why is the sky blue?’ question, however is the one I remember vividly as it was very scientific and surprised me with the amount to of knowledge my Daddy had. In those precious days at his work bench I also learned how to fix things, with Daddy often reminding me to ‘always think if there’s a better way’.

When I was 10, I visited a working artist in our neighborhood, who had traditional oil paintings of New England scenes hung on his walls. Upon entering his house I was so struck by the beauty of the painting of a country snow scene over the fireplace mantel that my feet felt glued to the floor. The wonder and awe of that introduction to landscape painting remained a pivotal moment in my desire to be an artist.

Observing nature closely enriches our lives and is a rewarding life experience becoming a full-time professional artist requires diligent study and practice. The art of observation is vital – to wonder at intricacies – in light and shade, changing light and color, shapes of objects, mixing colors, atmosphere, perspective.

Nature’s beauty itself incites an atmosphere of spirit and wonder. I have become aware of the awesome presence of God at times. To quote one observer “The hills are mute but how they speak of God!” (attributed to poet Charles Hanson Towne. When I was a plein air painter, I sensed His presence in the ‘rustling grass’ as in the hymn, “My Father’s World”. On each blank canvas I painted the capital letter “**TGBTG**” (TO GOD BE THE GLORY” – borrowed from JS.Bach – acknowledging our Great Creator).

As time moves on, I believe the Lord now shifts my attention to every day shared experiences with others. Does someone need a smile, a prayer, a hug, an offer of help? It is a rewarding practice. It is a way to find a path that moves away from the routine and open eyes of wonder.

So much to wonder at and about as we move in the Advent Season, anticipating blessed Christmas Day. Let the Christmas carol “Joy to the World” remind us of the “Wonders and Wonders of His love.” God bless us all, every one.

Be everywhere you are. Smile in the grocery store. It could be contagious.

- Dorothy J Stoffa, Dec. 1, 2024