

St. Columba's Episcopal Church
December 25, 2022 – Christmas Day
John 1:1-14
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

“In the beginning” – the first words of the first book of the Bible. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In the beginning – the first words of the Gospel according to John. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Who was this Word? “The Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.”

Our minds and our imaginations are inadequate to comprehend this beginning – creation out of nothing by God, through the only Son of God. We see only tiny fragments of creation – the mountains, the ocean, the stars, the plants and animals of our planet, ourselves. If we look with eyes not blinded by over-familiarity, we recognize that even these tiny fragments of what God has created are immensely beyond our comprehension. And what of God's creation that we are not familiar with – worlds other than ours, angels and archangels and the host of heaven? All far too much for us to even imagine, much less comprehend!

And so, out of God's infinite love for us – in the words of the Nicene Creed – “for us and for our salvation [God's Son] came down from heaven ... and was made man.” At Christmas we honor this new beginning – the birth of a baby, Jesus. God's very self made small enough for us to gaze upon, to hold, to care for. Now, through the love we feel for the Holy Child, we can begin to understand God's love. This was a new beginning unlike any other new beginnings in God's good creation – the beginning of the life of the Savior of the world.

The Holy Child grew to be a man, and by knowing this man human beings have learned and may still learn about God the Father and God's Way of Love. We can learn through Jesus' teaching, his ministry, his prayer, his death. If we consent to follow him, he will lead us on the path of self-giving love which he showed us in his life.

The new beginning of Jesus' birth was by no means the last of God's new beginnings. God raised Christ from the dead, to a new life more full of life than life had ever been. And the risen Lord gave his followers – and gives them still – a new gift, his first gift – the Holy Spirit.

Early in his Gospel (3:1-5) John reports an encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. Nicodemus recognized that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above, [without being born anew].” Startled, Nicodemus asks, “How can anyone be born after having grown old?” Jesus explains that a person who wants to enter the kingdom of God must be born anew of the Holy Spirit. John tells us that if we receive Christ, God's Son, God will give us the gift of becoming God's children through the power of the Spirit.

Today as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the new beginning this birth meant for the entire human family, let us pause for a few moments to appreciate all the new beginnings God has already worked, the new beginnings God is working now, and the new beginnings we believe God will work in the future. And let us pray that we will be open to God's call to new life in the Spirit and to whatever new beginning God wills to bring to our lives, today and in all the days God gives us. In the name of the Holy One of God. Amen.