



PENTECOST

Seasonal News Of Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church

Volume 3 - Issue 2- 2017



Holy Innocents is a community where the best of the Episcopal tradition is honored and creativity, innovation, diversity, and inclusion are embraced.

Holy Innocents' mission is to be "Your Place for Faith." We seek to enrich each person's spiritual journey through worship, prayer, community, hospitality, and mission, and help individual faith flourish into communal compassion and action. Home to Holy Innocents' Episcopal School, our campus serves on many levels as an engaging, ever-renewing forum for people of all ages to gather, pray, celebrate, mourn, converse, reflect, learn, and teach.

Membership at Holy Innocents is based on desire. If you are baptized (or desire to be baptized), intend to make this parish your principal community of worship, and you will support the ministries of the parish, you may be recorded as a member of the parish. We offer several opportunities throughout the year when new members are welcomed on Sunday mornings. We also offer opportunities for adult Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation.

For more information on membership contact Caroline Fleming.

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Clergy Corner



THE BEST OF SEASONS

The Rev. Dr. Bob Dannels

Interim Rector

At the end of the nostalgia-saturated baseball movie "Bull Durham," the character Annie Savoy paraphrases a line from Walt Whitman to the now-retired minor league ball-player Crash Davis: "Walt Whitman once said, 'I see great things in baseball ... It's our game -- the American game.' And he continued, 'It will repair our losses and be a blessing to us.'"

Those who've heard me mix theology and baseball will not be surprised by my encouragement that you go to church as often as possible this summer and that you attend at least one baseball game during these months, because it is the best of seasons.

In the midst of the current crankiness in political circles, including the rude spats on Capital Hill, and our own internal critics, and possibly the barbs at home or at work, remember -- it's baseball season, the best time of year!

"Baseball," Ted Williams once said, "is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a good player." In that and so many important ways, baseball is a clue to what real human life is like.

Baseball can calm us down and teach us religious practitioners a thing or two. There's no time clock, a reminder that God is patient with us through the unpredictable course things can take -- like searching for a new rector. The playing field is only partly measured, the bases and the pitcher's mound carefully codified and the rest left to the real or contrived quirkiness of the ballparks' outfield shapes and distances. It's a wonderful blend of rules and wide-open possibilities. Sounds kind of Episcopalian!

Between its lines, baseball is a game of small tolerances that make for recurring drama. Like anything worth doing, it requires lots of learning and practice. To the learned and practiced it offers a few moments of pure grace.

Yes, baseball is also a business. Even the college game messes with the holiness of the field and the pure joy of playing the game. But there would be no field, no green-turfed cathedrals without the financial support and staffs to run the place. Ditto the church. In the material world in which we have Holy Innocents' Church, there has to be wherewithal if there's to be a "where" -- a place where you can find the faith once delivered to the saints in a form you can see, experience and find again. Come to think of it, a ballpark is so much like a church that its pews are filled with those who remember it the "way it was" and will regularly complain about the organist and the lack of time-honored decorum and manners.

In our national pastime and in our community of faith, there is a sweet elegance of play and living, there is inspiration -- in spurts -- along with disappointments, and there is no perfection this side of heaven.

And there is common truth about mission and ministry: progress and growth always involve risk, stepping out, taking some chances -- We Christians call it "a leap of faith." You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first.

Play ball!





LOVING, LIVING, AND LEAVING WELL

The Rev. Lisa M. Zaina

Vicar

It is during this time of life transitions that we enter Pentecost, watching, waiting, and wondering what will be next in the life of Holy Innocents.

Every day we find ourselves in transition. And, as those of us who are older know, what that means doesn't always seem to resonate with children or young adults. I am reminded of one of my classes at the gym that I call Geriatric Pilates, so named as a result of the fact that each of us has a significant limitation for which the instructor has made accommodation.

One day before class the young, beautiful, and very fit instructor with the build of a ballerina asked me how I was feeling. I told her that I was sore and she asked me what I had done to be sore. I said that I hadn't done anything. At first, I didn't understand that she didn't understand. She seemed perplexed, until a woman who is my contemporary said "Oh, honey, you have no idea, do you?"

Maybe I should have included "Learning Well" in the title. I now have learned that attention to time, and how it is spent, is always time well spent. It means being present in a way that allows us to connect with others so that we can live and love well.

I really didn't pay attention to the passage of time until recently, when enough had passed that I noticed it. One of my favorite songs in high school was Alan Parson's Project's "Time." The song begins: "Time Flowing like a river, Time Beckoning me..." I now understand how poignant those words are.

It isn't until a certain point in our lives that we begin to think about how well we have lived, loved, and left where we have lived, and whom we have loved. Maybe until that point in time we are just too interested in making our way rather than being in place. But, it's never too late to think about these things.

And let's use Jesus as our example.

Forty days after his Resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven. Remember, he told Mary Magdalene that he would do so, and that she shouldn't hold on to him. He did leave his disciples behind, and they wondered what it was that they would do next. But, he had lived and loved well, preparing them for this eventuality, and giving them the tools and the direction that they need to be able to bring followers to him, to create a loving community of God.





How did Jesus live well? He wandered the countryside with a ragtag group of followers. He was probably often hungry, dirty, and tired. We learn in Scripture that he said he did not have a place to lay his head. Generally, in our world, that isn't really considered living well. And, for most of us, that would not feel like the good life.

But, like Father Ted Hesburgh, C.S.C., said "How is God better glorified than by intelligence and devoted service to others in the line of our chosen life's work? Neither God nor mankind is well served by mediocrity." Jesus was all in. He lived into his gifts and shared them with others. That is a life lived well.

And, because he lived well, he loved, as well. If we accept the gifts we have been given, and offer them to the glory of God, we are being loving. Because, when we glorify God, we focus more on the world around us, and the needs of community rather than ourselves. We simply love better.

And, he did leave. And, despite the fact that I envision the disciples milling around, mumbling under their breath, and wringing their hands at his Ascension, which is what I would do as well, he prepared them for it. He taught them, and told them that if they believed in him, they would do even

greater works than he. Notwithstanding that assurance, I likely would still be muttering under my breath. However, to seal the deal, the Holy Spirit was sent 10 days later, and her presence made them believe that they did have the power. Pentecost gave them the fortitude to carry on, living, loving, and leaving well.

Living, loving, and leaving well takes hard work. As we watch, wait, and wonder what is next, we must take the time to pay attention, and learn from Jesus, and one another.



WHO IS JESUS?

The Rev. Buddy Crawford

Senior Associate Rector

Signs, discourses, and the well-known “I AM” sayings are a few of the distinguishing characteristics of the Gospel of John. I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the gate of the sheepfold, and I am the resurrection and the life to name a few. Each of these images, and metaphors is used by Jesus to bring the reality of God to our lives.

The power of a metaphor is not that it defines a particular thing, but that it points to something else using the familiar, that when viewed through the lens of the metaphor it takes on a meaning that is beyond the familiar. There is something mysterious in the way Jesus says, “I am the gate” or “I am the bread of life.” Metaphors, as Jesus uses them, take the common and ordinary and give them deep theological meaning. Jesus is indeed the gate through which we enter the Kingdom of God; Jesus is the bread of life that we eat week after week to nourish and to sustain us on our journey.

The “I am” statements are relational – highlighting our relationship with God or Jesus and often with each other. One of my favorite “I am” sayings from Jesus is “I am the gate.” Recently, I shared with someone in a discussion about the gospel of John why

this is such an intriguing image. In the rocky Judean hillsides there is often little building material except for the rocks that cover the ground. Corrals are often nothing more than circular enclosures made of stacked stone with a single opening for the sheep to enter and exit. Once the animals are safely inside the fold the shepherd lays between the openings; his body literally becoming the gate and allowing nothing harmful to enter the fold.

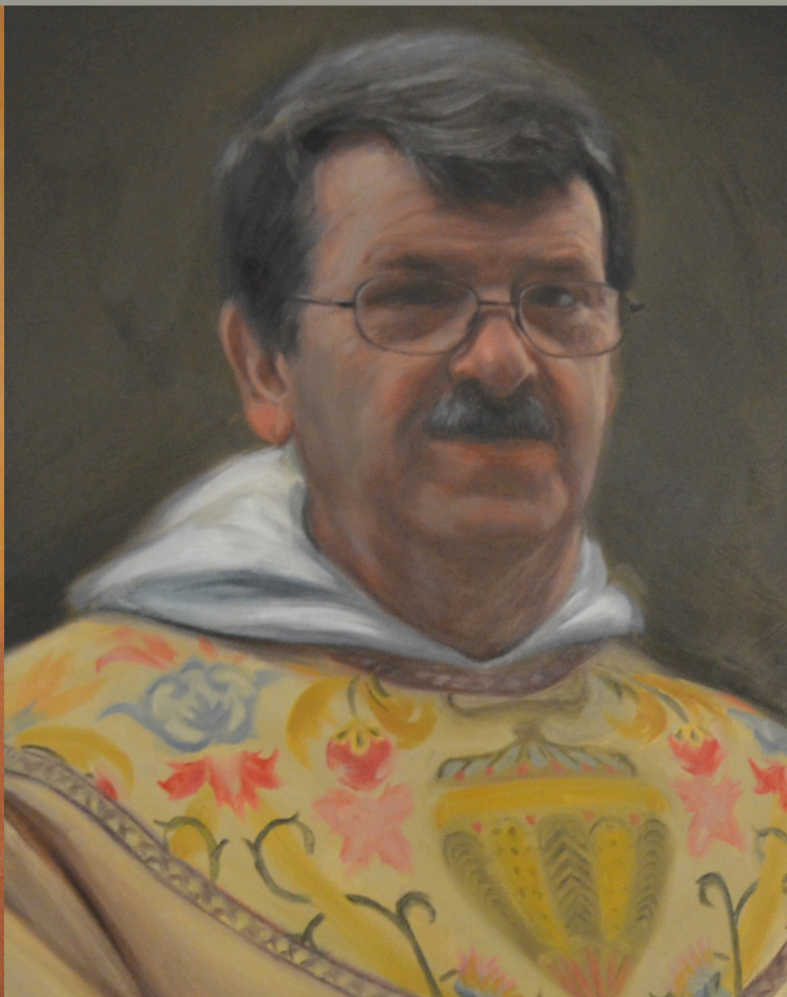
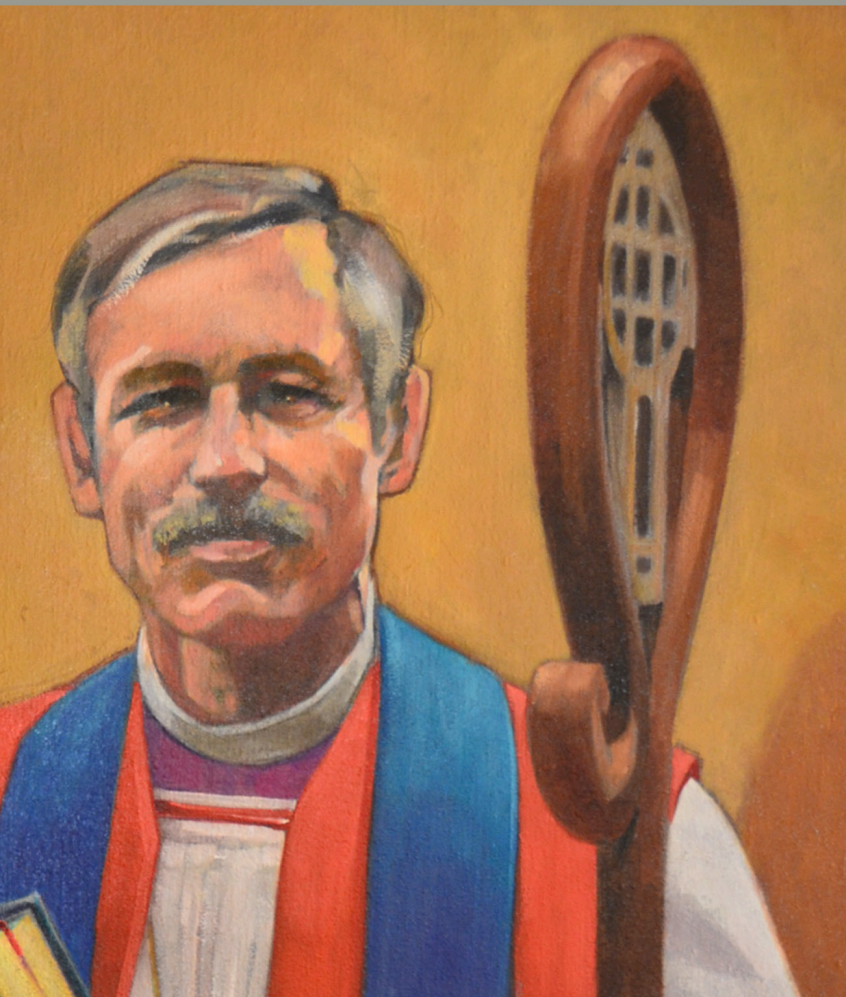
During this season after Pentecost I am continuing to reflect on Jesus’ identity and mission. Jesus is the “savior,” a word that carries various meanings: redeemer, protector, or rescuer. Being a “gate” is one way that Jesus saves, rescues, and lays down his life for us. This image gives me a new way to think about Jesus’ self-offering on the cross. His body hanging on the cross becomes a gate through which we pass from estrangement to restoration, from dangerous places to the safety of home, from being nameless and unknown to being part of a family of beloved daughters and sons. This “good” news allows us to proclaim in every season (not just Easter): Alleluia, Christ is Risen!



A Good Old Fashioned HOMECOMING

Please tell your friends and family members that everyone is meeting back at Holy Innocents' Church on Sunday, September 24 for Homecoming.

More information to come. Mark your calendars and plan on joining us.



The Rt. Rev. Bob Johnson will return to Holy Innocents to preach and confirm those seeking to join the Episcopal Church.

We will also be joined by The Very Rev. Joe Reynolds and The Rev. John Porter. We will have special music and traditional hymn-singing as well as lunch at the church.





WE SEND YOU FORTH

The Rev. Will Stanley

Curate

“We send you forth, bearing these holy gifts...”

These are some of the words we say on many Sundays when lay eucharistic visitors come forward to the altar to receive the recently consecrated elements of bread and wine. Those visitors are sent forth to visit all those who are part of our Holy Innocents’ family but are not able to be with us that day, for whatever reason. It is a powerful embodiment of what we say so often, that we are one body—the Body of Christ—with many members; all of us are always part of something larger than the sum of our individual parts.

Our practice of “sending forth” is not limited to lay eucharistic visitors. We send forth many folks, often in the context of some kind of transition. One which I’ve experienced up close is with our graduating high school seniors. When I arrived at Holy Innocents wet behind the ears of seminary in June, 2015, this parish already had traditions which marked this occasion and kept our young people connected to this place once they were off to college or some other experience. During my first year, I was privileged to get to know a great group of young people in their last year of high school. They welcomed me—a new youth leader not all that much older than them—with open arms. We laughed a lot that year.

We “sent forth” those seniors, as well as our most recent group of folks in the class of 2017, with a simple lunch. Families of the graduates were invited, along with the adult volunteers who have been the consistent thread amidst clergy transitions over the years. We “sent them forth” WITH something, too: a framed copy of our Icon of the Holy Innocents. And because us clergy types almost always feel a need to preach, each year I gave them a similar charge of “we send you forth bearing these holy gifts” for these soon-to-be-college-freshmen.

I called on them to remember this place, where they are and will continue to be loved. I gave them permission to seek out a new home at a local Episcopal community, be it a parish, a college chaplaincy, or some other space. I also gave them permission to make their own decisions about how they wished to continue their experience of God in the world. Yet I asked that they give the Icon a chance when setting up their dorm rooms, for it can be a powerful reminder of who they are and from where they have been “sent forth.” Connection matters.

And like so many things, what is true for teenagers is just as true for any of us along the generational spectrum: may we be sent forth into the world, bearing our lives as holy gifts to all those whom we meet.





FROM THE CHANCEL RAIL: SOMETHING NEW IN CHRIST CHAPEL

The Rev. Buddy Crawford
Senior Associate Rector

Soon you will see something new in our chapel. An aumbry (or ambry) is being made for the reservation of consecrated bread and wine following communion services in the chapel. These cupboards may be made of wood or metal; sometimes they are called tabernacles especially in the Roman Catholic tradition. An aumbry is typically affixed to a wall of the church, built into a niche within a wall, or placed on a shelf or table close to the altar. Clergy and Eucharistic Visitors often use bread and wine from the aumbry to take communion to the sick or homebound.

Historically, ambries have been used to keep chalices and patens, sacred books, and oils for anointing. It is now customary to have aumbries dedicat-

ed to storing the sacrament separately from the one used for storing sacred oils for healing and baptism.

At Holy Innocents we already have two aumbries for the sacrament, one in the nave and the other in the oratory. The nave aumbry is a wooden cupboard on the wall to the left of the altar. It is the most common form used in the Episcopal Church. In the oratory the aumbry is made of metal and is in the shape of a pelican and holds only consecrated bread. During the early centuries of the Church the sacrament was reserved in a pyx, a small container that was suspended above the altar. The hanging pyx was often made in the shape of a bird.

VOLUNTEERS Needed!



Let your child's imagination soar as we begin VBS 2017 June 19-23. This year we will be enjoying "Maker Fun Factory" where PreK-3rd graders will learn about God's purpose through invention. 4th and 5th graders are invited to come as helpers.

It is that time again! We are looking for volunteers to help this year. Please consider volunteering to help during this wonderful week. Parental involvement makes all the difference to our kids. Contact The Rev. Will Stanley for more information or to volunteer.





PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE ALTAR GUILD

Nettie Silva

Altar Guild Member

The Training Course for Altar Guilds manual by Don Taylor shares this story about an Altar Guild person:

"A delightful white haired lady enjoyed teasing people who asked her age by saying, "My dear, I won't tell you how old I am, but I was a waitress at the last supper." Her story might not be exactly true, but think about it, someone had to clean and prepare the room and meal for Jesus and his disciples; and someone had to clean up the room and do the dishes after the whole group departed to the Garden of Gethsemane. We don't think of that person as the founder of the altar guilds – though maybe we should."

Taylor, Don B., The Complete Training course for Altar Guilds. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Morehouse Publishing, 1993.

Altar Guilds for lay people date back to the mid-nineteenth century but their roots go all the way back to the earliest days of the church. The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus written around 200 C.E. in Rome describes the care of the church vessels to the subdeacon, books to the lector, and the building to the doorkeeper. Later these duties were assigned to a sacristan who managed the church building and everything in it. The sacristan duties were performed by 'minor orders' of monks or lay persons. However, these 'minor orders' were not recognized by the Church of England after the Reformation so the duties of the sacristan were transferred to the parish clerk. Nineteenth century movements including the Oxford and Cambridge movements promoted more involvement of the laity in the church's life, including liturgical ministries. This meant the parish clerk did not have to perform all liturgical duties or activities relating to the altar. Those duties were assumed by volunteers who became known as the Altar Guild.

After that history lesson, let me jump to St. Peter's in Rome about 30 years ago. My husband and I were in St. Peter's for the first time and were truly overwhelmed by the magnificent splendor of the interior of the church. As we walked through the church taking in the beauty, I happened upon a small side chapel that was very simple as compared to the other chapels. The sunlight was streaming in and a petite nun was placing a beautiful cloth on the altar. I stood there and watched as she quietly and efficiently arranged candles, containers and other objects on the altar. Since I was raised as a Methodist and had not yet become a member of the Episcopal Church, I really didn't know what the nun was doing. But I recognized it as a beautiful scene with a person obviously in a moment of quite joy.

Fast forward fifteen years or so and Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church and School had become an integral part of our family life. When my husband and I became empty nesters I was wondering how I would fill this new void in my life. Then one of my friends from our Foyers group invited me to join the Altar Guild. This seemed just like the right thing to do at that time. And it was. As the

years passed and with support from members of the Altar Guild I learned the ins and outs of preparing for Eucharist services. I came to understand the basic duties of the Altar Guild to be the preparation of the Eucharist and any other sacraments and offices of the church, so they are carried out with decency, order and beauty.

The Altar Guild is a dedicated group of volunteers that work closely with the clergy to make sure the many and diverse Eucharistic services at Holy Innocents are appropriately set up. Serving as a Team Leader and then Chair of the Altar Guild, I have come to know and enjoy working with clergy and the other members of the Altar Guild and understand that it is all about teamwork and reverence for the liturgy.

Being a part of this group has enriched my life in ways I did not expect. I have learned so much about the history of the church and why celebrate Eucharist the way we do. But on a deeper and more important level it has enabled me to experience a spirituality that I had not experienced before. Being a member of the Altar Guild has been a factor in my personal spiritual journey and being an active participant in my church is important to me and it is a core component of my life. In reflecting back on the nun preparing the altar at St. Peter's many years ago, I understand I have had many moments of 'quiet joy' while preparing for a service so the Eucharist is conducted in decency, order and beauty.

Please let me take this opportunity to invite you to join the Altar Guild. I don't think you can find a more friendly, kind and caring group anywhere! There are four Altar Guild teams and each team serves for one week a month. So this means the average time commitment is about one and one-half hours per month. This typically includes about an hour on Saturday morning to prepare the nave and the chapel for Sunday services and then about thirty minutes to set up for a service or clean up after a service, which is usually the one you are already attending. If you wish to be more involved with the church, becoming a member of the Altar Guild is a wonderful way to start!





THE MEN OF HOLY INNOCENTS RETREAT

Mike Ernst
Retreat Attendee

The Men of Holy Innocents' ("MOHI") gathered in the mountains of Western North Carolina for their annual retreat the weekend of May 5 through 7, 2017. MOHI returned to Lake Logan Episcopal Center near Canton, NC, for a weekend of fellowship, introspective religious study and discussion, focus on personal and communal growth, shared meals, compline, Eucharist, wonder in the midst of God's natural beauty, and group activities. This year's study and discussion program was led by the Rev. Bill Harkins of the Cathedral of St. Philip. Rev. Harkins focused on Fr. Richard Rohr's book, [Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life](#), and incorporated other biblical, cultural, practical, and scholarly sources about male faith, as well as the personal and vulnerable sharing of stories. In [Falling Upward](#), Fr. Richard Rohr grapples with the two "halves" of life and shows that those who have fallen, failed, or "gone down" are the only ones who truly understand "up." While most tend to think of the "second half of life" in the chronological sense (i.e., growing old, dealing with health issues, and letting go of life), the whole thesis of Rohr's book (and the retreat's focus) is exactly the opposite. Instead, according to Rohr, what looks like "falling down" can largely be experienced as "falling upward." These topics allowed the retreat participants to discuss their own brokenness – and the opportunities for growth created thereby.

The weekend retreat was carefully planned to balance deep and meaningful programming with community-building activities. The retreat kicked off with a Friday social hour, communal dinner, short program on the weekend's theme by Rev. Harkins, and compline, followed by community time of fellowship and shared stories. Saturday's schedule began with breakfast, an intensive half-day program of study, discussion, and introspection led by Rev. Harkins, and lunch together. Participants were then free for the afternoon to engage in unstructured time or planned activities. While some spent quiet

time (alone or together) in the beauty of Lake Logan, others engaged in group activities including: fishing; a hike up to a snowy 6000 feet; a golf outing in cold and wet conditions; and a field trip to experience Asheville's unique blend of music, arts, and craft breweries. Saturday evening, all men came back together for dinner, a bonfire, and more time spent together with conversation and music. Sunday brought an early breakfast, a closing plenary discussion led by Rev. Harkins, and a celebration of the Eucharist before departure.

The retreat brought together a broad cross-section of HIEC's men. Participants ranged in age from their 20's to their 80's. Attendees included single, married/partnered, divorced, and widowed men; while many had children and/or grandchildren, others did not. Retreaters crossed the entire spectrum of levels of involvement in HIEC's programs and ministries: from clergy members to Vestry members to "Regular Joes" to avowed back-benchers; and from visitors or folks searching for a church home to new members to returning members to long-time parishioners. The common thread among all of these disparate individuals was that all were "Men of Holy Innocents" – and all took time from their busy lives to come together to seek a deeper connection with God and their faith through community.

MOHI is a fascinating model at our parish. It is not a group, per se, to the extent that word implies exclusivity. Rather, MOHI is quite simply all Men of Holy Innocents'. Under this "umbrella" are many subsets based on shared interests, including the Men's Book Club, Third Friday Breakfasts, Road to Emmaus Bible Study, an annual cookout, and other interests/activities. We invite all men at HIEC to find their place within MOHI and join others seeking a deeper connection to the Divine through one another



WHY FLOWERS?

Maidee Spencer

Flower Guild Design Chairman

CELEBRATE! Family, friends, health, achievements, thanksgivings, birthdays. Anniversaries, life, season, sunshine, rain - any of these is an excuse to celebrate God's love in flowers.

It is the greatest pleasure and honor to design flowers to enhance the liturgy and celebrate the sponsors.

Holy Innocents' contemporary nave setting and huge suspended cross soar above the altar making our design challenge large. But our 20 Flower Guild members have gotten comfortable with the challenge.

IS THERE A PLAN? Oh yes! All the plants and flowers grow from simplicity to abundance from the doors, past the font, to the altar.

You may have noticed a network of large bare lichen branches framing the pulpit and above the nave shelves during Lent. This symbolized Christ's sacrifice during the 40 Days.

Then at Easter the sticks burst into bloom with parrot tulips and an explosion of blooming cherry blossom branches.

And for the first time we made a live Oasis floral garland draped around the nave Pascal Candle.

WE NEED YOUR HELP! No experience or skills needed. We do small jobs-sweeping, cleaning, storing, washing and sanitizing buckets and containers. Conditioning flowers properly after Thursday delivery is essential to making flowers last in designs (some Easter flowers were still thriving two weeks later!) Madly moving designs into place Easter Saturday or between 10 and 2 on Advent IV when it

is also Christmas Eve!

Next we have small introductory design jobs such as preparing Petal Pushers flowers for shut-ins at Christmas and Easter; or prepping water tubes and covering them with leaves for Processional Crosses at big Festivals.

Intermediate skills are required to design the floral wreaths for the Pascal Candles and torches.

The most challenging design jobs are the pulpit and pedestal.

Every single space to be decorated has a photo or drawing and a flower recipe. No one is left on their own.

WON'T YOU HELP? We would teach you proper conditioning procedures for specific flowers: regular, bulb and woody stems. We plan several workshops for training and hands on practice.

DO YOU GROW aucuba, variegated pittisporum, contorted fig or filbert, Little Gem or Brown Betty magnolia? Please tell us and share.

DO YOU HAVE A CELEBRATION OR A MEMORY TO HONOR WITH FLOWERS?

Call Melody to choose your Sunday: 404-255-4023.

GROW WITH US! JOIN US! SPONSOR FLOWERS! COME TO WORKSHOPS AND LEARN TO ARRANGE!



CHOIR AS FORMATION

David Brensinger

Choirmaster

I believe almost everyone has had the experience of hearing a passage of scripture read and immediately having a musical setting of that scripture pop into one's head. Perhaps it is something like Isaiah 40:4—"Every valley shall be exalted"—which many associate with the tenor aria from Handel's *Messiah*, a perennial Advent/Christmas holiday favorite. Or the verse "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33) which almost can't be heard without calling to mind the simple hymn in the Episcopal Hymnal 1982. And, of course, this happens with non-sacred texts: if someone were to say "don't stop thinking about tomorrow," would your brain not "hear" the popular Fleetwood Mac tune? How often have children learned the books of the Bible by singing something like "Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John..."

Children and adults of all ages have learned and memorized scripture as a result of singing scripture in hymns and anthems all their lives. They have learned of the love of God, the glory of Christ, the moving of the Holy Spirit, the compassion of others, the message of hope, etc.

In addition, choristers—young and old alike—have learned to be fully involved as both worshipers and leaders in the liturgies of the Church. They learn commitment, teamwork, dedication, and perhaps most importantly, the joy of creating beauty through music in the midst of the liturgy and offering that beauty on behalf of the congregation as an offering to God. Consider that, as the ushers collect alms, and as the clergy prepare the gifts of bread and wine, the choir (and/or organist) is also presenting the gift of an anthem or voluntary.

All of this certainly contributes to the Christian and life formation of those involved. Here at Holy Innocents', we are particularly fortunate to be able to offer opportunities for children and young people the opportunity to engage in such formation. The Primary Choir and Music Experience for Young Children is led by Suzanne Logue, who is a dedicated educator and talented musician with nearly 30 years of public school teaching experience. The St. Cecilia & St. Nicolas Choirs, for girls and boys third grade and older, are active as leaders in the 9:00 am liturgy about twice a month. Through the Royal School of Church Music training that we offer, they learn about the liturgy, the Bible, music reading, the seasons of the Church year, and service to God and others. This responsibility and opportunity for joyful expression forms them in their lives both at Church and in the world beyond.

You are invited to consider what choir membership can do for your children, and what they can do for the Church, and the depth of formation that this can bring to them today and for the rest of their lives. While we're at the end of the current choir season, watch for information about the commencement of fall rehearsals in late August, and plan for your child to participate in the fun and satisfaction and formation of choir!



EMMAUS HOUSE: LIVES CHANGED

Rosalyn Devine

Parishioner

This article is excerpted from a 2016 Faith Forum when the Devines shared their experiences in family outreach at Emmaus House.

I wonder if you have met Claiborne Jones? If you have you know that when Claiborne asks you to do something it is lawfully hard to say no. And so a few years ago I joined the Emmaus House Advisory Board. As a veteran reading teacher, I was drawn to the children. As you may know, Emmaus House serves the community of Peoplestown in Atlanta, just behind Turner Field. Emmaus House was founded by Father Ford, an Episcopal priest and advocate for civil rights. A large component of the services rendered at Emmaus are for children. This was an obvious fit for me. So, I have done my best to help the children there most directly through teaching and reading instruction evaluation of the summer programs there. I have taught all kinds of children at Emmaus House through the years. Some are easy to teach, and honestly, some are really tough. I bring a lot of candy. But, what I am clear about is that I see the face of God in these children and they give my family and me more than I could ever give. To say these experiences have deepened my faith is an understatement. They make my faith real. A number of years ago my children, James and Anna, wrote about their experiences at Emmaus House as I had brought them with me during the summer to help and be part of the experience. This is what they had to say:

ANNA, AT AGE 12, "Never Letting Go" -

The day was coming to a close, and we only had one more group of kids to go. "I really like these kids, Mom," I said, sitting down on one of the stools and popping almonds in my mouth. It was a turning point. Every single one of the kids I had met was caring and beautiful, even if they jumped out of their seats every once in a while. My mother looked at me and smiled as the last kids came in. Their 'shepherd' was my brother, James, and he looked exhausted after taking them to classes for a few hours. The first girl walked in jumping up and down and pointing to James and laughing about making him wear a girl's bright orange bracelet. She pulled out a chair, made herself comfortable, and asked what we were going to do. This girl, Faith, was shorter and thin with lanky arms. The other, Onya, was tall and big and had a deep voice when she laughed. I became very close with these two girls over the week. They had a passion for learning and paid attention when my mom taught them new tricks or when I played fun games and read with them. After the hour would pass they would be sad to leave and thanked us for helping

them. I'd never felt like I was more accepted by anyone. Faith and Onya, and everyone else, had showed me not to worry about difference, but to accept it. We always laughed at dinner that week talking about Faith and Onya and everyone else at the camp and told stories to my dad! The rest of the week seemed to fly by and on that Friday I was surprised about how sad I was to leave everyone. The change from the first time I walked into the art room to the last was so dramatic, that I was happily surprised. My mother was beyond happy about how James and I had had fun and loved the kids. My mother and I finished our last class and walked outside to say goodbye to the kids and drive back home. I was walking down the concrete steps when Aniya came up to me. She gave me a hug and spoke softly: "I'm never letting go!" I hugged her for a while and said goodbye to the rest of the kids as we walked down to our car. I kept thinking about Aniya as I pressed my nose against the glass window and watched Emmaus House slip away. I was so amazed about the effect I'd left on her and how she'd left an effect on me.



JAMES, AT AGE 14, "Give it Time" -

One recent summer I volunteered with my family at the Emmaus House summer reading camp. In the days before we started our work with the children of Peoplestown a feeling of anxiety swept over me. This came from my fears about the differences I thought I would find between the campers we would be teaching and myself. I felt as if there would be no connections to be found. Would they reject me? Would they judge me? Would I have anything to talk to them about? When Monday morning arrived we met two kids, BJ and Jerome. They were eating Hot Cheetos for breakfast at a table in the middle of the dining room. To my surprise they were never shy, judgmental, or secretive, but instead quickly accepted me. Later on that morning, I became a shepherd for two girls, Faith and Onya. These

girls were at first shy and reluctant to be at camp, but within the first hour, they opened up in a big way. I was amazed at how loving and caring they were, especially towards my mother. They would give her hugs every time they saw her and told her stories about the days before. As each day passed, they became their true selves and we became friends. By the last day of camp, my view on these kids had completely shifted. I found that I enjoyed being with Faith, Onya, BJ, Jerome, Marquise, Marquita, and Trenton at Emmaus House even more than kids the same age in my own neighborhood. I learned that my assumptions had been wrong and how important it is to spend time with people who we perceive as different from ourselves.

In short, it appears to me that my children learned valuable lessons that opened their perspective, as did I. That's it. And if that is not deepening of faith, especially when learned through the eyes of children, I don't know what is. Now, let's be clear. All of my experiences with children have deepened my faith whether they are here on this campus or with those in Peoplestown or even in my own home. But there is something unique about the children that come to Emmaus House. Maybe just because it is, in some way, unexpected. I know that my time spent at Emmaus House has taught me to keep searching for the face of God in others, and for me that is a story worth telling. My story has taught me that there is a real reason that Jesus was so adamant about the children as we have much, much to learn from them. As we read in Matthew 18, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'"



DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO ME RIGHT NOW?

The Rev. Will Stanley
Curate

That proactive question comes from author, consultant, and motivational speaker Simon Sinek. Given as part of a recent talk to tech leaders that's gone viral online, Sinek asks this question in response to the common practice of folks having phones "on the table" during meetings or meals. The simple presence of the device, he argues, gives an unconscious sign—through a kind of extended "body language", if you will—to all those nearby that they are just not as important, not as desirable for our attention and care. So why do we do this?

Well, says Sinek, simply put...we're addicted. And like many addictions, it's not altogether apparent to any of us that it's gotten that bad. It's just become more and more the norm, like a temperature moving up ever-so-slightly in a room until someone thinks to ask, "Hey, isn't it a little hot in here?" For so many of us, the tools that have connected us to some many have often impaired our relationships with those right in our midst.



Sinek's video was the topic of a recent EYC gathering with our young people. As I've been helping to lead our work

with 6th-12th grade students these last two years, I've gone through my own evolution when it comes to how we structure those formation sessions. Translating the cornerstones of Christian faith in our Episcopal tradition in such a way that it is intelligible to the daily struggles and joys of life as a teenager is the task. And it's a tall one, requiring more than simply printing out a canned curriculum. So I hoped using Sinek's video to talk about relationships with God and one another wouldn't be too off-putting for our students. Well, to say I was pleasantly surprised would be an understatement!

In their own ways, they spoke about their desire to be less saturated by technology and social media. They also named how they often can feel as if they don't know how to "tune out" from the constant need to refresh, reload, post, and update. So what were we to do? Well, we committed to take one small step. As you'll see in the photo above we agreed to keep formation time as a technology sabbath. We committed to honor one another by giving each other our full attention; to say to each person gathered, "you ARE, in fact, the most important thing, the most important person to me right now."



LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN PRAYING

The Rev. Will Stanley
Curate

Some of you know that the Rev. Lisa Zaina and I went to the same seminary. We overlapped for one year at Yale (my first, her final.) One of the joys of that environment is its eclectic nature: Christians of all stripes and types studying, praying, and living together in a Divinity school community within one of the world's great, secular Universities.

A staple of that diverse community is Marquand Chapel, where worship takes place each weekday classes are in session. Its liturgy and music embrace the fullness of the spectrum of Christianity. I was privileged to experience so much music I might never have encountered if left to only our Episcopal standards. One such hymn is a short piece written by Ken Medema:

Lord, listen to your children praying
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying
Send us love,
Send us power,
Send us grace.

Medema's words certainly apply to any of us, as we are all God's children. Yet when reflecting on our work with children "in this place" of Holy Innocents, this short came to mind. We are listening. We are planning. We are dreaming. This time of transition at Holy Innocents extends to our ministry with children and their families.

At the time I'm writing this article (early May), we are close to completing our search process for a new Senior Program Staff member in a Director of Formation for Children, Youth, and Family Ministry. This full-time position will allow us to give intentional energy, time, and resources to perhaps the most important area of in parish life: our younger people. It also comes as a result of taking Medema's words to heart: we've listened, we've prayed, and we've asked God for love, power, and an ample dose of grace, too!

As baptized members of the Body of Christ, children and youth are indispensable to our common life. By virtue of their baptism, they are full members of the Body. Period. And they have much to teach us...if we would listen. Any of the clergy and other lay leaders who are present weekly in Children's Chapel or Sunday morning formation can attest to this. I most often see and hear their gift of wonder in all things. And it's a lesson each of us needs to hear and learn in this and all times.

Each of us is called to ministry by virtue of our baptism. Period. How might you respond to the call of our children praying? How might you partner with God in offering love, power, and grace alongside our youngest members and their families?

Happy Listening!







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