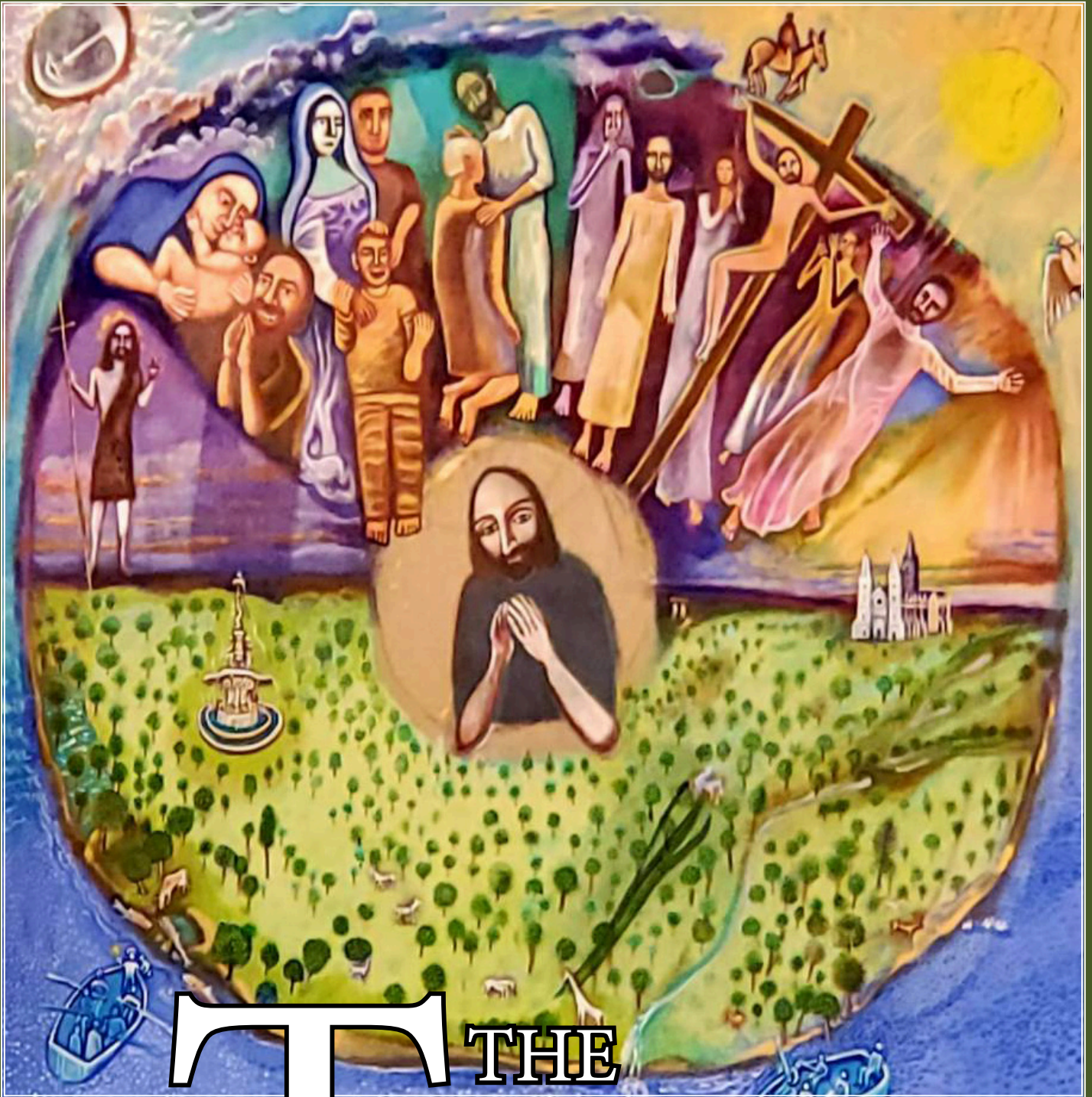


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# THE TABLE

LENT & EASTER



# Letter from the Editor

THIS YEAR IN *THE TABLE*, we are exploring the work of the Body of Christ, as well as the mission of Church of the Redeemer, through the overarching categories of “body,” “mind,” and “spirit.” We begin with **body**. I had assumed that to focus on the “bodily” work of the Church meant to explore only the physical labor our bodies are doing in service: Who we are helping, why, and how. But as I began delving into the theology of the body, I quickly discovered that this aspect of our humanity is far more complex and essential than I had realized.

I was struck by how ignorant I have been of the theological importance of the body, and found myself wondering how I had gotten to that place. A prevailing notion in and around my spiritual formation is that we are meant to slough off our sin-riddled flesh in order to achieve holiness. We tend to do this through mistreatment, denigration, and improvement (attempted or achieved) of our bodies—as though through our work we might transcend our bodies and reach God. In a presentation from 2015 called “The Tree of Knowledge: Bodies, Minds and Thoughts,” Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams discusses this human idea that the mind is the place of divine communion rather than the body. That to transcend—leaving behind our physical form—through the purity of knowledge would be to achieve our truest selves. This is not so, he argues. We are no self at all without the home where it dwells. We have no knowledge without our bodies, for what our minds have acquired has happened through the processes connected to the body.

We may have been trying to leave behind our bodies to “reach God,” but it is by taking on flesh that God reached for us. As Dr. Julie Canlis explores in her plenary session from our diocese’s Convocation in 2021, liturgy is an invitation to practice the wholeness of the human experience by stepping into Jesus’ own embodiment. Yearly at Christmas, we reenact his acceptance of the physical experience as he descends into flesh and blood and bones. Then through Epiphany, we witness his encounters in and through that body. During Lent, where we find ourselves now in the liturgical calendar, we watch him face the difficulties of that inhabitation as he submits to his calling.

In his beautiful book of the same title, Williams articulates that our bodies are “where God happens.” And while we may need to practice acknowledging the *beauty* of this truth, *difficulty* is also a part of this equation. Even as I write this, it comes starkly to mind that there are many for which a “return to the body” is painful, triggering, even dangerous. Malcolm Guite, reflecting on his responsive poem to Dante’s journey in *Paradise Lost*, says:

## ABOUT THE ART

Cover Art, untitled by Michael McVeigh

McVeigh is a Edinburgh-based artist whose paintings identify strongly with Scotland, its people and Scottish culture. This piece was commissioned by Dr. Julie Canlis as a visual immersion into the year-long cycle of the Life of Jesus. More of Michael’s work can be enjoyed at [michael-mcveigh.co.uk](http://michael-mcveigh.co.uk)

Throughout the journey into the Inferno we are shown signs that Christ has been this way ahead of us and broken down the strongholds...We, who build so many hells on earth, need to know that there is no place so dark, no situation so seemingly hopeless, that cannot be opened to the light of Christ for rescue and redemption...For all of us, somewhere within, there is a threshold or a gate beyond which we feel we dare not go, but it may be just past that threshold that our real healing and restoration needs to take place (*Word in the Wilderness*, 86-87).

Perhaps the deepest solidarity we have with one another is this quintessential piece of human reality: our trajectory towards death. This commonality transcends all preferences, backgrounds, and experiences. In such things as weakness, failure, tragedy, and loss, we are most connected to one another. It is the same for all of us: We cannot but live through our body as it is given to us. If our bodies are the place to find and know God, then the sharing of need and helping to meet it in each other is evangelism. Our experience of God is effectively exchanged through our service; his love passing through us to one another, often wordlessly.

We offer in the pages of this issue a meager discussion of this rich topic of bodily work. We hope that these articles about baptism and sensory faith, service and benevolence, feasting and inhabiting, will give you a starting point to delve more deeply into this intimate theology. May you find yourself more attuned to the beautiful instrument of your body, even in “minor keys” of life. As we inhabit the church calendar in this season of Lent, may you find solidarity with our community in renewed physical awareness—of feet, legs, back and hands, chest that trembles subtly with each heartbeat; of shoulders, arms, hands and flexing fingers tipped by barely-visible prints that say you are the only you. And yes, may you be aware of your spine and the great heavy thing it carries about that absorbs so much of your sensory experiences, firing at alarming speed the electric energies of process and thought. We are the whole of these things.

Through the fasting of Lent, the uncomfortable awarenesses of Holy Week, and the shocking brilliance of Easter, may we together awaken to the wholeness of the self and its experiences, tuning in to the beauty of our embodied lives as we take a front row seat to the captivating drama taking place in this visceral space.

**With Joy,  
Laura Fissel  
Managing Editor**

pg 7, “Through the Gate,” poem by Malcolm Guite

Guite is an English poet, singer-songwriter, Anglican priest, and academic. This poem can be found read aloud by Guite and paired with William Blake’s painting “The Inscription over Hell-Gate” (seen here on pg 8) on his blog [malcolmguite.wordpress.com](http://malcolmguite.wordpress.com). Visit this online space for other fantastic poems and musings as well as information about his many wonderful books.

# THE TABLE

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OUR BAPTISM  
by Dr. Julie Canlis



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by Dr. J.R. Briggs



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# LENT

## REMEMBERING OUR BAPTISM

Something parents often find themselves doing with small children is helping them to anticipate and enter big events—like birthdays, or taking the time to bury dead birds, or making the emotional journey toward the first day of school.

I was faced with this preparatory responsibility a decade ago when I needed to help our four children get ready for a trans-Atlantic move. We had raised them in Scotland, eating shepherd's pie, surrounded by sheep, and now they were supposed to become Americans overnight?

We couldn't figure out how to make the transition one which would help our children with the massive change – one which would honor the emotional and psychological distances they would be crossing to change culture, friends, continents. We needed some way for them to cross this distance. We could have taken a plane and been in Seattle in 13 hours! But we knew we needed time to cover the distance. So instead, we settled on going by boat ... for 7 days.

When the Statue of Liberty finally came into view, we felt ready. We felt like pilgrims (although our accommodation wasn't exactly like the Mayflower). Something inside us had had time to catch up to the immensity of the journey. We were now Americans.

Lent is very much like this.

We know Easter is coming, but how do we avoid just rushing right through the mystery? The early church knew that Christians would have a hard time getting ready for Easter on our own. Lent is a period of time set aside to help people prepare for Easter. It is choosing to get on a boat for 40 days when we could just get there in 13 hours by plane.

Lent is a gift: A grace given through trial and error by past spiritual giants in the church who acted like good parents, trying to help their children get ready for, and be able to

take in, the big events in their lives.

In the early days of Christianity, getting baptized was like a death-warrant. Not everyone was cut out for persecution, and so they didn't automatically baptize people who were interested in Jesus. Instead, they trained baptismal candidates in a "spiritual gymnasium" (called a catechumenate) for three years to make sure that these people were tough enough to endure the persecution that was most certainly ahead. Imagine waiting three years for your baptism!

These three years of training were like a prolonged spiritual high – gathering in catacombs, secret passwords, intimacy with God, growing knowledge of Scriptures. And if your life reflected a growing Christ-likeness and trust in Jesus, you would be considered ready for baptism. You would fast and pray and finish preparations in the 40 days leading up to this day. Some things were so classified that you weren't taught them until the week of your baptism—the Lord's Prayer and the Creed were never written down, but passed on orally.

And then, at long last, at midnight as Holy Saturday was rolling into Easter Sunday, you declared something very unusual: you declared your death. As Colossians 2 says, "for you were buried with Christ when you were baptized, and with him you were raised to new life." In baptism, you get to die before you die.

Some early baptismal fonts help us, through their architecture, understand how the early Christians thought about baptism:

EARLY CHRISTIAN BAPTISTRIES proclaimed this message loud and clear, as they were in the shape of mausoleums: Roman burial chambers. To go inside what was normally a funerary building for one's baptism declareds: "you are going here to die. We are burying a deceased person. Sin killed you. You are just reenacting your death. You will rise to a new identity – of being

in Christ, and in his body of other people."

ONCE INSIDE THE MAUSOLEUM, the architecture shouted to you about new life. One ancient baptismal font is in the shape of an Octagon, which for the early Christians was all about the New Creation. If creation happened in seven days, and Jesus rose on the "eighth day," then God has inaugurated a new creation in the life-death-resurrection of Jesus ... otherwise known as the 8th day. You would enter the mausoleum, where normally there would be a dead body, but instead of a corpse on a platform, there was a font where one "went to die." The fact that this font was octagonal helped these early Christians understand that they were not just stepping into the waters of baptism, they were stepping into the 8th day of creation. They had been re-created. Anything could happen now.

ANOTHER FONT WITH EQUALLY STRONG IMAGERY was in the shape of a womb. You must be born again, said Jesus – and how direct was this imagery of female anatomy! And just in case you think this is a bit odd, did you know that people were baptized completely naked? The early church was clear: you are dying with Christ, and being raised with Christ. You are reversing the shame that Adam and Eve experienced in the garden, and being born anew, into the 8th day of creation.





So what does all this have to do with Lent?

After the persecutions were over, after Christianity became an empire religion, Christianity faced a different kind of crisis. What was once dangerous (to be a Christian), suddenly became fashionable. What once could get you killed now got you a tax-break.

To be honest, this isn't too far from a crisis we ourselves are facing. What do we do when our Christianity is easy, doesn't require too much of us, makes us complacent and inward-focused? Do we read more books? Look for the next radical thing to do? Join an extreme ministry team? This is a crisis for us on both a national and a personal level.

The early church came up with a

solution which might be helpful for us today. These early Christians remembered the three years of intense training to get to their baptism; they remembered the 40 days of fasting up until Easter Eve—the night of their baptism; and they remembered all this with fondness and even nostalgia. And they said “Let’s go back to our origins. Let’s do our 40 days of baptismal preparations again.” They wanted to look forward to Easter with newness, with joy and rekindled gratitude. They didn’t want their faith to become routine and old. This is how Lent originated.

So Lent is for those of us who have caught ourselves wanting to feel again what we felt at that Young Life Camp when we first met Jesus. *The Early Church knew that.* Lent is for those of us who have caught ourselves longing for that discipline

that came naturally in our early relationship with God. *The Early Church knew that.* Lent is for those of us who have wanted to just get baptized—to start over—again. *The Early Church knew that, too.*

Lent is not about renunciation. It is about remembering our baptism.

Lent did not begin out of a desire to self-punish or to focus on our sinfulness. It’s even more black and white than that: Lent is about death. But the crazy Christian message is that it is only through death that we taste life. Lent is when the whole church remembers our origins—origins that began in our baptism, and Jesus’ baptism, where he heard the words that we can hardly believe: “you are my beloved.”

Only when this has settled into our depths can we, like Jesus, go into the desert of Lent for 40 days. Jesus was able to endure tremendous temptation in the desert not because he was “divine” but because he was loved. His baptism prepared him for the desert of temptation. In fact, after he was baptized, it says the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. This was his armor against temptation, not divine self-mastery. He knew he was the Father’s son. This and this only should have our attention as we head into our own wilderness this Lent.

Most of us dwell on our flaws before we dwell on God’s love. But this Lent, reverse that trend, and follow Jesus, who first heard God’s word of “beloved” before he headed into the desert. And then, in the strength of that love, enter into Lent. You don’t need something more radical. You don’t need something more punitive. You need to clear the ground so that you can hear God’s word of love over you, and then—yes, you might need to sort through some things that are disordered in your life.

What our baptism gives us is a completely different ground for our identity. What if we took Lent as a 40 day period to remember what

happened to us (possibly when we were babies and hadn’t a clue what was going on): that our baptism is a gift! That we have been “laid-off” or fired from our constant 80-hour work week of maintaining our fragile identities.

Funnily enough, I’ve heard people say that Lent “isn’t in the Bible” or it is just a “man-made routine.” Lent originated out of the early Christians’ desire to not let their faith become routine. It was an annual routine to keep them from the routine. Of course it has been abused – what in our Christian life has not? But that fact shouldn’t keep us from the good parenting techniques that the early church has to offer. Let this be 40 days of remembering your baptism, and the identity it offers you, free of charge.



On Ash Wednesday in the ancient church, everyone came to church to be marked by Jesus’ cruciform way, and declare that they are beloved dust. They were marked with a cross and told “you are but dust.” It marked the beginning of 40 days (not counting Sundays) when you don’t just give up something but you turn towards Jesus and your baptismal identity, leaving behind anything that is making you sluggish.

Of course we should be turning from sin all the time, the way we should be flossing our teeth all the time, but our wise parent The Church has set aside time for us all to remember our baptism. Together. To step down into our true identity. To be plunged into Christ, and leave behind anything that keeps us from knowing we are loved by God, and allowing us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Lent is not an endurance stunt. It is reclaiming that we are loved long before we enter the wilderness.



JULIE CANLIS lives in Wenatchee, Washington and holds a PhD from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She won a Templeton Prize and a Christianity Today “Award of Merit” for her work on John Calvin, entitled *Calvin’s Ladder*. She is a sessional lecturer at Regent College and liturgical director for Trinity Church in Wenatchee, where she is raising four teenagers with husband, and childhood sweetheart, Matt. Her most recent publication is *A Theology of the Ordinary*, which is what happens when PhDs meet gardens, children, and chickens.

The article included here is a written adaptation of a lecture Dr. Canlis gave at Westmont College on March 2 of this year and can be found on Youtube. Church of the Redeemer had the privilege of hosting Dr. Canlis as a speaker at Convocation in 2021. There, she offered a lecture that is an enriching exploration of Paul’s theology as an extended meditation on his baptism, and the church calendar as the embodiment of our own. We highly commend this presentation: it can be viewed by searching for “Convocation 2021 Plenary 3 - Dr. Julie Canlis” on the Diocese of Christ Our Hope Youtube channel.





## “Through the Gate”

by Malcolm Guite

Begin the song exactly where you are  
For where you are contains where you have been  
And holds the vision of your final sphere

And do not fear the memory of sin;  
There is a light that heals, and, where it falls,  
Transfigures and redeems the darkest stain

Into translucent colour. Loose the veils  
And draw the curtains back, unbar the doors,  
Of that dread threshold where your spirit fails,

The hopeless gate that holds in all the fears  
That haunt your shadowed city, fling it wide  
And open to the light that finds and fares

Through the dark pathways where you run and hide,  
through all the alleys of your riddled heart,  
As pierced and open as His wounded side.

Open the map to Him and make a start,  
And down the dizzy spirals, through the dark  
His light will go before you, let Him chart

And name and heal. Expose the hidden ache  
To him, the stinging fires and smoke that blind  
Your judgement, carry you away, the mirk

And muted gloom in which you cannot find  
The love that you once thought worth dying for.  
Call Him to all you cannot call to mind

He comes to harrow Hell and now to your  
Well guarded fortress let His love descend.  
The icy ego at your frozen core

Can hear His call at last. Will you respond?





# WELCOME the hebbards



ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a man who loved the soil in God's acre. This farmer-deacon also treasured the people of the highways and byways, and he often would travel the roads, calling the lost to join him in the harvest fields. In course of time, he took a wife—a storyteller from the ivory towers—and they built a home together.

Early in their marriage, the deacon's wife learned a secret about her husband: once a year, on a night near Michaelmas, he would turn into a ram, burst through their cottage door, and make for the mountains. His wife would follow—nimble at first, and then more slowly, with a baby on her hip—tracing his trail up the wooded slopes. She would find him at the peak and, at sunrise, the ram would turn back to a man and tell his wife all that he could see from the summit. He would put the baby on his shoulders as they made their way back down the mountainside, and the wife would gather the wool that the ram had lost to brambles and branches. Once home, they would build a fire, and the deacon would set to work on his garden, or open the front door to see who might be coming down the road. The wife would sit by the hearth and spin her wool into a strong, smooth yarn. When guests came through their door, she would use the yarn to mend their clothes or knit new hats for them. It was said that anyone who wore these threads was sure to find their way back home.

This is the story that emerged from my prayers when, seven years ago, I married my very own deacon-farmer, Steven. Many in the Redeemer family have met Steven as the Interim Park Director, a role that brought us to Greensboro in January. This move was an exciting step along the vocational journey God has given our family: to equip God's people to practice radical

hospitality. When we met, I was a university professor specializing in fairy tales, and in the relationship between faith and imagination (George MacDonald, anyone?). Steven was running a farming program he had founded for Mobile Loaves & Fishes, an Austin, Texas non-profit committed to the chronically homeless. For the first five years of our marriage, we both lived and served on the staff of a 27-acre tiny-home community Mobile Loaves & Fishes had created for its friends on the streets. Living alongside neighbors who suffered and loved so tremendously shaped the course of our marriage in profound ways. During our time at "the Village," Steven and I launched MLF's education program, bringing in non-profits from around the nation who wanted to extend a more faithful, profound welcome to the homeless. We also led a residential apprenticeship program for young adults, combining service at the Village with a curriculum of "radical homemaking" and Bible study.

We are passionate about Gospel hospitality, and about the ways we meet Jesus when we make room for "the least of these" at our table. Hospitality can seem risky, but when we draw the local church and Christian households closer together, the Spirit releases incredible power for welcome, healing, and celebration. Our prayer is that Steven's work with New Garden Park will advance the ways Redeemer is already a place of welcome, and will empower the households of Redeemer to encounter both the risks and treasures of "entertaining angels."

Along with Steven and myself (Bethany), our household includes our daughter Pearl (3), Caedmon (18 months), and Galahad, our noble Great Pyrenees. We are so excited to know the people of Redeemer more deeply, and we can't wait to hear your stories as you sit at our hearth and table.





# coming to our senses, coming to God

by Dr. J.R. Briggs

After a handful of months, I'm almost back to full health. My sense of taste returned after a few weeks, but my sense of smell took a few months longer. Finally, on a run on a brisk Saturday morning in May, I caught a whiff of a lilac bush as I brushed past. I stopped and spent the next several minutes walking around the park and leaning in to catch the scent of every tree, bush and flower I could see, delighting in God's creativity. It ruined my run, but made my day. When I returned home, I stuck my nose in a bag of freshly ground coffee and took one long, slow inhale. Glorious.

The return of my taste and smell, and the experience of living without them for a time, led me to ponder the importance of our senses in the Christian faith. I reflected upon how Jesus engaged the world through his own senses—and how he encouraged people to engage with their senses to in order to experience the reality of the kingdom.

On several occasions, the gospel writers record that Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion on them. He placed his hands on lepers, blind people, and dead girls, and appropriately touched children—a sign of blessing in first-century Judaism. Quoting from the prophets, Jesus told his disciples they have eyes but they cannot see, and ears but they cannot hear. He enjoyed meals with his disciples—on the shore of Galilee, at the house of Matthew, and at the wedding at Cana. And no doubt, Jesus smelled fresh baked bread, pressed olives and the pungent odor of the feet of his disciples when he stooped down to wash them. Thomas made the brazen statement that he wouldn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead unless he could see the nail marks with his own eyes, put his finger where the nails were, and put his hand into the side of Jesus. When Jesus appeared to his disciples he didn't prove the resurrection to Thomas by reviewing doctrinal statements of his deity or reminding him of the points of his teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. Instead he encouraged him to use his senses.

During the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples all five senses were purposefully engaged: the smell of fresh baked bread, and the *glug-glug-glug* as wine was poured into the cup. His disciples saw him break the bread and felt as it was handed to them, and ultimately tasted its

goodness. Even for us today, as we gather around the Table, it is a tactile reminder of the sense-oriented experience of forgiveness, salvation and redemption.

Our five senses are powerful and woefully underrated. Researchers have discovered people can detect at least one trillion distinct smells—and we can even smell fear and disgust. Swedish scientists found that the human finger can decipher between surfaces with ridges as small as 13 nanometers. And the human ear continues to hear sounds even as we sleep. Our senses can be tools and vehicles which usher us closer to our creative God and his vast, vibrant and textured world. Thus, engaging our senses fully is an invitation to a sensual faith.

But for many followers of Christ, even that word *sensual* is awkward, provocative—scandalous, even. For centuries Christians have been nervous about the embrace of our senses—the Puritans are one striking example. Many today worry that an emphasis on a sensory-oriented faith experience could lead to trusting our emotions too much, or that a sensual faith could lead easily to a sexualized faith. We often speak pejoratively about Christians or churches that engage in “smells and bells.” But the origin of these traditions is rich, and its intent rooted in directing our embodied lives back to the God who created us and graciously offered us these sensory gifts.

In a recent *Christianity Today* piece, Jennifer M. Rosner reminds us that the Jewish faith embraces an *embodied* spirituality where people actually live out faith through their physical bodies. She quoted Jewish historian Daniel Boyarin who stated, “Christianity has generally conceived of human beings as embodied souls, while Judaism has conceived of human beings as ensouled bodies.” We often need reminding that it was Torah which taught Jews, (including Jesus) how to order their lives, which ultimately taught them to use their own physical bodies. The irony is that many Christians today believe in and talk about the incarnation of Christ, yet live an excarnated existence. To seek God yet keep our senses at arm's length is incongruous. Discipleship is always bodily.

But how are we to engage with God and live incarnation-ally by engaging our senses faithfully?

We see throughout Scripture how using our five senses helps us make sense of God. Think of the Psalmist who stated, “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:11). *The Message* translates part of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount as: “You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.” The Old Testament includes God's specific instructions of the construction of the tabernacle and the Temple.

As we read the Bible with a sensory-oriented posture we can engage in imaginative question asking. It was Leonard Sweet who first taught me to ask sensory questions of Scripture:

*What did the garden of Gethsemane smell like?*

*Just how tasty might the food in the garden of Eden have been?*

*What did the disciples voices sound like when they sang a hymn together? (Do you think Peter was off-key?)*

*What did the bread and fish taste like at breakfast on the shore of Galilee (John 21:12–13)?*

*What did it feel like for Jesus to touch the eyes of the blind man outside of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–25)? Were they smooth, or tough and textured?*

One of my favorite questions I like to ask in a conversation, or when teaching my students: *What does God smell like?*

We have permission to ask new—and potentially uncomfortable—questions. Engagement with Scripture is different when you approach it with a posture of wonder, curiosity and imagination. New questions lead to new insight and new encounters in faith.

Additionally, engaging our senses helps us to become more aware of them in order to embrace them appropriately. If we were to ask people when they sense God's presence most deeply, we may hear answers such as: *When I am out in nature. When I am drinking a cup of good coffee. When I hear Debussy's Clair de Lune played on the piano. At the communion table. When I am embraced by those who love me.*

Oftentimes their deepest experiences with God already involve our senses.

Prayer can be a full-bodied sensory experience as well. When our church gathered recently, we were encouraged to stand up and offer praises to God by looking up, extending our hands upward, and expressing our voices loudly and exuberantly. Then we were instructed to stand facing outward, confessing our sin (aloud or silently) and then turning around 180 degrees

FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS, Dr. Briggs has served in pastoral roles in mega-churches, church plants and house church networks. Since starting Kairos Partnerships in 2011, he has served and invested in pastors and kingdom leaders in over 40 denominations throughout North America. He serves as affiliate faculty member of practical theology at Missio Seminary, a guest instructor at Friends University in the Masters of Arts in Spiritual Formation program, the Director of Leadership & Congregational Formation for The Ecclesia Network, and as a National Trainer and Strategist for Fresh Expressions U.S. In his new book, *The Sacred Overlap*, J.R. explores how God's divinity overlaps with his humanity and communicates a refreshing vision that embraces the tension of the both/and of God's presence in the world and in us. The article included here was originally written for published online by *Outreach Magazine*.



toward the center as a physical act of repenting and turning back to God. We could hear people's praises and confessions, we could see people's hands extended, we could feel the physical pressure on the soles of our feet as we stood and turned around. Yes, we could have remained seated and reflected silently while we prayed. But to stand, extend our hands, and say it aloud helps us to embody our prayers in ways that cultivate opportunities for deeper, more experiential connection with God.

Leaning in to the God who created our senses can also embolden us to be more creative in corporate worship. Several years ago, when teaching on Jesus as the Bread of Life, we borrowed a dozen bread makers and had them baking throughout the auditorium before the service. We scheduled them so the loaves finished baking when people first arrived. The congregation smelled the sermon before they heard it—and then we ate it during communion. What could be more welcoming than to come to the table of forgiveness and receive bread still warm?

During Advent one year, we distributed frankincense and myrrh throughout the service to smell the gifts from the Magi (we thought it would be wise to refrain from handing out gold). On another occasion, we invited a deaf woman in our community to sign the Lord's Prayer as we reverently stood and watched her in complete silence, entering into her reality. You may consider interviewing someone who has lost one of their senses (someone visually impaired or colorblind, or an individual who lost their sense of smell or taste with COVID) and ask them reflect on what it is like.

I've also learned to praise God specifically for my senses. When was the last time we thanked God for the ability to taste and smell? Up until my bout with COVID I had never thought of doing such a thing. Now, I find myself thanking him for these gifts frequently. What if the whiff of that lilac bush on my run in the park is *actually* what God smells like? What would it look like if we devoted time to be still and ponder the goodness of God we experience through each of our five senses?

There are numerous ways to experience God in new, fresh and surprising ways if we will have the courage and intention to embrace our senses rather than eschew them. May we taste and see—and hear and touch and smell—that the Lord truly is good.





# EMBODIED HOSPITALITY

by Lena Van Wyk

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks,” Jesus tells his disciples in the 12th chapter of Luke.

Peter, in turn, asks Jesus, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?” And Jesus replies, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.”

In this teaching, Jesus is making it clear to his disciples that they are to be stewards, or managers, of his Kingdom household until he returns in the Last Days. They are to be ever vigilant, perpetually awake, and constantly alert, awaiting his return. But it is to be an active period of waiting, attending to the economy of the household they are entrusted with: the caring of all the precious bodies under their care.

Jesus doesn't say that they are to wait and craft perfect theology or build soaring cathedrals, though these are also goods for the Kingdom. But their essential task in

tending to their flock is attending to their embodied needs. Interestingly, this parable comes directly after the famous passage in Luke 12:22 where Jesus teaches, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.” For the Father will care for you. After that passage, the reader is always left wondering: but how is God going to feed and clothe me? What are the mechanics of that provision? And this parable seems to provide an answer: Christ will literally feed his followers through his Church.

The early church took the task of feeding one another very seriously, as an essential part of being the body of Christ, through their eucharistic meals together and through feeding the widows and orphans and anyone in need. In Acts, the apostles even appointed a particular office of leaders—deacons—to attend to table ministries of the church and keep everyone fed, since the task was taking so much energy and time and needed Spirit-filled leadership (Acts 6).

It is in this tradition that Christians have continued to eat together and feed those in need for over 2,000 years. The Church has fed people across every century, in perhaps every country on earth, over millions of tables, with every kind of food known to man.

For over two millennia, we have kept the table of Christ laden with

good things for our fellow servants of God and our fellow children of God. We do so because we know that every human body is of sacred worth to God and he delights in sustaining our bodies until the time that He resurrects them into eternal life. And even then, in the New Creation, we are told the feast will continue in the most remarkable wedding feast (Rev 19:7-10). Jesus eats broiled fish after his own resurrection, suggesting that eating together will be an eternal part of our life with Him (Luke 24:42). And so it is in this holy tradition that Church of the Redeemer pursues our food and farming ministries at New Garden Park.

We farm so that we can be the hands and feet that feed our parishioners and those in our community.

We run our Free Farmers Market so that we can nourish the widows, orphans, and anyone who is suffering or marginalized in our city.

We host potlucks at our Feast Days and our life groups so that we each can practice the simple but sacred art of feeding a brother or sister in Christ from the bounty of what God has gifted us.

We sit at the table together, one eye on the door, hoping that our beloved Jesus will open it and find us breaking bread together in love and say, “Children, I am well pleased. Let's continue to feast together now that I have joined you.”





# to be a servant:

# The Diaconate

by The Very Rev Dr. Dan Alger

In February, Bishop Steve and Bishop Alan ordained three members of our Redeemer family (Buddy Hocutt, Melissa Lewkowicz, and Leah Wall) as new deacons to serve the church, bringing our total number of deacons to six (including Ashley Davis, Steven Hebbard, and Ryan Kildoo). It was a wonderful evening of worship and fellowship! Different Christian denominations use the term deacon in a variety of ways, so perhaps you are wondering how the Anglican Church understands this order, and how these new deacons will serve at our pro-cathedral.

Anglicans understand Scripture to define three orders of ordained ministry, each with different callings and responsibilities: deacons, priests, and bishops. Every priest is first a deacon and every bishop is first a priest. When Bishop Alan was consecrated at our church a few months ago, we presented him with a bishop's ring on which was inscribed, "Always a deacon." No matter the amount of responsibility or position bestowed upon them through ordination, every Christian is a servant. For this reason, the diaconate is an amazingly important order. Deacon comes from the Greek *diakonos*, which means "servant." Deacons are the embodiment of servanthood—service to Christ, service to the church, service to the poor, service at the Communion Table, service to the world. Deacons represent who we should all be in character, in devotion, and in function. We never move above or beyond our status as servants, for as Jesus said, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:34).

Although not explicitly called deacons, many believe that the first deacons were ordained in Acts 6. The Apostles were

overwhelmed with their preaching ministry while simultaneously overseeing the mercy efforts of the church. Eventually they came to the conclusion that they needed help: "It is unacceptable for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint this responsibility to them and will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (vs 2-4). The Apostles were not saying that waiting on tables was below them or of lesser importance—just the opposite is true. They had a particular ministry to preach and pray and lead, and they did not want the essential role of physical service to be overlooked, so they asked the church to name some of their best to official roles of service. These people, including Stephen and six others, were presented to the Apostles who laid hands on them to commission them for this special role. Paul would later define the character requirements of deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Today, candidates go through a multi-year process of training, prayer, examination, and discernment in order to be vetted for the role of deacon. These men and women are to be icons of the Christian servant.

The Ordinal (the section of the Book of Common Prayer containing the liturgy for the ordination of a deacon) outlines some specific areas where deacons are charged to serve. They are to humbly serve to strengthen the church by reading the Gospel, catechizing, assisting the priest in the worship services, attending to the setting of the Communion Table, guiding the prayers of the church, and being active in mission by helping the church interpret the needs of the world.

I find this line of the Ordinal particularly moving: "It is the deacon's office to encourage and equip the household of God to care for the stranger, to embrace the poor and helpless, and to seek them out, so that they may be relieved." Through the example and effect of their service, deacons reveal the person and work of Jesus, as he said of himself, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

The order of the diaconate is different from that of priest or bishop in that it is not a role of headship. In other words, they are specifically set aside to serve, not to bring spiritual oversight to a church. Deacons do not lead churches, except in temporary situations as deemed appropriate by the bishop. Deacons do not focus on the ministry of preaching as one of their primary roles, although they do preach from time to time as asked. Deacons also do not preside over the Eucharist, for which the authority is given only to the priest or bishop. Christ was an example of both authority and submission and the three orders of ordained ministry in the church seek to be examples of both. Of course, deacons have significant influence and have all the authority that every Christian has in Christ as a part of the priesthood of all believers, but in order to give them space for focusing on the work of physical service, they are not tasked with the deep responsibility of shepherding a church. This does not make them lesser. In the economy of God's Kingdom, it is the servants who are to be

celebrated. Deacons are a full and equal order and profoundly important to the life of the church.

Here at Redeemer, some of our deacons are volunteers with jobs outside of the church and some have specific areas of ministry responsibility on our staff, but their role is not confined to any one area. When a person is ordained to the diaconate, they are a gift to the entire church. You will see our deacons serving liturgically in various ways, such as setting the Communion Table, guiding our acolytes, and reading the Gospel. They will assist in the pastoral care of our church and will bring prayer and healing to those in need. When you need special attention from your church, don't be surprised to see one of our faithful deacons show up at your door. From time to time, you will hear them preach, especially at our monthly weekday Feast Day services here at the pro-cathedral. They will also assist in teaching some of our catechesis classes, serving on our prayer teams, leading specific initiatives, and simply loving the church and the world we are called to reach.

The men and women who are called to be deacons in the church and serve here at Redeemer are gifts to us. They love Jesus and they love you. You can trust them, call upon them, and receive their service. They have taken vows as servants of Jesus Christ and servants to you. May we love them well as we are well-loved by them.





# STEPHEN MINISTRY at Redeemer

by Rev. Ashley Davis

Dr. Kenneth Haugk, who was a minister and also a clinical psychiatrist, developed Stephen Ministry for training lay members in his church to help meet the needs of his congregation. He was overwhelmed by the needs of his congregation on top of his responsibilities of running the church, preparing sermons and Sunday worship. The ministry took shape when brainstorming with seminary students who wanted to intern at his parish. It worked so well that Dr. Haugk and his wife (a psychiatric nurse and clinical social worker) eventually founded a ministry in St. Louis in 1975 that later became known as Stephen Ministry.

It may seem that with so many clergy, Church of the Redeemer would not need a Stephen Ministry, but in reality, most of the pastoral care of the church is handled and delegated by Fr. Benjamin. These needs range from one on one care, food and transportation issues, marital issues, hospitalizations, and grief. With over 500 people affiliated with the church, Fr. Benjamin alongside volunteers like me cannot effectively manage and care for as many needs as our body has. Inevitably, some folks fall through the cracks and don't receive the care they need.

Sometimes people in the body need practical help to get by, like receiving meals through an illness, or being given groceries to get to the end of a particularly hard month. Often our friends can help us get through rough periods, but these are give-and-take relationships where we care for one another. Sometimes when we are struggling with a loss, we feel like we are burdening our friends too much and then isolate because of fear, shame, or insecurity about our neediness. Pastoral care focuses primarily on the spiritual needs behind a problem, like a need for confession and repentance or spiritual guidance. Others might need the help of a therapist to dig deep into rooted problems often formed over time that lead to the same disappointing outcomes—feelings of depression or anxiety, or the consequences of unhealthy decisions. As a method of care for the Body, Stephen Ministry specifically affords care to people who are hurting and going through a defined loss. They do not receive care indefinitely, but are offered it as long as the care receiver needs their presence. Though it is similar to the kinds of relationships mentioned above, it is just the Stephen minister caring for the care receiver, removing the element of mutual care as in a friendship. Because of the extensive training the ministers receive and the confidentiality of the relationship, a Stephen minister offers more care than a friend may be able to, and is then able to refer the care receiver to additional help from a mental health provider or priest if needed.



Stephen Ministry describes itself this way: “a proven and effective way to organize, equip, and supervise a team of congregation members—called Stephen ministers—to provide high-quality, one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people in the congregation and the community experiencing life difficulties.” Trained Stephen ministers offer a ministry of presence (being with someone) when they are hurting. Often when someone experiences a loss (of a job, separation, death of a loved one, miscarriage), they can benefit from a Stephen minister spending time with them once a week to listen and offer Christ’s love and peace. Many people feel a deeper connection both to the church community and to Jesus through the care of their Stephen minister during a difficult time when they often feel isolated and lonely. Anyone who is experiencing a loss (loss of employment, divorce, death in the family, infertility, miscarriage, relocation), can receive help from a Stephen minister. If you know of someone who you think needs this kind of one-on-one care, please contact Fr. Benjamin Wall or Rev. Ashley Davis. We would initiate contact with that person and interview him or her to determine if a Stephen minister would be appropriate, or if we need to refer that person for other assistance.

Stephen Ministry requires dedication and commitment. The initial training is 40 hours, with ongoing supervision groups and additional training that will continue every other week. Stephen ministers commit to serving for two years. Along with being dependable, they also need to be able to keep confidentiality, show compassion and empathy, and refrain from judging or being critical of care receivers. Since these ministers act as the hands and feet of Jesus, a close and consistent relationship with Christ is essential. Though the time commitment is significant, many of these individuals say that the training they received through this process helps them in their jobs and other relationships.

Right now Stephen Ministry at Redeemer is in need of both Stephen ministers and care receivers, as well as people willing to be on the leadership team. Perhaps you feel that your gifts don't lend themselves to being a Stephen minister, but you have gifts in teaching, administration, or communication that would be helpful in serving on the leadership team. Reach out to me (Rev. Ashley Davis) or Fr. Benjamin Wall if you are interested in finding out more information about this ministry or to learn how you might refer a friend or lend your own hand to this essential work.

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Simple Gifts (key of G) old Shaker hymn

♩ = 60

'Tis the gift to be sim-ple, 'tis the gift to be free; 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be; And when we find our-selves in the place just right, 'Twill be in the val-ley of love and de-light. When true simplic-i-ty is gain'd, To bow and to bend we shan't be a-shame'd To turn, turn will be our de-light, 'Till by turn-ing, turn-ing we come round right.



# benevolence & almsgiving

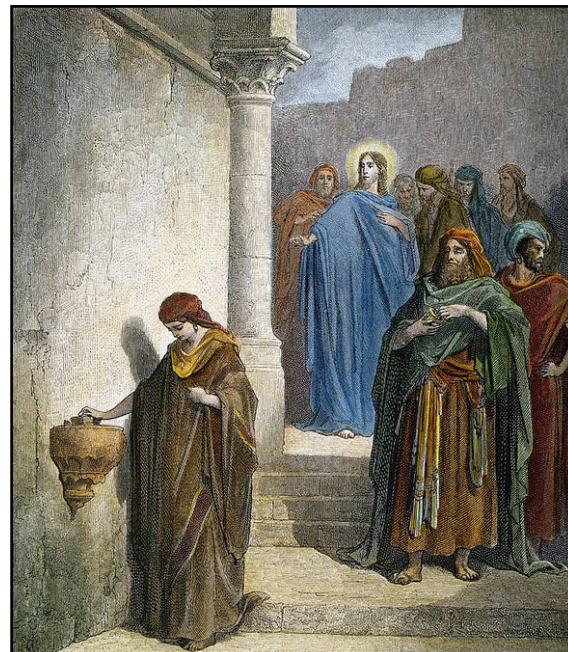
by Fr. Benjamin Wall

**B**enevolence is the quality of being well-meaning. To be benevolent is to be kind, compassionate, generous, considerate, and of goodwill toward oneself and others. Theologically speaking, benevolence is a way of rightly naming faith as lived in the light of Jesus' life, ministry, and teaching of loving others as oneself, and to do so publicly. In Christianity, benevolence is rooted in the holy tradition of the giving of alms—which consist of material goods such as meals/food, money, or other tangible goods generously and sacrificially offered to people living in conditions of poverty and plight, and to those who are less fortunate or live on the margins. Throughout the history of the church, Christians have believed that almsgiving (benevolence) is a visible expression of love founded upon the love God has demonstrated to the world in and through the son of God, Jesus Christ, who offered himself as an act of love for us. In other words, Christ's love compels us to love others in tangible ways and to do so generously, considerately, and sacrificially without conditions.

There are many ways almsgiving is practiced at Redeemer. Like many churches, our parish designates a portion of our annual tithes and offerings for the

support of our mission in relation to relief for those in need within and outside our local community. This money has allowed our church to assist people with dental, medical, and healthcare needs and to obtain reliable transportation, secure affordable housing, financially assist with utilities, vehicle and home repairs, and much more. Other ways our community has and continues to tangibly demonstrate our love toward those on the margins is through our Free Farmer's Market which provides a reprieve in a county that is food-health insecure. In addition, our farm ministry provides combat female veterans the space and opportunity to engage in horticulture-focused therapeutic peer support. In all these ways and many more, the Spirit of God continues to guide us in the way of love that is compassionate, generous, and considerate, a way of life that we are called into more and more day by day, year by year.

This way is the way of Jesus Christ. For the mystery of the gos-



pel is not that Jesus came to serve the poor and those on the margins but became poor and lived at the margins. Benevolence is the way of Christ. May we continue in this way never content with all we've done, but hopeful that God will continue to do this work in and through us all the more. May we continue to excel still more in the quality of being well-meaning. May the love of Christ compel us to love others in tangible ways that can only be characterized as generous, considerate, and sacrificial without conditions.

## — stephen ministry — “Christ caring for people through people”

I WAS PART OF THE INITIAL STEPHEN MINISTRY TRAINING AT REDEEMER from 2018-2019, facilitated by Hunter Van Wagenen and Father Dan Nobles. There were six of us—three women and three men of diverse ages and walks of life—meeting all day Saturday once a month. Those times together were such rich, rewarding times of building relationships and community with each other, as we learned how to come alongside hurting people in our midst. Each of us was provided a comprehensive study guide and several books to read (and later keep in our libraries for reference); there was a teaching video for each class; and we spent time roleplaying with each other, activating what we were learning. The guidance of Hunter and Dan as trained facilitators was a valuable part of our learning, bringing to us their own perspectives and experiences. As we continued to meet, our confidence in the program and in ourselves increased, as did our realization of our total dependence on the Holy Spirit and His ability to equip us and use us in His ministry. Unfortunately, COVID interrupted all our lives before we were able to fully complete the program and be sent out. I am so thankful that Deacon Ashley Davis and Father Ben Wall have taken on the leader training to renew the program at Redeemer, and I look forward to getting up-to-speed and seeing more and more Stephen Ministers raised up and sent out to be additional hands and feet of Christ at Church of the Redeemer.

BY LUANNE ARRINGTON

MY TIME WITH CAREGIVING THROUGH STEPHEN MINISTRY HAS BEEN AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE. I first met with my care receiver back in late 2019. We talked about Stephen Ministry and what would be involved. Stephen Ministers typically meet with their care recipients once a week. We looked at our calendars and decided to meet up for breakfast on Saturday mornings at a local diner.

Each time we met and shared a meal, we talked about what was going on in each other's lives and got to know each other. There were times we couldn't meet up, and we would call or text each other just to check in. Even though I was assigned to be a caregiver, what ultimately happened is that we mutually cared for each other and walked alongside each other for a season. When the pandemic hit, we weren't able to meet in person any longer, but we kept up through phone calls and texts, where we would share prayer requests and pray for each other.

Each caregiving relationship in this ministry will be different depending on the needs and the situation. However, God shows up in ordinary things like eating breakfast and sending texts. My mindset going into the relationship was to be a blessing to the other person, but as often happens, in the end my life was also blessed.

BY REV. RYAN KILDOO





# the stations of the cross an INVITATION

by Karen Alger

Our worship and liturgy in the Anglican tradition is based on the life of Jesus and the growth of His Church. Weeks-long seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter all focus on the “big picture” of Jesus’s life and ministry. We prepare for and celebrate his birth, learn about the early days of his life and the calling of his disciples, mourn our sin and the necessity of Good Friday, and together feast and revel in His resurrection and grace.

During Holy Week, worshipers focus on what Jesus would have been doing each day of the last week of his life. Praying the Stations of the Cross takes that magnification even further, as it focuses on the last moments of Jesus’s life. This practice was developed with the intention of helping ordinary people understand these last moments of Jesus’s life more clearly. At New Garden Park, our Redeemer Kids Team invites you during Holy Week to participate in this beautiful practice, offered to the community as a way to deepen our contemplation of the season as we anticipate Easter.

The objective of the stations is to help an individual or group contemplate what it must have been like for Jesus in his last moments. Jesus intentionally chose to experience arrest, beatings, scorn, and ridicule. Participants become pilgrims along the Way of the Cross. The experience becomes an invitation to remember each of these intentional choices he made in his final hours, and to dialogue with God about the impact and meaning of the reality of his death.

The Stations of the Cross may have some variability between traditions, but generally the participant enters into the timeline of Jesus’s last moments on Thursday evening, the night before He was crucified on Good Friday. That was a busy evening for Jesus and the disciples, including the Last Supper and his washing of the

disciples’ feet. He then took a few disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and prepare for what was to come. Jesus intentionally chose to go through so much agony, even knowing beforehand how painful it would be. Participants are given the opportunity to be fellow-travelers with Jesus on his way to the cross, walking through fourteen deeply moving moments from his condemnation through his burial in a borrowed tomb.

As a ministry team, we have chosen to prioritize these hard truths and contextualize them for adults and children alike. It would be easier to avoid these painful moments, but it is in darkness that light is most brilliant, and in the tragedy of Jesus’s death, his bright love is on unabashed display. We hope this will be an opportunity to linger in that reality and experience its transforming power. The Stations of the Cross at Church of the Redeemer is designed to be prayerfully walked but also humbly interacted with, allowing for pilgrims of all ages and walks of life to receive what blessings God wants to give. Each of the fourteen stations includes scripture, prayers, and activities to more concretely remember and experience Jesus’s last moments.

All members of Church of the Redeemer and our neighboring communities are invited to participate in the Stations of the Cross. God is full of grace and longs to show us the extent of his love. Please prioritize this practice of walking the Way of the Cross. The stations will be available on the grounds of New Garden Park from April 11-16, 9am-sunset each day.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*



## REEL WORLD REVIEW

by Mikey Fissel



**Reel World Theology**  
It is our hope that by examining the entertainment that is prevalent in our culture, we may better understand and engage the narratives that are shaping it, being aware that story is powerful and entertainment is not mindless.

WHETHER YOU ARE SOMEONE who keeps tabs on the Best Picture nominees every year, or you just have that friend who won’t stop telling you that you need to see “that movie about the deaf people on AppleTV,” it’s fairly likely you have “heard” about the movie *CODA* (Child of Deaf Adults) at some point. And, hey, if you haven’t, now you have! *CODA* is rightfully getting a lot of positive attention as it falls into the classic space of tugging on your heartstrings through both a unique family dynamic and a coming-of-age story. It is centered on Ruby, the only hearing member of her deaf family, who is trying to navigate the challenges of trying to live fully in two separate worlds.

While the story mainly centers around the conflict of Ruby having to decide between following her dreams of singing versus existing solely as a full time interpreter for her family, *CODA* succeeds by diving a little deeper and highlighting the unique personhood of all of

its characters. Most of our characters are not simple or one-dimensional, but complicated. There are some with openly mocked disabilities and others hiding personal trauma. This makes for an incredibly compelling story that should have us all considering our own uniqueness and how that uniqueness can be a gift and supported by our community ultimately for the good of both ourselves and others.

*CODA* can feel a bit cliché at times, but does a great balancing act between making us laugh and cry. It also feels very earnest in its holistic depiction of those who have to manage the reality of living in two different worlds, and I personally appreciate the sincerity in the film’s depiction that those two worlds don’t have to exist in such stark contrast.

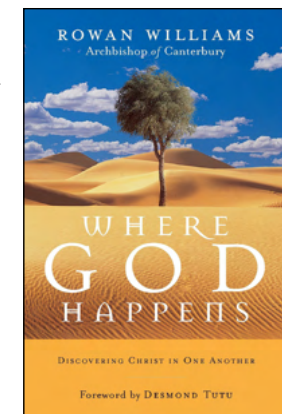


*Where God Happens*  
by Archbishop of Canterbury  
Rowan Williams

ROWAN WILLIAMS’ UNASSUMING *Where God Happens* is a powerful book. Invigorating in its challenge to live the teachings of the desert mothers and fathers regarding the embodied self, it is a great wealth of perspective and practical encouragement. It asserts the belief that as human beings, our bodies are the place where “God happens,” and through the teachings, stories, and experiences of the desert fathers and mothers, explores transformative, lived theology that centers on this reality.

With four simple sections, it is organized into thoughts on community living, the value of silence, and the practices of both “fleeing” and “staying.” But the common heartbeat that connects these teachings is the emphasis on the human body as the stage where God shows up and does his work. The body is flesh housing the eternal—and that is supremely significant. What we may be tempted to view as a prison or barrier is a beautiful grace and this living truth has the potential to animate a Christian and a community of believers with the breath of Christ if they can inhabit that boundary of physical space.

The sensory experience of the body—its successes and failures, beauty and ugliness—is where the love of God is revealed, expe-



rienced, and shared. Williams scandalously says, “*Only the body saves the soul. It sounds rather shocking put like that, but the point is that the soul left to itself, the inner life or whatever you want to call it, is not capable of transforming itself. It needs the gifts that only the external life can deliver: the actual events of God’s action in history, heard by physical ears; the actual material fact of the meeting of believers where bread and wine are shared; the actual wonderful, disagreeable, impossible, unpredictable human beings we encounter daily, in and out of the church. Only in this setting do we become holy, and holy in a way unique to each one of us*” (pgs 115-116).

I have found this book immediately transformative in my life. It has helped me to rest appreciatively in this body that I have historically spent so much time and energy trying to escape or change. In the quiet presence of this awareness, I have started waking up to the beauty and the profundity of God in my physical self and tangible environment. There, I am seeing answers to questions I’ve long been asking, and finding a path into deeper life that is accessible and full of sweet grace.

reviewed by Laura Fissel

## THE BOOK NOOK





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