



Journal

December 2008



STARCROSS COMMUNITY

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To answer the requests for more communication from Starcross, without increasing expense, these e-JOURNALS will be sent (hopefully!) in between the quarterly newsletter, SHARINGS, mailed to all on our mailing list.



OLIVE HARVEST. This time of year should be called “Olive Time and Related Events.” Does that sound pretty secular and commercial? Well for us the time in partnership with the olives is pretty spiritual. We have the same feelings as those living with olives have shared for centuries. The weather was great. We were pressing an hour after we had picked, which really adds to the flavor. On the last day friends arrived to pick and celebrate the harvest. This year we were able to add the unique spice of Taggiasca olives to our Tuscan Blend. The results are remarkable. “Taggies”, as we call them, were

brought by monks from the “Holy Land” to the Italian Riviera in 1200 AD. Our trees at Starcross are just maturing. Picking is slow, as we pick by hand, but it is worth it.

The oil will slumber peacefully for 2-3 months and then we can bottle and offer it to you. We will have a very small quantity of Olio Nuovo (new oil) offered at our Christmas Faire. John Ash, a local chef of renown, says it is like a teen-aged oil — “in your face.” To those who know how to use it this new oil is prized.



WREATHS AND FRUITS. Within 24 hours after the last drop of oil came forth we had rearranged the barn for the wreaths! The first shipments will go out December 1. As usual they go out with special thoughts to names we recognize. Sister Marti makes all the labels and Sister Julie puts them all on.

This year the orders are down. It is right that we share the economic troubles of our friends. We are all going to get through these times —as long as we stick together.



We will be taking orders for wreaths, fruits, books, and a very limited supply of seasoned olive oil through Thursday, December 18th. As the month wears on mails can be slow and it is safer to call in your order at 1-800-960-1500 or order on line at www.starcross.org. Just click that link, listen to David play Bach, and enter on the home page where Holiday Gifts are displayed.

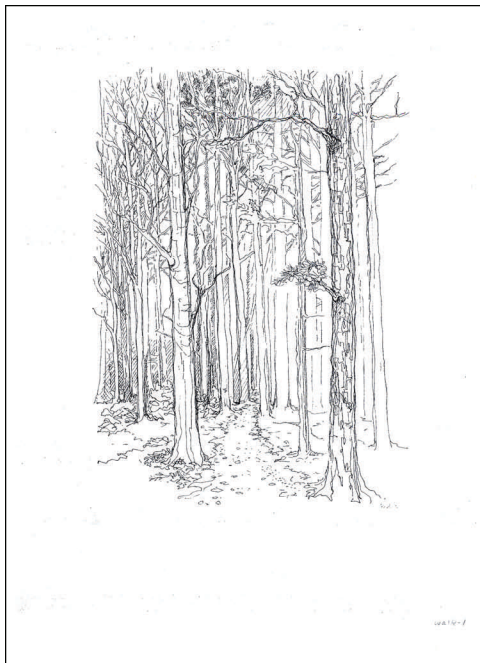
OUR DAVID AND HARVARD MEDICAL COMMUNITY MAKE MUSIC!

Speaking of David he has a special concert coming up (Feb. 28) in Boston's famed Jordan Hall with the Longwood Symphony Orchestra which is promoted by Harvard (some faculty are actually in the orchestra) with the proceeds going to support the medically underserved community, in this case ALS Therapy. After David was invited they were delighted to learn, and have been advertising, his long time involvement with music as an instrument of healing. In addition to his activities in the AIDS pandemic, David has performed for Doctors without Borders and others. These concerts are always sold out affairs so if you are in a position to come better buy tickets now <http://longwoodsymphony.tix.com/Event.asp?Event=153936>.



STARCROSS CHRISTMAS FAIRE.

There was much more interest than we had thought in our first Faire and Open House. Folks came from around Northern California. Our Holly, a Culinary Arts major, at Johnson & Wales University in Denver was home on break and ran the show. She was helped by good Friends; Sandra Bodley, Nancy Mangam, Sue Moeckel, and Monica Schwalbenberg-Pena. It was good to see the old Farm House so active again. My job was guide for the tours and there was much interest. There were over 250 people. I think this will be an annual event.



A WALK THROUGH ADVENT. It is pretty sad when an author gets excited by reading one of his own books! But *A Winter Walk* is made up of so many experiences and traditions that I really do use it as a guide through one of the potentially most nourishing seasons of the year.

Lets us look at the first 7 days of December. The Christian communities focus on the beginning of a new era. The Jewish psalms used are all ones of hope. How does that work in our daily lives?

Day 1. It begins with awareness that there is more to December than checking off items on a list. For me it often has to do with *Leaves*, falling leaves and memories of former times. *Day 2.* We need to keep things *Plain and Simple*. The Quakers can teach us much about how to do that. As my friend Emily's grandmother would put it "Friend, perhaps thee has too many cumbrances." The priority should be not on things but on relationships. We must make time to sit with those we love — God is in that circle somewhere. *Day 3.* It helps to feel at home in the universe and nothing helps us more than the *Stars*. It is wondrous outside. Our soul expands on a walk under the stars. *Day 4.* Most of us grew up with the Christian

or Jewish approach to Christmas or Chanukah. But many other spiritual communities have crafted rich traditions that expand our awareness of our existence and the sacred spark we each enshrine. This is a time to transcend any barriers between us. *Day 5.* Europe is in a post-Christian era, parts of the US are there also. What does a free-thinking person do to share the nourishing aspects of the Advent practices of Grandparents. We all can put aside our beliefs and non-beliefs and come together around an *Advent Wreath*. It means something different to each of us but we can unite in sharing our life together. *Day 6.* I am a nut for *St. Nicholas Day* and urge the practice of putting how we feel about those we love into writing. I start a letter on the 6th and give it on Christmas Eve. *Day 7.* There have been a lot of requests to reprint *Slow Time*, the story of sitting on my aunt's porch every night when I was seven waiting for a lily to bloom. I hated it! But I did learn that, like a musical composition, Advent must have different movements and it is necessary to have slow times, *adagio*, if we are to find the divine within the darkness.

Well, enough of that. The point is at this time of year we cannot be controlled by the television or even the pulpit. We must individually work at what we want from the season. The rewards are rich.

FROM COLD AMERICA TO EQUATORIAL AFRICA. Sister Julie leaves in January to check on our AIDS orphans program (Starcross Kin Worldwide) in Uganda and to help each of our 100 ki9ds move toward a bright future.

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I can't end without saying how important our environment, our "sacred space", is to keeping us on track at this hectic but special time of year.

Near the chapel is a persimmon tree. The leaves have dropped but reddish-gold fruit hangs from the bare branches. Ours is an Asian persimmon whose ancestors took centuries to reach California. American cousins of our tree could be found everywhere East of the Mississippi. When pioneers moved West they brought with them a love of persimmon pudding - a fondness our family shares. From time-to-time someone of us goes to this bright spot in our grey landscape

and returns with a basket of orange-red fruit. Soon the smell of old-fashioned pudding fills the air. It is not much to look at, brown and simple, but it is a most authentic dessert. In the evening we take pleasure in sitting before the fire nestling our bowls of warm pudding. And, outside there is the moon shining through the bare limbs of familiar trees. If we listen we may even hear the sound of a few late-traveling geese.

In so many ways, you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Your brother,

Toby

From Sister Marti: *If you would like to make a contribution on-line click here, and thank you.*
<https://secure.pon.net/referral/area/donate.htm>

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