

The waters of solidarity

By Pastor Mary Anderson

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Genesis 1:1-5

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11

AFTER THE hectic and holy Christmas season, after the unusual turning of a new century and, wonderfully, a new millennium, the church and the culture will settle back into familiar rhythms. For the church and its calendar, this means the season of Epiphany with its festivals of Magi, miracles, baptism and transfiguration. On the cultural calendar none of these celebratory times appears even as a footnote in the march of days. Between the Christian observances of Christmas and Ash Wednesday, the world knows only the festivals of Super Bowl, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day and the next retail opportunity, Valentine's Day. The term "Epiphany" is an alien word in this our new century.

What of the gospel in this season? We begin this new time by reading the no-nonsense Gospel of Mark. There is no birth story to woo us into the good news. Mark begins with a full-grown Jesus meeting the grimy baptizer at the Jordan and going under the water in solidarity with those he came to save.