



Journal

September 2009



**STARCROSS
COMMUNITY**

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FINDING THE BALANCE WHILE PICKING APPLES

Here at Starcross apples and then pears provide the sights and smells of September. John Updike once wrote:

The breezes taste of apple peel. / The air is full of smells to feel.

That is how it is here. In the morning there is the smell of apple butter that has cooked through the night. All day there is the saucing and canning. Finally, there is the cidering in the barn. And then we turn to storing pears for the winter. It is a lovely tempo.

Even with the bucolic environment around me I feel an uneasiness about this month. I suppose it has to do with 9/11/2001 — what happened to those who suffered that day and what has happened to us all since. It is easy to hurt ourselves as we strive to protect ourselves. In September 2008 the irresponsibility of financial barons brought about the economic melt-down and with it the dreams of countless responsible people. A year later we have millions unemployed. This month many who planned on college are not going. I seem to focus on the shattered plans of those young people a lot.

So is it any wonder when picking the apples I ask myself, “What’s next?” People I respect have very different options about the present war in Afghanistan. Where are we headed as the casualties mount? Many friends are passionate about crafting a better health-care system. They are all good people. Some want a single-payer plan, others have little faith in bureaucracy’s efficiency or compassion. And that is only one of many health-care issues that have to be resolved. Yet I think we all want decent health-care for everyone. I feel it is important to find common ground and not encourage more divisions between us. Sometimes I really don’t have much of value to contribute to the process. Observing heated discus-



sions I am often reduced to advising things like, “You really must get out of your office and get some fresh air!” I guess I have a faith that if we take care of ourselves we will learn how to take care of each other.



Looking beyond the apples I am picking, I become aware of the vast blue sky and let my troubled thoughts be calmed in that expanse. Toward the end of the month comes the Autumn Equinox. 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. And with each day after that, there is more darkness.

In challenging times, I often feel that with the sunset comes a truce in our efforts to sort everything out. Evening brings the brilliant night-sky. I am old enough to be among those who wake in the middle of the night. I frequently step outside into the familiar, yet unfamiliar, wonderful world that is my home. At some point this month, when the moon is full, I hope to see again the wild geese heading south. What a life they lead.

These days are full of risks — and full of peace.

Your brother,
Toby



MARK YOUR CALENDAR !

Friends have been asking when we think the **Olive Harvest** will take place as some come from a considerable distance and make it an annual event. As far as we can tell it will be the weekend of **November 21 -22**. It will be a lighter harvest as all the olives in California were hit by an unusual late freeze. But it will be just as exciting as in past years!

Also, you might want to mark down our **Christmas Faire** on Saturday **November 28**. Our special friends will be helping out and both Holly and David will be on hand.

Wreaths, dried fruit, books, our Gold Medal olive oil (with tasting), lavender infused balm, soap – and a very limited supply of “Olio Nuovo” this fresh-pressed, strong oil so prized by chefs. Baked goods and more. Optional tours of Starcross, or just walk the land.

ACTS OF REMEMBRANCE

“I felt deeply in my heart both the sorrow of the one who goes and the grief of the one who remains.”

BASHO (on the serious illness and departure of his traveling companion.)

Family members or friends have written to tell us about their loved ones and have them remembered at Vespers on a particular day. We feel enriched by knowing something of each unique life story, and we remember it as it is read out year after year at this gentle time of prayer and meditation.

Please tell us of anyone you wish us to include in the Vespers Memorial Book. This is a part of our sense of spiritual solidarity with you. Naturally, there is no fee or other obligation. It is an honor for us to do this. Simply send us the person’s name, date of birth and death, and a sentence or two about them. Write, call or e-mail (community@starcross.org) and we will remember them each year on their birthday, unless you prefer the anniversary of their death or another special date.

We have also dedicated olive trees, both in memory of people who have died and to honor living people or events. We send out a certificate telling which olive tree is being commemorated, and we record it in a book and put a marker by the tree.

The ashes of friends of Starcross have also been buried in our Garden of Memories or sometimes left in our chapel until they can be taken and scattered at a special place sacred to a family.

