

Light the Way February 2009 Newsletter

The island of Vieques, which is part of the territory of Puerto Rico, has a bay that boasts one of the greatest concentrations of dinoflagellates in the world. These bioluminescent microorganisms (720,000 per gallon of water) light up the water with breathtaking illumination.

If you cross this bay on a dark night in a canoe or kayak, your paddle will leave a swirling glow in the water. If you splash a little water on your arm, it will sparkle as if Tinkerbell had just flitted by. And if you jump out of the kayak for a little swim—like my children did—the water lights up around the swimmer as bright as any illuminated swimming pool.

Bioluminescence is a terrific example of how the Church is supposed to function. Our life (*bio* in Greek), by virtue of our connection with Christ and one another, should give off light (*lumen* in Latin) as part of our very being (*essentia* in Latin). So, bio-lumin-escence is our vocation as the Body of Christ in the world today. We should—quite naturally—be giving off light, just like the microorganisms our family discovered in Puerto Rico.

This biological metaphor reveals something else important about the nature of the light we bear. Although each single-celled organism contributes to the phenomenon, what makes it so miraculous and dazzling, is when all of those cells function together, as one large *body* of light.

Perhaps you remember the popular children's song, "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna let it Shine." The song helps remind us that we each have a bit of light to share. When we share this light collectively—in worship, in fellowship, in service and in prayer—it is miraculous and dazzling.

Here and there, now and again, we can catch glimpses of the light. One of my favorite glimpses is when we kindle a new fire at the Easter Vigil and light the Paschal Candle. The Celebrant sings, "The Light of Christ!" And before you know it, the entire Church is filled with a glow from those who have lit their own candles to help light the way toward the first Holy Eucharist of Easter.

I see glimpses at other times and places in and around St. Martin's. There are still other glimpses in and around our ecumenical neighbors in Forest Acres. I glimpse the light of Christ in the Episcopal Church in the United States, and throughout the Anglican Communion around the world. The swirl of that same light is clear through the movement of the Christian Tradition throughout the centuries since that very first Easter. It is the light of Christ borne through his one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, and it is truly miraculous and dazzling!

In the beginning of the Gospel according to John, he expresses his understanding of Christ as bioluminescence—life (*bio*), light (*lumen*) and being (*essence*). This is what John wrote: "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:3-5)

We have received the light of Christ. Thanks be to God!

Together, we share that life, light and being—that bioluminescence—in a world of darkness, in ways that are miraculous and dazzling. Thanks be to God!