

The Vintage Voice

Serving The Church Pension Fund's Family of Beneficiaries

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The Wave

The Rev. Nancy H. Bloomer, Ph.D.

It did so much damage. It took so many lives. It broke the hearts of many people. We ask, "Why?" but there is only silence. The Earth moved; the waters roiled, pushing out a huge wave which raced across the ocean and hit land. The force of the water broke down buildings, overturned boats and cars, and swept up the living and the non-living alike in its enormous hand. An occurrence of this magnitude brings out the big words: "immense," "huge," "catastrophic." We grope for meaning. *"The voice of the Lord is over the waters; The God of Glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters."* (Ps 29:3)

God has spoken, but what did God say?

I sit in silent meditation. I concentrate on my breath. Breathe in, breathe out; inhale one-two, exhale one-two. There is nothing else, just my mind watching my breath. Breathe in love, breathe out fear; breathe in peace, breathe out disorder. A mental image forms of Earth sitting just as I am, concentrating on her breath, feeling the gentle rhythms of her body, relaxed, alert. Suddenly there is agitation; an unexpected movement breaks her concentration. A sharp pain, a gasp, the intake of breath followed by an extended exhale: in that moment the tsunami is born. As her long sigh moves across the waters, Earth once again resumes her gentle breathing and watchful attention. The moment of disturbance is over.

Sitting, watching the breath, paying attention to the present moment, this is my way of prayer. Not asking for anything, not trying to grasp or reach for anything, just sitting, feeling the connections, allowing the mind to find its way home. Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Luke 17:20-21). The silence holds all the questions, all the answers.

After meditating, I wanted to do something to help, but what? I let that question rest in my mind as I went about my daily activities, keeping before me the image of God hovering over the waters and of Earth in rapt concentration. As so often happens, an answer came in the form of a child. My nine-year-old granddaughter, Eliza, was visiting me over the New Year's weekend. She had heard the adults talking about the tsunami, and she had let the gravity of the event sink into her heart. On the first day of the New Year, she and I were having a conversation about New

Year's resolutions. She asked me, "What resolution are you making, Nonnie?" Taken off guard, I replied — too quickly, as it turned out — "Oh, I'm going on a diet." Then I asked her, "And what is your New Year's resolution?" Her reply humbled me. "I want to make a difference in the world," she said.

That same week, after she had returned home and was back at school, her mother sent me an article from the local newspaper. A headline read, "Fourth Grader Spearheads Tsunami Relief." The fourth grader was my granddaughter. On her first day back at school after the Christmas vacation, before the teachers and other adults had barely thought of it, Eliza was placing metal coffee cans around the school with signs which read, "Give Here To Help The Wave Victims." She was also organizing students from other classes to help collect necessary supplies for the relief effort. Upon hearing what the children were doing, the teachers and principal joined them, and that is how one little girl and one school responded to the needs of others. "*The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.*" (Isaiah 11:6).

Children are prominent in the Indian Ocean disaster, since a large number of them drowned in the surging waters. Photographs of surviving children, some of them homeless or lost, have appeared in the print media and on TV throughout the world. One scene comes to mind: children playing and smiling in a refugee camp just days after the tsunami, apparently adjusting to their changed circumstances, accepting the day as it is. They give us all an example, which is to live this day, accepting what it brings to us without complaining, without grasping, our hearts open.

I learn so much from the children I know. Their awareness of the essentials is sometimes astonishing. Their patient fortitude in the face of pain and loss, their eagerness to heal and comfort others, their willingness to trust when it would be so easy not to, are fundamental to the Christian life. Jesus loved these little ones and told his disciples to be like them.

Can we be silent enough for the Word to be heard?



Nancy Bloomer lives in an antique house in Essex Junction, Vermont, companioned by her dog, her books, and her garden. The mother of two grown daughters, Nancy considers herself richly blessed to have her two grandchildren, Eliza and Alex, living close at hand. In addition to doing church supply, Nancy is an adjunct instructor at a nearby university, where she teaches English courses in the Bible and Environmental Literature. She was a founding member and recent chair of the Diocese of Vermont's Environmental Ministry Team.