

ATTERIDGEVILLE

TIMES

| VOL. 3 | DECEMBER 2018 – JANUARY 2019 |



HOLY DAYS

Advent: The Coming of Christ. Christmas: The Birth of Christ. Epiphany: The Revelation of Christ to all Nations.

There are many Holy Days that fall under the mantle of the year-end holidays in the Christian tradition. There are different names, many meanings, and a multitude of traditions for each one. I kept getting stuck this year, though, on how to celebrate a Holy Day when it doesn't feel holy.

Holiness is not something I really thought about for most of my life. I felt that certain places or things or times were holy in some immutable way, and there was no questioning beyond that. The lookout from the chapel at Mar-Lu Ridge, waves crashing endlessly at the beach, the smooth white grave marker of my grandmother in Arlington National Cemetery. Quiet nights when you can hear the soft patter of rain and smell the damp breeze, sitting with a purring cat reading a good book, singing with my mom and grandmother beside me in church. Holiness was a sense of rightness, a knowing that God was moving in the world in the here and now.

HOW DO YOU SAY IT IN ATTERIDGEVILLE?

Aketse – I don't know (I

say this one a lot)

Rapela – To pray

Bana – Children

Kereke - Church

MUSIC

Eyes Wide Open by
Gotye

Iscariot by Walk the
Moon

Nina Cried Power by
Hozier ft. Mavis Staples

BOOKS

Just Finished

Freedom is a Constant
Struggle by Angela Y. Davis
Pastrix by Nadia Bolz-Weber

Reading

Things Fall Apart by Chinua
Achebe

Americanah by Ngozi Adichie
Up Next

Good Morning, Mr. Mandela
by Zelda la Grange
Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi

When I got to college, a lot of things changed for me, one of the most important being that I was forced to confront these conceptions I held of holiness. As I've grown, it becomes harder and harder to believe in that sense of rightness. It becomes harder to see how God is moving in the here and now, when what most often gets my attention is the hurt and pain of my life and the world. How do I understand holiness, much less the Holy Days of my faith, when it has become a dry concept, not an experience of reverence, of acknowledging the Divine and unknowable God?

When I was in Jerusalem and Occupied Palestine last January, I got the chance to see a lot of what Pastor Ray Ranker (former YAGM and my campus pastor) likes to call "dead stones". They tend to be places of historical or biblical importance, where people have often erected monuments (often in the form of buildings or monuments). I struggled with reconciling the importance of each place with what felt like its forced holiness; gilt covered ceilings, plaques, and crowds of pilgrims and tourists didn't evoke much in the way of reverence or make me feel like I was walking on hallowed ground.

Those experiences were part of the realization that I have been on a path of questioning much longer than I had known. While I still believe that Mar-Lu, the beach, my grandmother's grave, and the rest are places and times of holiness, God has broken into my life over and over to say "Look again" and pushed my arrogantly drawn lines around what is holy and what is not.

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the ground on which you are standing is holy ground." *Exodus 3:1-5 NRSV*

Part of my struggle this year was certainly being away from my family. My memories and traditions around Christmas especially are inextricably entwined with the love and relationships I have with them. Being apart from those things meant both feeling lost in a different culture and feeling at home with a new family and new memories.

The picture at the opening of this newsletter is from the New Year's Eve church service I attended. A normal New Year's Eve for me generally includes family, friends, celebration, maybe some bowling, but never church. This time my New Year began with the sound of prayers lifted in fervent whispers, the sight of candles flickering before hopeful faces, the taste of bread and wine, and a feeling of holiness when I least expected it.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN 2019?

Many new ventures have already begun for me in 2019, and I want to share with you what some of them are!

I've started working with the creche at the Diaconate Center. (Creche is like preschool- ours has ages 1-5!). While I will still work with bakoko in the Mar Khosa Senior Citizens Club on Mondays singing and teaching with the choir, most of my week is spent in the main office or down in the classrooms. I help with administrative tasks like planning out the year's curriculum, typing meeting agendas and minutes, as well as helping the teachers with any odd jobs and occasionally watching a class. Let me tell you, I have undying and unlimited respect for all teachers who work with young kids- I have no idea how they have enough energy and patience



Rudzani, one of the creche teachers, and I making our best model faces!

and I would like to personally thank all of my preschool and kindergarten teachers from the bottom of my heart for not running out the door.

I also have started to reboot (ha ha, oh puns) the Computer Center! The center has been closed for a few months now from a combination of no internet and dwindling student numbers for the typing classes that were being held. Right now I'm working on testing all the equipment and wires (a hot and dusty job) and getting the modem working so we can use the internet. In the near future I will hopefully be teaching classes on general computer skills; typing, resume writing, using word processors, etc. I'm looking forward to passing on some of the knowledge my mom imparted to me in elementary school as the computer lab teacher.

More puns ahead- I will soon be tooting my own horn by taking up again my old passion of trumpet playing. Never mention playing an instrument in 5th grade near Koko Joyce or she *will* recruit you to join the brass band! Please pray for the return of any and all trumpet playing abilities I once had. My hopes right now are to get through Hot Cross Buns in the right key.

YOUTH MINISTRY AT JM MASIPA CONGREGATION

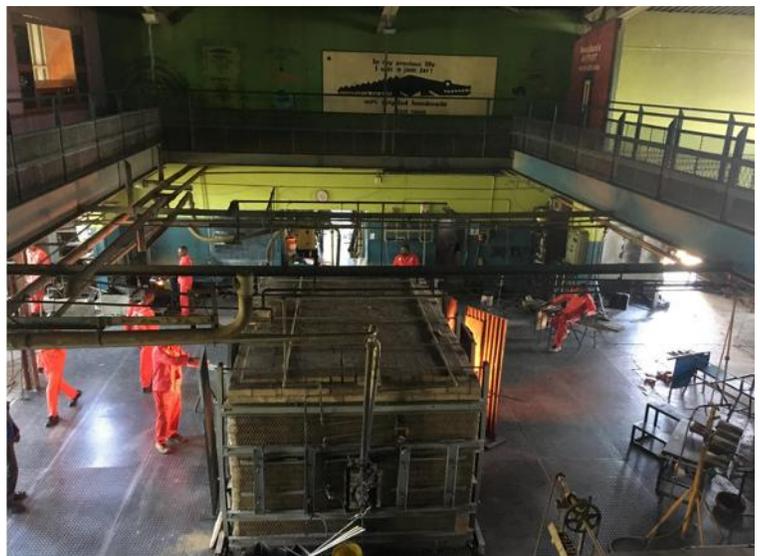


SANCTUARY IN SWAZILAND

I'm a sucker for alliteration, so don't take the title too seriously; I wasn't running away from Atteridgeville so much as running towards the opportunity to see the rest of my cohort for the first time in three months. South Africa can get pretty lonesome when you are the only YAGM in the cou I'm a sucker for alliteration, so don't take the title too seriously; I wasn't running away from Atteridgeville so much as running towards the opportunity to see the rest of my cohort for the first time in three months. South Africa can get pretty lonesome when you are the only YAGM in the country (shout-out to Deja, the other YAGM sticking it out in Uruguay!) Retreat is a time like no other, and they say a picture is worth a thousand words, so I'll try and show instead of tell what it was like!



Apple pie (I can't believe I made it either!) using Mom's recipe



Glassmaking at Ngwenya Glass- they only use recycled materials!



Candles from Swazi Candles on our last night of retreat

MLILWANE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



Baby Animals, Pt. 1



Baby Animals, Pt. 2



Log or crocodile?



Sadly, no hippos were spotted.



Insert Lion King Joke here



Family Photos

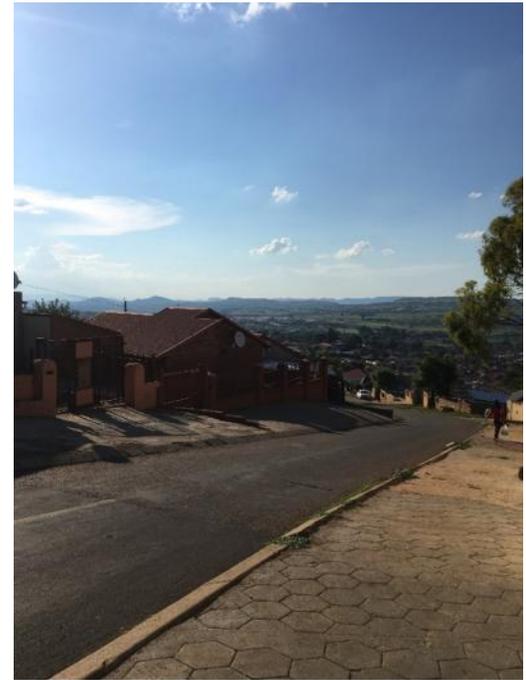


ADVENTURES IN ATTERIDGEVILLE

The best Christmas present, a video chat with the family!



Some of the letters I've gotten in the past few weeks. Yes, they are always bent!



Want to hear more about the books I'm reading or the songs I'm listening to? Want to hear more stories from my time in Atteridgeville, or just want to chat?

Send me an email at toriyagmsa@gmail.com or drop by my blog at www.toriinsouthafrica.wordpress.com. You can sign up for updates for my blog or let me know if you want to get these newsletters when they come out!



May the Peace of Christ Go With You

-Tori-

