



The Voice of the Spirit

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From the Rector

BY JASON ROBERTS



Welcome to this Easter edition of the Voice of the Spirit. Bringing so many voices from our community together in one place paints a

beautiful picture of the many interests and passions we worship with each Sunday. This broad brushstroke of stories helps to make us who we are!

As we move out of Lent and into the season of Easter, we will hear and read stories of the disciples trying to figure out what it looked like to be

disciples. It took time to figure out the details about what they were being asked to do. It was not until after Pentecost – when the church had been entirely handed over to God’s people – that the disciples and new converts would finally devote themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.

Because it takes time, energy, focus, prayer, community, learning, unlearning, relearning, frustration, forgiveness, and honest conversations (the list goes on and on), to be a disciple, we work to have multiple connecting points in our community to come together and experience what being devoted means. Some days, we just need fellowship. Some

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days, we just need prayer. Some days, we just need worship. Some days, we just need to be taught and learn. Some days, we need a combination of them all. Every day is different, which is why we have so many ministries in our community.

Karine Crow, one of the study team members for the 40 Days of Discernment, observed that the “things we do” fit so nicely into the Acts 2:42 way of being followers of Christ. We gathered responses and placed them into these themes of the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers. Some ministries and concepts mentioned fit in all four of the themes. We placed those in the category of “devoted” as they touched on all four ways that the new converts devoted themselves.

The study team and I will present the information gathered during the 40 Days of Discernment during the Ministry Leaders’ Meeting on Thursday, May 16, 2024. Come and hear how our community is devoted to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.



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Nurturing, Loving and Caring for God's Children

BY SCOTT BELLAIR



Kids of the Kingdom Episcopal School lovingly known as KOKES became part of Holy Spirit in 2015 under the leadership of our rector, Jason Roberts.

During one of the many vestry meetings prior to the acquisition of KOKES there was a discussion about the reasons for this venture. According to one vestry member present at the meeting, there were several reasons put forth but Father Jason gave the most compelling reason. He said "KOKES is a way to bring children closer to God." It was evident from the inception of this relationship that our school would be a place to provide children the opportunity to grow in their relationship with God.

Prior to Covid, KOKES enjoyed great success with high attendance, great teacher morale and an excellent financial position. There was even talk of paying off the loan that was needed to fund the creation of the KOKES campus. Then came Covid and everything changed. Attendance dropped due to social distancing requirements, teachers no longer had students to teach and expenses overran the meager income that was being generated. KOKES applied for and received Covid funds just as every other small business, but the funds were not enough to overcome the mounting monthly expenses.

After three years of diligent work, KOKES has not recovered from its predicament, but great progress has been made, most notably with the appointment of Joyce St. John as Interim Head of School in December 2023.

In her role, Joyce not only ensures the school adheres to regulatory requirements, she has made great strides in supporting the teachers and staff in reviewing curriculum, and setting a vision for KOKES. Joyce has also taken steps to raise morale by having regular staff meetings, continuous contact with staff and developing a personal relationship with the teachers. This has created great confidence in her leadership.

In the interview with Joyce, she wanted to express her deep gratitude to the school board, Father Jason and the congregation for the support she has received. She stated she has been approached by several of the congregation with questions about how best to support KOKES. Joyce laid out a plan where the school board takes a more active role in facilitating different areas in relation to the success of the school. Her plan is to have the school board set up committees to augment the administration of the school. The plan includes but is not limited to the following committees:

A. Financial Committee - to help oversee the monthly finances and to make recommendations on how to streamline expenses.

B. Marketing Committee - to help market the school in various ways for example revamping the website, updating the signage on the property, ways to provide contact information such as business cards, flyers etcetera.

C. Staff Appreciation - organize special activities each month to celebrate teachers & staff, provide a week-long celebration for teachers in May as part of Teacher Appreciation Week.

D. Fundraising – assist the current fundraiser as she has expressed the need for additional help.

E. Facilities & Maintenance – to perform regular inspections of the facilities and make recommendations for essential work and future upgrades.

F. Church & School Connection - to foster and strengthen the relationship between the church and school through greater communication and active participation

Our Holy Spirit congregation is filled with talented, knowledgeable and capable people who can contribute much to the success of KOKES. As Jason stated “KOKES is a way to bring children closer to God.” It is our duty as a congregation to continue to support our school with our time and talents. I would urge each of you to take the time to reach out to Joyce via her personal email: jmstjohn311@gmail.com or call her at (210)-838-2712. This is one of the most worthwhile ministries we offer at Holy Spirit.



It Started Out So Good...

BY DOUG BOLDT



My alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m. during the week. I am not a snooze alarm person, never have been. Rather, my version of a “snooze alarm” is after I slither out of bed, I sit in my chair in the living room and listen to Christian music, traditional hymns, praise choruses, and the like, and sip on a cup of coffee. I don’t have the energy or focus to open up *The Word* or any other devotional book, so this way I can just absorb good thoughts into my spiritual system without having to actually do anything. Great way to start the day. Well, it would have been, except for that one morning.....

It must have happened when I opened up the door to let the dog out. Just a few minutes before I needed to get out of the chair to start getting ready, suddenly there’s a small bird flying around the living room and kitchen. Nothing to really be afraid of, but still a bit disconcerting. My plan was to shoo him out the door with my guiding broom, but alas it was to no avail. As I flailed the broom seemingly aimlessly around the house, he simply would not go through either open door. Finally, his course changed and I seized the opportunity. For whatever reason, he flew into the small half bath by the front door and landed on the floor. “Perfect!” I said. New plan: I’ll trap him under the broom, then gently guide him out the door to his much deserved freedom. The initial entrapment was flawless. But suddenly, just as I turned the corner to guide him into the hall – POOF! Tiny feathers shot out from either side of the broom. I lifted the broom to see if my suspicions were correct, and they were. Through no intention of my own, I

had launched poor little Tweety to the great aviary in the sky.

But I was running very late at this point, so I simply scooped him up and laid him on the ground by the front porch (I’d watched enough true crime to know what to do) with the intention of giving him a proper burial when I got home from work. But the best laid plans of mice and men....

Fast forward to 4:00 as I return from work. Side note that is important to the story, Teri and I have become the neighborhood grandparents, so as I was walking up to the front door, two of our elementary age friends came running frantically up to me almost shouting, “Mr. Doug! Did you know there’s a DEAD BIRD IN YOUR YARD?!?” I was able to answer truthfully, “well yes, as a matter of fact I did know that!” Then the bomb dropped. Nearly in tears at this point, one of them said, “I wonder how it happened? WHO COULD HAVE DONE THIS? It’s so sad!” Trapped with no escape just like the bird, I simply said, “let me go in and change my clothes and I’ll come back out and we can talk about it.” Surely that would buy me enough time to move to Canada or somewhere and no doubt they would forget about it. No such luck. In fact, not only were they still there, but they had taken the time to compose a reading and a poem for a funeral service and found some flowers to put on the grave. “May we bury him in your yard?” Of course, I said, that only seems fitting.

So there we stood, Ms. Teri and I, listening to the somber words of the saddened young neighborhood priest, and even troweling a

small bit of dirt on the deceased. Again, I've watched enough true crime to see this happen more than once: the murderer actually attends the funeral of the one they killed! There I was, guilty of birdslaughter, feigning an act of sorrow. But the day started out so good....

And so it is with life on this earth. The day, the week, the month, the year, your life – it started out so good. But then something happens. You just did your best to make things work, but one thing led to another, and next thing you know you're the murderer at an innocent bird's funeral. It can happen on a small scale and it can happen in the major catastrophes of life, and it can happen again and again throughout our lives. I just don't know how it got to this point....

But here's the good news. The creator of the heavens and the earth, and the birds of the air, and you and me, has promised "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Through the meditative moments, through the unexpected interruptions to those moments, through our wild chasings through this life trying to fix it all, through the justifications and lies, through all the questions and ponderings of where it went wrong – He's still there. I know it for a fact every time I look at that little bird's grave.



Not My Will, But Yours...

BY KRISTIN & JON SEWARD

Approximately two weeks before our son Maxen was due, a routine ultrasound revealed an unexpected concern: his liver and spleen were enlarged. Following this discovery, a high-risk specialist diagnosed him with Congenital Cytomegalovirus (cCMV), a condition that can pose significant risks when transmitted to a developing fetus. With cCMV affecting 1 in 200 births, its potential complications range from asymptomatic to severe, encompassing conditions like hearing impairment and cerebral palsy.

Maxen's journey began in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), where he spent two weeks under the care of medical professionals who worked to stabilize his condition before he could be discharged. Upon leaving the NICU, our focus shifted to ongoing care with a team of specialists tasked with understanding the full extent of the virus's impact on Max. Our days were a blur of specialist appointments, with the focus primarily on Maxen's liver. Initially, there was optimism that Max's liver, known for its regenerative ability, would respond to treatment aimed at both his liver condition and the underlying virus. However, as Maxen approached his fifth month, his lab results started to show his liver was not improving and instead continued to deteriorate. Max's doctor recommended a biopsy to assess the severity of his liver's condition. The results of the biopsy showed Max's liver had progressed to end-stage liver failure, leaving us with no choice but a liver transplant as the only viable option for his survival.

The weight of this news hit like an 18 wheeler crashing into us. We had remained hopeful that his liver would heal itself and we could move on to whatever else may come up due to his cCMV. As Maxen began the testing and evaluation process for the transplant, there lingered a stubborn part of us that refused to accept the



inevitability of it all. It was a blend of denial and fervent prayer, that God would heal him without the need for a transplant.

To be honest, our faith faltered. We understood that God's wasn't a vending machine where one could insert a prayer and expect an instant miracle. Still, we couldn't help but hope that Maxen would be spared from the ordeal of surgery. Each passing week on the transplant list brought little hope, both from seeing Max's condition deteriorate and the anxiousness by his doctors. Soon our prayers had to shift. We now prayed that God would heal Max no matter what. And if it had to be a transplant then provide him the best donor liver, a quick and easy surgery, and a fast recovery.

After seven weeks on the transplant list, Max got his new liver when he was 7 months old. The surgery lasted eleven hours overnight compared to the typical 4-6 hours that a liver transplant usually takes. Following the operation, Max required several additional procedures, and his recovery stretched out over five weeks, instead of the anticipated 2-3 weeks. It wasn't an easy surgery. We found out later that he had significant bleeding and stopped breathing a few

times during the surgery. Those other procedures were nerve wracking as well. We had to once again hand over our baby for each one within a few weeks. But I had to remind myself God healed him even if it wasn't the way we wanted it. I remembered the words of Jesus in the garden: "Not my will, but yours."

Maxen is now a thriving five-year-old, as healthy as can be under the circumstances. He has done significantly well with his transplant. While being immunocompromised he has had only a few hospital stays and ER visits. He still struggles with the effects of the cCMV and being in the hospital for 93 days. But we are very thankful for all the therapists and specialists who continue to nurture his progress. Sharing Maxen's story has become a way for us to highlight the incredible journey he has undertaken and the importance of organ donation. Perhaps, in retrospect, Maxen's healing through a transplant was part of a larger divine plan. Maybe this was God's will all along.

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." John 22:42

April is National Donate Life Month. Register to be a donor at <https://donatelifenet/>. And to hear more about Mighty Max's story, just ask us!



Diocesan Council 2024

BY BETHANY HIROTA-MABRY

Kiki Foster, Michelle Rowand, Bethany Hirota-Mabry, and Jason Roberts, were this year's delegates to the 120th Annual Council (February 22 -24, 2024).

2024 Theme: "Lift High the Cross"

This annual meeting of our diocese, celebrated its 150th anniversary, included members of the 86 congregations of the Diocese of West Texas ranging from as far north as San Saba, as far west as Sonora, as far east as Victoria, as far south as Brownsville and still growing, coming together to hear the great work that others are doing and to have a plan laid out for us for the next year.

There was a lot of great news of growth and activities! A list of great news includes but is not limited to the following report highlights:

- Camps and Conferences had the highest enrollment in their history.
- The immigration and Refugee ministry advocates for individuals and families who enter our country through our various congregations by expanding Plaza de Paz from 3000sqft to 5000 sqft adding space to kitchens, classrooms and creating a clothes closet. They have seen a 37% increase in church engagement!
- College and Young Adult Ministry is thriving and reaching new young adults every month using social media platforms, weekly meetings at

Trinity University, and retreats at Camp Capers, Mustang Island and study days at our various churches.

And yet, all this positivity was tempered with an undercurrent of the reality of our times:

Statistics show that fewer people identify as spiritual or religious. The role that church communities once played in the lives of North Americans has changed and there is less emphasis on being a part of a spiritual community.

In general, people (Christians and non -Christians) think Jesus is pretty great. But the church – most think that it's kind of left Jesus behind.

Bishop David Read (the leader of our diocese), gave a moving address - and later, a sermon - challenging us all to return to the missionary zeal of the early roots of our diocese. This missionary mindset says that we each possess a part of the story of Jesus that we can share, talk about, and live into. To move into this missionary mindset we were given the book *Surprise the World*. There are five easy habits involved in the text: BELLS- Bless, eat, listen, learn and send. If you ask any member of our group, I am sure one of us will be more than happy to share this short and easy to digest read. We are each missionaries sent out to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ as we devote ourselves to the apostles' teach and fellowship the breaking of the bread and the prayers.

Nothing Changes if nothing changes. We try new and creative ways to lift high the cross, building relationships with our neighbors through outreach

and evangelism. Each person is challenged to Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, until all the world - or West Texas - proclaims Christ's sacred name.

Our Diocese has not had a Bishop Suffragan in a number of years and Bishop Read recognizes that he needs assistance. There will be a vote in October 2024, stay tuned for more details! Secondly, there has been a noticeable absence of deacons in our Diocese and Bishop Read would like to see the return of deacons to assist congregations! A study group will be formed and recommendations for reintroducing the Diaconate in West Tx. will be brought to next year's council.

For a more in depth look at Council reports and the bishop's address I encourage you to visit the Diocese website at www.dwtx.org in the Resources and Archives link.

Your Ideal Self

BY MARIE SLUDER



“Ask me whether what I have done is my life” author William Stafford asks in his poem, “Ask Me.” The question begs to be asked, is the life I am living the life that wants to be lived?

Perhaps this life is hidden deep within while you live the life you are “supposed” to live, be like the people we are supposed to emulate – Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Ghandi. We are meant to strive to be filled with integrity, honesty, compassion, kindness, resilience. But the person you show, is it really YOU? Is it your true self?

Ours is a purpose driven life where our choices, intelligence, will, and freedom separate us from the animals. Our choices make us who we are. Poet Robert Frost says:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Our sense of what is ideal, what is perfect, what is most desired, is what motivates us and gets us up in the morning. Our ideals and notion of self helps provide us with a compass and a guide to what we choose in every aspect of our lives. The vision of the ideal sells vacations and magazines and fills daytime talk shows. And it's what we dedicate our time and resources to, whether we realize it or not.

An ideal is a combination of ideas, hopes, and preferences which inspire and motivate people and, if this ideal is attractive enough, we will work and dedicate our time and money towards attaining it. Each one of us has THE ideal, and all our life goals and objectives stem from our striving for this one ideal. Our ideal reflects our values. But what is really worth striving for?

One is not fully human unless one has an ideal. It shapes and characterizes our entire life. Our individual ideal makes us what we are. The higher the ideal, the more fully human we are. A person's ideal shows us what kind of person he or she is. We are what we value. Ideals give life purpose and meaning. Ideals give us enthusiasm for our work. Ideals shape our personality. Ideals shape human history. As a 20-year-old preparing to graduate from nursing school, part of my ideal was being a Family Nurse Practitioner with a Doctorate of Nursing working in primary care, married with two children, a dog, and white picket fence, and living the so called American dream. But ideals can rapidly change. While I achieved the goal of Doctor of Nursing and I do work as a Nurse Practitioner in primary care, life took an entirely different turn otherwise when my Dad became physically disabled the Summer following my graduation from college. My Dad needed a 24/7 caregiver, and I traded in marriage and children for a life of caregiving for my Dad. My ideal changed. I pictured an outstanding,

patient, compassionate, kind, honest, Godly caregiver for my Dad, a man who had always been there for me my whole life, and that's what I aspired to be. That was my inner self, my authentic self.

An ideal should be high – we should aspire to greatness while at the same time making it attainable. An unreachable goal is of no value. There are barriers to discovering and realizing our ideals. One of these is impatience. We want our ideal yesterday. There's no contemplating, no discovering, no learning or growing. We want perfection, and we want it now. Poor priorities is another barrier. We place our most valued choices and decisions first, and if shooting for our ideal is not top priority, it's unlikely we will ever reach it. Discouragement from others can also derail our efforts towards our ideal. "You're not smart enough," "pretty enough," "dedicated enough," whatever naysayers might say – it can all stop us in our tracks in our mission to be our absolute best, to be the ideal we envision. The final barrier to discovering and realizing our ideals and reaching them is fear. Fear of failure, fear of not being good enough or smart enough or pretty enough or ever being able to reach THE ideal. Fear that the inner voice we hear can't possibly be speaking truth about the person we truly are – not just the person we show to the world.

But there are as many ideals as there are people. We needn't feel overwhelmed or afraid. Some people don't know what their ideal is or haven't spent enough time doing the self-work necessary to reveal their true self. There are personal ideals, as well as family, group, national, and universal ideals. There are an unlimited number of categories of ideals, including wealth, science, glory, fame, and honor, among many others.

What is your ideal? Your personal ideal? You have one whether you realize it or not, because it guides your life. To discover your ideal, ask



yourself, "Where do my thoughts, my free time, and my money go?" In my own journey to identify my ideal, I looked no further than the mentors and teachers I had venerated and tried to emulate, and pulled out my wallet and paid for the highest quality caregiving money could afford to buy, that way either myself or the caregiver would provide my Dad with the outstanding care he deserved. My thoughts are always of him and whether I am providing him with the care he has earned for being such an amazing Dad to me. This is a big part of who I am and my true, authentic self.

Emily Dickinson wrote:

Each life converges to some center
Expressed or still;
Exists in every human nature
A goal

To discover your ideal today, look at your calendar, your checkbook, your spiritual journal, or diary. These will shine a spotlight on what's important to you – what you consider to be your ideal. And is it the ideal you really want? Are you the person you are truly meant to be? Are you being your true self – it takes time and experience to see the difference between the inauthentic self versus the deep, true, authentic self you are meant to be. Take time to prayerfully consider where you're at and what your ideal is or should be. What do YOU aspire to be? Who is your authentic self?



My Three Faiths

BY ED ROWAND



To start this off, I am not a theologian, and I am sure that there is nothing that I am going to state below that hasn't been said somewhere else, and much better. I ask that you afford me some of

that Christian grace we are all supposed to have. Even I have it...sometimes. And if reading this gives you a desire to find those other authors to see how much better they did at this, then this article has had some benefit. Those authors deserve your time and efforts. Okay, that being said, on we go.

I was listening to one of the sermons recently and my mind wandered to how my faith has changed over my life. (My apologies to the sermonizer, I only caught bits and pieces after that. Heck, I don't even remember who was giving the sermon.) I decided that I had gone through at least three phases which I dubbed "Childish", "Transactional, and "Following". (Yep, someone said it better somewhere, I'd bet on it.)

Childish faith is that early faith that is selfish and totally focused on the desires of the faithful. God *is* the father (or Santa) to the childish faithful and their job is to dole out presents as long as they are prayed to hard enough. Those prayers for a new car, a better job, more money, or any other material improvement fall in this category. It is

both selfish and arrogant to ask the Master of Creation to adjust the weave of the universe just to make you a little more comfortable, just a little better off. Especially when there is so much hatred, strife and hardship in the world. If you think that really is God's "job", I have bad news for you. It isn't.

Even I eventually realized that God is not Santa Claus, and so my faith "evolved" to a transactional faith. I call it transactional because I'd make deals with God, mainly to get out of the Burning Lake after I breathe my last. If I go to church most Sundays, and if I give a certain amount of money when I go each time and if I donate so many hours of my time to charity then I will go to Heaven when I die. God is no longer a father bestowing gifts on his children; He is now an accountant, tallying up your sins versus your virtues to see if you are "in the black" by the time the Grim Reaper drops by to give you the last Uber you are ever going to take. To me, this still feels arrogant. That you can somehow buy your way into Heaven by just doing enough good things to offset the bad things is ridiculous. Bad news time again, friend. You can't. Just being born into the world started the meter running on your sin account and most of us aren't going to catch up to that. I know that I'm not. I mean, I live in my head and I know what's going on in there most days. If Saint Peter has to show me all the sins that have been floating around in there since I was born, well pray you got in line ahead of me because you are going to be waiting for a while. And besides, if you do a good deed expecting to get something out of it (including

spiritual credit), is it still a good deed? Isn't it now self-serving instead of altruistic?

Things are looking grim. God isn't just going to give me stuff and I can't buy my way to Grace. Luckily, before I sank into nihilism, I heard a sermon (it wasn't here. It was in Houston.). That sermon led me to my third phase, which I call Following Faith (Someone else has a better name for it. Guaranteed.) In the sermon, the speaker told us that we were in luck! If we believe in Jesus, we were already saved! You don't have to buy your way into Heaven with good deeds and you don't have to do charity work. You just have to believe that Jesus is your one true Savior. Man, this guy was good. And then came the catch.

As a follower of Christ, we should all strive to be more like him. And to be like him, it means that you still do good deeds and you still do charity work and you still give to the church so that they can do more of the same because that is what Jesus would do. And even more, you open yourselves to others and treat them with respect whether they look differently, or act differently or dress differently. After all, Jesus never said "I am the only Begotten Son of God and I have come to save Man.... except you folks over there. Yeah, you people are doomed. Just don't like the look of you. Sorry."

It's doing all those things, not as part of a tally to get out of trouble, it's because you want to do it. And every day you are going to try a thousand times. And every day you are going to fail nine hundred and ninety nine times. And that is ok. Because we are not Jesus. And where he would get a thousand, it's something for us to at least get it right once.

You might be thinking to yourself that the end result is the same. The results themselves don't matter (well, they do matter. Just not...okay...look bear with me. We're almost there.) The difference is the outlook. Childish faith believes that God

exists to give them things. Transactional believers think that their salvation is in their own hands if they just do enough. Following lays your salvation with Jesus. The others are self-centered; Following is self-less.

If you've made it this far, I'd like to thank you for taking the time for me to boil down my spiritual journey into less than two pages. Sorry. I never said that I was particularly deep. Just remember, it is in the striving to be more like Him that we find Grace. It's in the willingness to keep trying to maybe be a little better today than we were tomorrow, that helps us grow. And just think what the world would be like if everyone tried to be a little more like Jesus every day. That's a world I'd like to live in.

Care Beyond a Cure

BY PEGGY HARRISON



Do you know of someone who may have a medical problem that is severely limiting their abilities and could possibly end their life in six months or less?

Hospice may be what they

need to maximize the rest of their life. Many people see the word hospice and think I am going to die tomorrow. Hospice does not mean that. It means that they have a terminal condition, and they no longer want to take curative measures to treat it. Many people choose



hospice when they are imminent, meaning they have hours to days to live. While that is ok, it means they miss out on a lot of support they could have had. Hospice provides support to the patient and family before and after death. We have nurses, aides, social workers and chaplains who can assist the patient and family members in the transition of life to death and support the family after death.

What happens when I choose hospice?

If you have a loved one who might benefit from Hospice, you would contact an agency. My personal preference would be Hummingbird Hospice, but I am a little prejudiced, as I feel the company I work for is the best. A Transitional Care Coordinator would contact you to start the process. They would ask you for consent to look at medical records to determine if the person is at a point where hospice is appropriate. If it is determined that the person is qualified, consents would be signed and a Registered Nurse would come and do an Admission Assessment. During that assessment, you would discuss what services you would like to have. And services would begin. Usually, a nurse would come visit at least once a week and if needed a hospice aide would visit anywhere from 1-5 times a week depending on the need. The nurse would do an assessment each visit and make sure you have enough medications, and other items you might need. The aide can assist with personal hygiene, from a bed bath to an assisted shower. You would also have access to a chaplain and a social worker at least once a month. After the loved one passes, the family has bereavement services for about 15 months.

Why am I writing this for our church newsletter? Because too many people miss out on the care that can be given when a cure is no longer appropriate. Hospice will help you or your loved one maximize the quality of the time they have left. Please don't wait until the last minute. If you have questions about Hospice, please feel free to ask me.

Why Fast During Lent?

BY SUSAN A. DAVIS



For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 (KJV)

Jesus came into this world as a human being. He was born of a woman, worked by his father's side, studied the Torah, made friends and enemies, celebrated, wept, comforted, healed, preached, prayed, and suffered, all as a human. Many scholars have written that Jesus became human to experience the weaknesses, frailties, and virtues of humanity. They look upon the 40 days of Lent as a time for us to remember His hunger, torment, and temptation in the desert prior to his death. Lent is also considered a time for Christians to participate through our meager sacrifices in the last agonizing days of Christ's life.



In the course of acknowledging Christ's human nature, we sometimes forget His divine nature. As the Only Son of God, Begotten not made, One with the Father, Jesus shares his Father's omniscience. He knows the meaning of his life from its inception. He knows his role in human redemption, the inevitability of His death, and the certainty of His resurrection. He knows that he is dying "for the sins of men," but His knowledge of what that means is far greater than our own. Jesus

was keenly aware, on a visceral level, that the cross He bore was not made of wood but of the agony, pain, sinfulness, distress, fear, loneliness, grief, and regret of every human being since before Christ's birth and unto the end of all time.

We look around us at the millions of people who have died brutal deaths, who have been tortured and beaten and burned alive, the innocents who die in the battlefields whether in a far-off war or in their own homes. We see the homeless sleeping on cardboard boxes in the cold, snow-blown alleyways of our cities. We see dreams and lives shattered by natural disasters, disease, and destruction. We know suffering. For Christ's death to have redemptive meaning, Jesus had to live as a human, but He had to die as God, with the full knowledge of God and the burden of all suffering souls. His death is distinguished from that of everyone by His divinity and omniscience. His experience of humanity was not a metaphor but the ultimate crown of thorns, a suffering, thankfully, that we can never know. God blessed us with a limited capacity for that knowledge. Of all that is known and can be known in the divine universe, we can barely hold a thimbleful. It is no surprise, then, that the meager sacrifices we make during Lent can never fulfil our intent to suffer with Jesus.

If our fasting means so little, then why do it? Even in our small ways we do remember Christ's days in the desert, we do participate in his suffering, and we do follow the Way of His Cross. More significantly, I believe, we bind ourselves to the whole of humanity in acknowledging our redemption and in thanking God for the greatest gift that we can ever receive and never earned – His love. Let each sacrifice not be seen as an obligation or even an inconvenience, but let it be embraced with love, and let Lent be a time of gratitude.

Fallen Angel

BY KIM NAJERA



Scruffy arms are tucked beneath a sweater more fuzz than yarn, woolen cap sits off kilter over graying long hair. His jeans are patched, frayed and well-worn and stream over his boots with no laces.

Wrists gnarled and bruised grip a wagon handle whose rusted wheels bobble and screech over the uneven pavement. The cargo of water bottles, sleeping bag, and an odd assortment of bags fill it, and with every screech of its journey Nameless Face finds wide berth. People part in waves, pick at invisible coat threads, cross over to the other side of the street as the cacophony of sound presses hard upon their ears.



Turning and tilting like a carnival ride, down an alley he goes, his graveled voice warbles *here kitty, here kitty*. Thin as floss the tom emerges, fur gone in spots, ear torn and scarred. Food chunks wrapped in tissue are dropped. The bag is probed and handfuls of dry food are dropped as his knotty fingers pat the head. The cart moves on. *Here kitty kitty!* echoes off the building walls as the merry screech of wheels call out the street cats.

I wrote this poem after seeing this unhoused man in Venice Beach, California many decades ago and followed him enough to watch him in the alley feeding the street cats. It was a profound moment

for me. The least of these giving to the least of those in the animal world.

As I thought about our verse this year, *Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer*, this poem came to mind. The compassion in that man's heart shone brighter than any stained-glass window in the most ornate house of worship, and despite his outward appearance, and lack, he was clothed in brilliance as a great apostle of Christ. All who walked past, or across to get away from him missed a miracle I witnessed.

I titled the poem *Fallen Angel* because the man was one. Divine once more come to earth in a humble form. A humble man, feeding street cats. God showed me this not to shame me but rather show me a tiny glimpse of the power of Divine love.

It's a weighty responsibility to follow the road Jesus called us to walk, it's ugly in spots, rough to walk on at times, but filled with tender work, laughter and storytelling as we become brothers and sisters in faith, and advocates for "the other" by sharing our teachings, bread and fervent prayers. Jesus opens our eyes to the beautiful work of healing the holes in the world. One act, one hand extended in love, one sincere prayer creates cracks in the veil where we see ordinary miracles in a very messy world. That is what Jesus saw, not the exterior but the core, the Spirit, this is what is heaven on earth looks like. We choose to love God and one another, we choose to share our bread with others as we are able, and we pray, and we find God on every corner.

Education for Ministry (EFM)

BY CAROLANNE CAPRON-REID



Spiritual Journey
Ephesians 4:13: "...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Have you ever really stopped to think about what a spiritual journey is or where you are in yours? Education For Ministry (often referred to by its acronym, EFM) is one of the programs offered by the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, and supported by our diocese. It is not a typical bible study in that it is more than just an in-depth discussion of scripture. Although we read and use the Bible as a source of discussion and reflection, EFM is designed to support and encourage individuals to explore their faith in conjunction with a small community of others within the program. We are challenged to look at scripture from the world's perspective today through structured theological reflection. To explore what we bring to our understanding of scripture based on traditions, culture, beliefs, and our actions. It is recognized that the rapid changes within our world may create uncertainty and ethical dilemmas. We discuss the challenges facing us in daily life in our current culture. We must reflect and identify what we can do as individuals, a community, and a nation to support God's creation.

Education For Ministry is a four-year program of study. We meet one evening a week during the school year. Preparing for discussion requires about ten hours of reading during the week. Although all are encouraged to complete all four years, it is up to the individual to make that decision each year. Some have taken breaks

between years based on what is going on in their life. The program is led by a “mentor” who has been in the program and had additional training in the program structure. There is a cost to the program, but funds are available to provide some assistance.

We have several church members who have completed the program, and I am sure they would be happy to share that. If interested, let us know. We are beginning to plan for the 2024–2025 year.

Did You Know the Name Jesus is Less Than 400 Years Old?

BY TIM ROSE



The person whom we call Jesus was originally called Yeshua in Hebrew. The name is derived from “Yehoshua” which means “Yahweh is salvation” or “Yahweh saves” as referred

to in Matthew 1:21 and Luke 2:21. He would have also been known as Yeshua son of Joseph or Yeshua from Nazareth.

The Gospels and epistles were written in Greek and there was no way to translate Yeshua using the Greek alphabet. The writers used IXOYE which is an acronym of the Greek words Iesous, Xristos Theou Yios Sotare. It means Jesus, Christ, Son of, God, Savior.

When the Roman Catholic church started using Classic Latin the Ancient Greek for Yeshua became the masculine Iesous. It is derived from Isho in Aramaic and Yeshua in Hebrew. It is also etymologically related to Joshua.

Up until the 14th century early English translations of the Bible spelled the name Ihesus. The letter “J” was added to the English vernacular in 1542. However, the letter did not become widely accepted until the 17th century. The first English translation to use the name “Jesus” was the 1629 Cambridge 1st Revision of the King James Bible.

So, in less than 400 years the Name Yeshua in Aramaic became IXOYE in Greek, which became Iesous in Latin, then Ihesus in early English and eventually Jesus. If Yeshua were translated from Hebrew to Modern English today, we would be studying teachings of Joshua.

Singing is Praying Twice

BY SANDY LAMPRECHT



St. Augustine is credited with saying “To sing is to pray twice.” The hymns we sing at Holy Spirit are gloriously rich and overflowing with prayer and with worship. These

hymns have been sung by faithful believers for centuries. For example, our Communion songs for March 3, 2024 included “Before thy throne, O God we kneel” written in the nineteenth century (page 574 in our hymnal), “Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face” also from the nineteenth century (p. 318) and “Lord Jesus, think on me” written by Synesius of Cyrene in the fourth century. (p. 641)

Deep theology and Scripture are embedded in all our hymns; they honor and focus on God and His divine attributes and love for His people. Many churches today have catchy modern songs (sometimes even with drums!) that focus more on us and our needs rather than on the Sovereign

God and His power and majesty. We, as believers, need to kneel in our hearts before God's throne, we need the Lord Jesus to think on us, and we need to see His face. But unless we take these words to heart and meditate on them, they become just nice songs from the past and quickly forgotten. Christians throughout the ages have gathered encouragement, strength and knowledge of God from our hymns. We are blessed at Holy Spirit to be in a position to partake from their rich theology as well. Few modern churches are so fortunate.

So now let me introduce myself. I am Sandy Lamprecht and I am relatively new to Holy Spirit, having moved from the Thousand Oaks area of San Antonio to Del Webb last January. This move necessitated me having to look for a new church home. So I prayed and I trusted God in this very important decision. My plan was to sit quietly in the pew for a month or so praying to see if this was where the Lord wanted me to attend. Well....that wasn't God's plan! On my very first week not only was I connected with members from the Del Webb community, I was also inducted into the Holy Spirit Choir immediately after they learned I had sung in two other Episcopal church choirs in the past. God's timing is rarely ours!

God knows best. I am absolutely delighted to be a part of our sweet and congenial Holy Spirit Choir. I sing with others who also love the beautiful hymns. We have a wonderful fellowship time at Wednesday night choir practice. We practice our hymns and offertory songs and we pray for each other at the end. Truly Wednesday nights, in its unique way, is just as much a time of worship and prayer for me as Sundays. I am transported into the spiritual realm every time I practice and sing these hymns that have endured the test of time.

I also enjoy being a Lector. It is a deep joy for me to have the privilege of reading God's Word to

our congregation. I am a retired academic librarian from University of California, Davis where I was their Religious Studies Librarian. I love God's Word and have studied it for decades and will keep doing so until the Lord takes me home. The hymns, as does our Book of Common Prayer, complement the Bible in amazing and unique ways. They are filled with Scriptures pointing us to God. No other denomination has such a depth of riches. I have been an Episcopalian since 1985.

I do mission work in Africa with Rafiki, formerly part of Bible Study Fellowship. I have an adopted Ugandan daughter, Rebecca, and four grandchildren. Rebecca and her husband have established a Christian primary school called Amazing Love outside of Kampala where they are training little ones in discipleship, Scripture and following Jesus. I will see them this summer when I return to Africa once again. I will also hear African music again. It tends to be loud and with drums, so you can imagine how much I will look forward to returning to Holy Spirit's choir to be transported once again into the realm of worship through our hymns. I agree with St. Augustine—to sing our deeply reverential hymns is to be praying twice.

The Empath Dies in the End

BY GAYLE J. GREENLEA

SPONSORED BY LYNN ALDERMAN

The empath dies in the end
in a field plowed by tanks,
trampled by feet fleeing
The banner of sun dimmed by smoke,
lungs aflame with sulphured air

The grandfather with trembling hands
bends over the stained sheet, singing
the last lullaby
Tiny shoes, empty. A mother's tears,
generational fears, revived

The dark shadow rises: broken cross
dividing sheep from goats
Flags unfurled from history's dust,
wound re-opening; malevolent flower
lulling love to sleep. Justice shredded
in a torrent of bullets,
pollinating hearts with hate

Wake!
Wake from the chimeric
enchantment. The seductive
whisper: music of opposites, lure of lies,
the hundred-year sleep of irreality

Monsters point fingers, then guns
The empath bleeds with the innocent
as the rough beast devours
the light. Night rolls back centuries
The fight for humanity commences
again. The empath stands in the breach,
absorbs shock, offers her body as Host,
digs graves, sowing herself in furrows
of earth; seed under stars, under snow,
waiting for sunflowers

The Giving Spirit of Our Church Family Shines

BY AL TESCHNER

In service to Christ Jesus, we are blessed. Our Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit family has once again confirmed that we believe that our spirit, through our pledges to the Annual Campaign, continues to make a difference for us and our community. The total of our promises has resulted in a marked increase over last year's pledge total. As team leader of our effort, I want to thank you for making the campaign a success.

I want to give a special shout out to the team of special people whose invaluable efforts added to the success. To Amanda LaHue, Vikki Miranda, Jose Herrero, Kiki Foster, Father Jason, and Adam and Adrian Coe. THANK YOU!!

Yours in Christ



Sandman

BY SYLVIE RODGERS



Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Sandman (inspired by a dream)

Pull me back, Sandman.
I'm getting tired of the same old story.
Waking up each morning devoid
of joy with a pocket full of worry.

Rewrite that sad refrain of the
little girl lost in the woods,
beaten down by heartache and pain.

You know the scene--
the one buried deep in
your cunning file of dreams.

Where death disguised
as life serves to stifle
joyous schemes.

Walk her to the wood's end
where all brambles have been

cleared. At least there she'll
stand a fighting chance...

Of escape into a field
of yellow daffodils to
find joy -- to sing and dance.

Pull me back, Sandman,
rewrite the script I plead.
Paint me that field of wildflowers
Play for me a happy song.

Give this girl her
happy ending
She's been lost in these
woods too long.

Note: In the Language of Flowers, daffodils represent new beginnings, new life.

I have loved to write ever since I was a young child. I scratch my head when I hear writers lament that they have “writer’s block” for the opposite has always been true of me.

My auxiliary power kicks in when I'm feeling blue, stressed out, and beaten down by my so-called life. That power is fueled by an enduring faith.

God is my mentor in this regard; He sends me dreams. While these dreams are images (yes, I dream in color), they are also recurrent, and it is only when I finally write them down, that God eases up.

I believe in my heart that God does have plans for us and sometimes He sends these messages to us in dreams. We must look at these dreams as Inspiration and a hope that there are better times ahead.

By Ava La Hue



Lenten Word Search

Tonja Rose

F O J R S F L R P X F A S T I N G G V T
C R O S S A O B S E R V A N C E W E W M
M R U H Y W C A K P C G I J L T A N I W
J E S I O N N R V D R O K N O R I E T F
O A D M T P C W I N E E U Q V U T R N O
Y A S I C S E O A F G P P R E S I O E R
P H S E T V O C N N I O E A A T N S S T
A F R H L A C F F F X C O N R G G I S Y
L O T E W F T J T A E I E D I A E T I D
M R O E P E E I Q H I S E W F T T Y N A
S G H O M E D X N S E T S T P R E I G Y
U I I O F P N N A G E S H I Y U I N O S
N V O Q L F T T E M H L P F O Y R D C N
D E P E B Y E A A S I U F I U N L P A E
A N M E A R W R T N D N M D R L E X L Y
Y E G R A C E E I I C A A I E I N A R E
A S H E S C O A E N O E Y T L N T E E F
S S P R A Y E R D K G N T E I I I F S I
I M A U N D Y T H U R S D A Y O T A T S
N Y X C P A L M F R O N D S E H N Y L H

Fruits of the spirit	Self examination	Maundy Thursday	Rest
Faithfulness	Ash Wednesday	Preparation	Lent
Forgiveness	Generosity	Meditating	Love
Repentance	Self-denial	Confession	Fish
Witnessing	Sacrifice	Good Friday	Sin
Offering	Holy Week	Palm Sunday	Joy
Anxiety	Forty days	Penitence	
Fasting	Observance	Cross	
Peace	Bread	Courage	
Hope	Palm fronds	Temptation	
Humility	Waiting	Purple	
Prayer	Trust	Grace	



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