

Since I began work with the Honey Creek Commission several months ago, I've been thinking a lot about the many legacies here, the things left to us by those who have gone before. Each of us has different things here that are important to us – this may be the place where we met the Lord or a life-long friend or even a spouse. It's where we learned about creation care or fishing or kayaking. It's the place where we first heard about Jesus and how to live as Christian. Maybe this is the place where you continue to come to recharge and reconnect in nature. Honey Creek is one of those rare places where it's dark enough to see the stars and lightening bugs. It's also a place where it is quiet enough to hear, well, quiet.

Honey Creek is many of these things for me – and more. I love Honey Creek bacon and steamed shrimp and broccoli salad. I love worship in the chapel and walking along the creek under the trees in dappled sunlight. Pine trees and live oaks this big and tall and old are treasures. Pine straw is God's carpet for us and moss is tinsel, like on Christmas trees, even if it does have chiggers. I wish the trees could tell the stories of the many people who have studied, camped and planned for the future of the diocese in the shade of the trees. I'd love to hear the stories of the men and women and youth who found the

land, built the facilities, and kept the center going in good times and bad. It couldn't have been easy, but they remained faithful.

The names of the buildings here reflect the visionaries who recognized the power of faith for the youth in this diocese. Camping in the diocese began in 1924 with fourteen youth and Fr. Jonnard from Savannah in a beach hotel on St. Simons Island. In only twenty years, over 450 people attended camp, then known as Camp Rees. A chapel, dining hall and cottages carried names of our forefathers and mothers - Schuessler, Chapin, and Jonnard.

In 1954, the St. Simons property was sold and the next year, a master plan was developed for this property along Honey Creek. The chapel was the first building constructed in 1959. Other buildings and facilities were added that carry the names of other ancestors – Hunt and Howe and Stuart and Guice. Our retreat center has grown, added new programs and dropped old ones. It's the Parish Hall for our diocese where we eat together and come to study and worship and work. I wonder if Bishops Rees and Stuart had any idea what the impact this place would have in the life of the diocese.

Some of the buildings here have been renamed and repurposed, just as Abram and Sarai were given new names and

were repurposed as the parents of a multitude of nations. God changed their names because God re-established a relationship with the people now called Abraham and Sarah. As a part of that relationship, God promised them he would be their God and the God of their offspring after them. His promise meant that God will extend God's everlasting covenant forever. God's promises stand for all generations – even longer than the pine trees and oak trees have stood here. God keeps promises and does so in ways that give new life, in ways we can never imagine, to people we would never imagine.

Honey Creek has changed since 1959. Most recently, the hurricanes and ice storm took out a lot of my beloved trees. The center looks different because there is more light and not just on the grounds, but in the spirit of the place. Hurricane Scott swept in and saved Honey Creek from the banks and is now working with Dade and the staff and commission to stabilize the finances. Hurricane Scott did not go out to sea and dissipate to leave us with a mess to clean up. He's swirling and spinning as strong as ever.

Our bishop has been faithful to the covenant established by his ancestral bishops. Just as Isaac and David and Jesus were descendants of Abraham and Sarah, we are the Honey Creek

descendants of Rees and Chapin and Stuart and Guice and Schuessler. Those and many unnamed ancestors, who with the early bishops, invited God to create this thin place where we find, reconnect and listen to God.

No matter our age, we are now the ancestors who will have descendants come after us. Yes, those early Honey Creek ancestors really did die and leave us in charge. We know our Honey Creek ancestors struggled and stumbled and failed sometimes, but they were faithful and they kept the covenant. We are now the grown-ups in the room who are responsible for living as faithful disciples to the covenant they made with God in this place, in ways we can never imagine, with people we would never imagine. But we are certain that God is still our God. Now it is our turn to keep the faith.

ξ