

EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the
HEAVENLY REST

God's Love. For All.

Lay Reader

LENT • VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2 • ABILENE, TEXAS

From The *Rector*



Lent and the Myth of Self-Improvement

– David Romanik

“Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.”

The Collect for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, The Book of Common Prayer 1979, pg. 219

At the end of last summer, I donated blood at the Hendrick Regional Blood Center. I have been donating blood with some regularity for a number of years now, and have grown accustomed to the process: blood pressure is taken, iron is measured, and questions about medications, behaviors, and travel history are asked. In addition to all of this, the nurse asks the donor to step on a scale. The rationale for aspect of the screening is that one must be at least 90 pounds to donate blood safely. Of course, it has been decades since I was under 90 pounds, so this always feels like a pointless (and often dispiriting) exercise. On this particular occasion last summer, I was genuinely shocked by the number on the display. The only time I ever really have a sense of how much I weigh is when I go to the doctor or donate blood. While I am rarely excited to know how much I weigh, it does not generally inspire a significant change in my behavior. This time, however, the number was high enough that I resolved almost immediately to take advantage of our family membership at the Y and start working out. Since that moment, I have managed to make it to the pool or the gym four or five days each week. Gradually, I began to see results: my clothes fit a little better, I had more energy, and I smelled like chlorine most of the time. Eventually, the time came for me to donate blood again, and I was feeling fairly confident that the number on the scale would be considerably lower than it was a few months before.. I swaggered over to the scale, but was dismayed to see the exact same number on the display that had inspired my renewed interest in exercise. I hadn't lost a pound.

My initial reaction to this disappointment was to explain it away: perhaps I had gained muscle mass or was retaining water. Before too long, however, I became reflective: I was feeling better, had more energy, and was genuinely enjoying my time at gym; who cares what the scale said? And eventually, I came to see this whole episode as something of a parable: a reminder that our efforts at self-improvement often fall short of our expectations.

We are about to enter Lent, the 40-day season of penitence and renewal that begins on Ash Wednesday and runs through Holy Week. It is a season when many people “give something up” or “take something on”: cutting something out of one's life or engaging in some kind of new discipline. The hazard of these Lenten practices is that it is easy for them to become “New Year's Resolutions 2.0,” an opportunity to recommit to whatever practice has fallen by the wayside since January 1. The problem with thinking of our Lenten practice in this way is that it obligates us to depend entirely on our own will. One of the fundamental assumptions of the Christian faith is that, because of our fallen nature, our will is disordered. As Paul observes in Romans 7, we are unable to do what we want to do, no matter how hard we try. Our attempts at self-improvement are destined for failure. Depending on our own will, in other words, sets us up for disappointment.

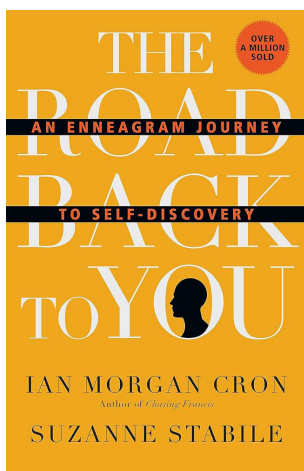
For this reason, Lent is not about self-improvement; it is about recognizing and embracing who God has created us to be. On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded that we were created from the dust of the earth in the image and likeness of God. One of the Eucharistic prayers we use in the Episcopal Church defines sin

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as our failure honor the image of God in ourselves and others. It stands to reason, therefore, that penitence and renewal are not about trying to become a better version of ourselves, they are about acknowledging who we truly are. Lent is a season that invites to become ever more aware of who God created us to be.

As part of our Lenten programming this year, we will be reading “The Road Back to You,” a book that discusses the Enneagram, which, more than anything else, is a tool for reflection and self-discovery. In some ways, the Enneagram is a tool that allows us to do the essential work of Lent: to explore who we are and who God created us to be. I hope you will join us as we read and discuss this book on the Wednesday evenings during Lent, and I hope you will use this season as an opportunity to rediscover what it means to be created in the image of God

The Enneagram with Susan Stabile



Speaker, best-selling author, and internationally recognized Enneagram master teacher Suzanne Stabile will join us Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 6:30 pm as a part of the parish Lenten Book study of *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-discovery*. Suzanne has conducted over 500 Enneagram workshops over the past 30 years, including at Richard Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation, CAC conferences, and numerous colleges, seminaries, and churches. In addition to her Enneagram work, Suzanne is the cofounder of Life in the Trinity Ministry, a nonprofit, nondenominational ministry committed to adult spiritual growth and formation.

The Enneagram is an ancient personality typing system that identifies nine personality types expressed individually and in relationships with others. The Enneagram is a unique tool for understanding and explaining human behavior, the underlying motivations that drive behavior, and the gifts we all have for transforming non-productive encounters with others. In short, it is a tool that can help us better understand ourselves and others.

Thomas Merton described this approach to formation as the one challenge on which all life rests: to discover our true selves in discovering God, and to find more of God in finding more of our true selves. As you discover yourself in a new way on this Enneagram journey, you’ll also find that you are paving the way to the wiser, more compassionate person you want to become.

Both in her book and when she teaches in person, Suzanne has a practical, comprehensive, and engaging way of accessing Enneagram wisdom and its connections with Christian spirituality.

Whether this is your first time hearing about the Enneagram or you have been studying it for years, we are excited to work through this book together as we learn more about ourselves and each other. The book study begins Wednesday, March 12. It will continue each Wednesday evening through April 9 with Suzanne Stabile sharing her thoughts and insights into this most promising self-reflection during our Lenten journey. Each Wednesday, dinner begins at 6:00 pm, and the program starts at 6:30 pm.

Wednesday Night Programming at Heavenly Rest

Marh 12 – Enneagram – Jen Rogers Introduction

March 19 – Enneagram Number 8, 9 and 1 (Chapter 3,4,5) David Romanik

March 26 – Enneagram Numbers 2, 3, 4 (chapters 6 and 8)

April 2 – Enneagram – Suzanne Stabile



Our Lenten Pilgrimage

– Amanda Watson

"What's it all about Alfie?" Isn't that the question we ask ourselves at this time of the year? What's Lent all about—the forty days of Lent? Lent is a journey. A journey is to travel from one place to another. More than that, it is a set of experiences someone has over time. Those experiences change a person in some way-- moving from something to something; but Lent is even more than that. In the opening prayer of the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we pray: "Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: (Now pay attention; this is it! This is what's it all about) Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that, we, lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of YOU, THE GOD OF ALL MERCY, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Lent becomes more than a journey; it becomes a pilgrimage, a long journey made to some sacred place as an act of devotion; that place of perfect remission and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

WOW! The Church offers each of us this opportunity to step away from our usual life by lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness to obtain the perfect remission and forgiveness from the God of all mercy. Lent is a time to create a clean heart, be present in the Holy Spirit, and be sustained by God's bountiful spirit. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us, Lent is a time to remove the yoke from among us, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil. "Then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom be like the noonday. For the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places and make your bones strong." (Isaiah 58:9b-11)

Lent is a pilgrimage—stepping away from the norm to provide a time to look deep within ourselves—into our wretchedness. How can we let go of something if that something is not identified or acknowledged? Our pilgrimage is not experiencing all our difficulties alone—God's bountiful spirit will sustain and uphold us, and the best part is that we have a merciful God. If we turn away and refuse to continue in our wretched way, there is God full of mercy waiting for us and who wants to create a contrite heart, a new heart within us, and on that Easter morning, the day of Our Lord's resurrection, we may worthily stand before God.

Pilgrimage is a time to let go of our normal, to open up time to pray, fast, and follow Jesus to hear God ask, "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house when you see the naked to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kind?" (Isaiah 58: 6-7) Lent is a pilgrimage of self-examination, prayer, self-denial, fasting, reading, and meditating on God's Holy Word so that we might come to that place where we are able to receive from our God of mercy a change of heart and forgiveness.

Pilgrimage is a beginning by returning.

Ash Wednesday at Heavenly Rest

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the season of the Church year in which Christians are invited to renew their faith through penitence and devotion. While it is occasionally framed as a morbid observance, Ash Wednesday actually is one of the most hopeful days in the liturgical calendar, as it reminds us that God has promised to be faithful to us no matter what.

We encourage you to join us for one of our Ash Wednesday services at Heavenly Rest on March 5, 2025.

Ash Wednesday at Heavenly Rest

7:30 a.m. - Holy Eucharist (Chapel)

12:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist with Hymns (Nave)

5:30 p.m. - Children's Ash Wednesday Service (Courtyard)

7:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist with Choir and Hymns (Nave)



All May, None Must, Some Should

The Reconciliation of a Penitent is one of the most powerful services in the Book of Common Prayer. Known more colloquially as "Confession," the Sacrament of Reconciliation, found beginning on page 447 of the prayer book, is an opportunity to identify and confess sins or sinful trends in one's life and receive the promise of God's forgiveness. While every service of Holy Eucharist includes a time of corporate confession, there is something especially powerful about identifying specific ways that one has dishonored the image of God in oneself and others. Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not a requirement, but it can be a source of particular comfort to those who are struggling with the reality of sin in their life. The Episcopal Church's approach to the Sacrament of Reconciliation can be summarized succinctly: "all may; none must; some should."

Lent is a season of self-examination, penitence, renewal. As such, it is a particularly good time to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During the season of Lent, clergy will be available on Tuesdays at 12:30 pm in the chapel for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Clergy will also be available to hear confessions at 1:00 Monday through Thursday during Holy Week (April 14 through April 17), and from 1:00 to 3:00 on Good Friday (April 18). If you would like to have your confession heard, wait in the pews near the baptismal font and you will be brought to the chapel by a priest. At the beginning of the service, the priest will usually walk the penitent through the service. The Sacrament of Reconciliation rarely takes more than ten minutes. Matters discussed within the context of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are treated with the strictest confidentiality.

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to experience a service that is rooted in a profound awareness of God's grace.



Demons

– Doug Thomas

There are demons.

In fashionable circles we tell ourselves lies to hide from the truth that must be disguised about all the horrors that we daily face, while keeping our concepts in their proper place.

There are demons.

You see them on sidewalks where children are slain. You see them in faces of families in pain who can't understand the source of their loss, believing that fate has made a cruel toss.

There are demons.

You see them in alleys where junkies will lie, boosting despair while seeking a high. You see them on corners with nothing to do, except hang around with some deadly crew.

There are demons.

You see them in bodies contorted with pain. You see them in eyes where misery reigns. For millions who hunger and cannot find food, the demons infect their heart and their mood.

There are demons.

In places so foreign their names were not known, until a mass bloodshed released a great moan of agonies suffered that coursed 'round the globe, while countries would wager to bid for the robe.

There are demons.

You see them in mirrors where vanity reigns, in faces obsessing on losses and gains. You see them rejecting an alternate view, where everyone's valued more than the few.

There are demons.

You find them in pulpits all over the land proclaiming the gospel of "give me a hand:" reducing the souls of those who do care, while never accepting a burden to share.

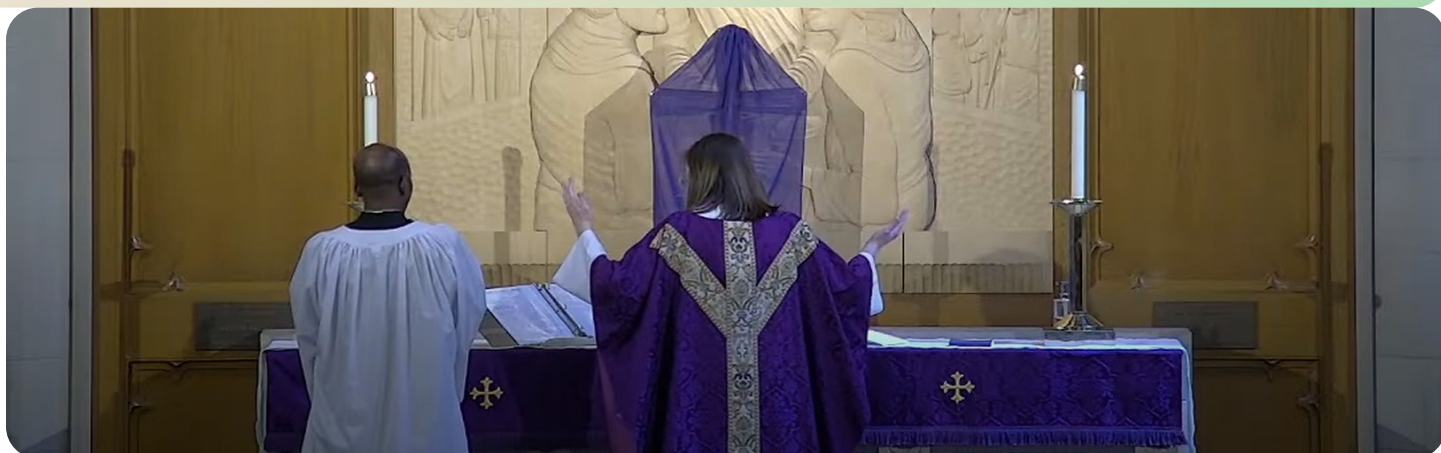
There are demons.

You hear them from speakers in places on high, about human suffering and how we must try to overcome evil with structures so grand they falsely proclaim the glory of man.

There are demons.

They're hidden in people you pass every day, whose lives are so empty it's easy to stray from a path that's narrow but filled with light, to one that's twisted and covered by night.

There are demons.



Eucharistic Prayer D and the Paschal Mystery

The liturgical year includes two major cycles organized around the Church's principal feasts: the Incarnation cycle, which includes Advent, Christmastide, Epiphany, and the season after the Epiphany; and the Paschal cycle, which incorporates Lent, Holy Week, Eastertide, and the Day of Pentecost. While there are some liturgical and musical changes that occur within these cycles, each is meant to be experienced as a liturgical whole. It is for this reason that at our 10:30 service, we tend to use the same Eucharistic Prayer throughout each cycle. During the Incarnation cycle, for instance, we have been using Eucharistic Prayer B, which contains a number of references to the "Word made flesh" and meditates on what it means for God to dwell among us. During the Paschal cycle, we will start using Eucharistic Prayer D at the 10:30 service.

Eucharistic Prayer D, which can be found beginning on page 372 of the Book of Common Prayer, is one of the most ancient prayers we have in our prayer book. It has been used for more than 1500 years in one form or another. Because of its age, it has some features that set it apart from the other Eucharistic prayers. Most conspicuously, it is quite long, clocking in at around 880 words. By contrast, the second longest Eucharistic prayer in our prayer book, Eucharistic Prayer 1, is around 750 words (we will use Eucharistic Prayer 1 at the 8:00 service during Lent). Prayer D's length can feel intimidating; it is not especially conducive to twenty-first century attention spans. There are, however, good reasons for its impressive word count. In the first place, Prayer D, unusually for Eucharistic prayers, includes the Prayers of the People. Shortly after the epiclesis (the invocation of the Holy Spirit), the Celebrant asks God to remember those who minister in the Church, those who are sick, and those who have died in the peace of Christ. There is something incredibly powerful about offering our prayers for the people around us at the altar: the heart of our common life.

Most of Prayer D's length can be accounted for in the section between the Sanctus ("Holy, Holy, Holy") and the Words of Institution ("On the night before he died for us..."). It is this section that makes Prayer D so appropriate for the Paschal cycle. It reminds us that we were formed in God's image; that even though we were disobedient to God's commandment, God did not abandon us to the power of death; that God's Son gave himself up to death; that he destroyed and renewed creation by rising from the grave; and that God sent the Holy Spirit so that "we might live no longer for ourselves." In so many ways, this section of Prayer D traces the arc of the Paschal cycle: on Ash Wednesday, we remember that we have been created from the dust of the earth; throughout Lent, we reflect on the ways we have dishonored the image of God in ourselves and others; during Holy Week, we meditate on Christ's faithful obedience to death on the cross; throughout Eastertide, we rejoice in his victory over death; and on Pentecost, we consider how this victory might transform our relationship to the people and the world around us.

As we meditate on the Paschal mystery over the coming months, our hope is that Eucharistic Prayer D will be a companion and guide as it reminds us of our call to live "not only for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us."



Lent for Children and Families

- Carol Ann Weston

Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras Celebration Tuesday, March 4 at 6:00 pm



Come one, come all to Heavenly Rest's celebration of Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras! A long tradition of the church is that on the day before Lent begins, people use up their rich foods in preparation for a season of fasting. This year, we will celebrate this tradition with a delicious shrimp boil, desserts, crafts, parade, and festive music. Choices will be available for those with shellfish allergies and sensitivity to spicy food. We invite all to come and participate!

We will close the evening by gathering around the fire pit to burn last year's palms in preparation for Ash Wednesday, the following day. We invite you to add your leftover palms if desired. Shrove Tuesday is unique: a celebration followed by a solemn ritual.

Children's Ash Wednesday Service Wednesday, March 5 at 5:30 pm (Courtyard)

On March 5, we will host a special Ash Wednesday service designed for children and their families. This service offers a meaningful opportunity for our parish's children to engage with the season of Lent. Throughout the service, children will be invited to take part in nearly every part of the liturgy, including the reading of scripture.

The service will contain the traditional act of receiving ashes, where each person will be invited to have ashes placed on their forehead or the back of their hand as a reminder that they belong to God and are loved by God.

One of the most special parts of this service is the closing procession, during which we will "bury" the Alleluia. The Alleluia is a word and song of joy, and traditionally, the Church does not sing it during the more solemn and reflective season of Lent. Children will play an important role in this closing ritual as they help put away the Alleluia banner they decorated during the previous weeks. The banner will be stored

away until we are ready to celebrate the joyous season of Easter, when the Alleluia will return with great celebration!

This service will have a simpler liturgy than our usual services and will not include the Eucharist. We invite everyone—whether young or old—to join in and participate in this beautiful service. It's a wonderful way to begin the Lenten season as a community, and we look forward to seeing you there!



Exploring Spiritual Treasure

– Karen Boyd



In the Episcopal Church our Baptismal Covenant is central to our commitment to follow Christ. We renew those promises each time we attend a baptism or a confirmation service. We will shine a light on each of those promises during Exploring Spiritual Treasure this Lenten season. This series begins March 2, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. You are invited to join us each Sunday morning. Breakfast is at 9:00 in Gerhart Hall with the discussion beginning at 9:15.

- **March 2** - Introduction to the Baptismal Covenant - Renouncing Evil, Affirming Christ
- **March 9** - Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers
- **March 16** - Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
- **March 23** - Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
- **March 30** - Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
- **April 6** - Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
- **April 13** - Palm Sunday - None other than the way of life and peace" - An Introduction to the Liturgies of Holy Week
- **April 20** - Easter Day - no class

EST will resume on April 27 with more great classes. Stay tuned!

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Mission, The Book of Common Prayer 1979, pg. 100

Chamber Music Concert Series, Spring 2025

– Thomas Pavlechko

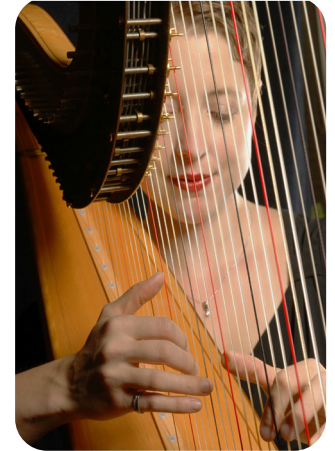


Saturday, March 1, 7:30 p.m.
Oboe, English Horn, Piano & Organ Concert

Oboist/English hornist, Susie Rockett, in collaboration with pianist, Becca Zeisler and organist, Thomas Pavlechko will perform works rarely performed showcasing repertoire written by Pasculli, Hindemith, Clara Schumann and American composer Eric Ewazen.

Sunday, March 30, 6:00 p.m.
Harp Concert

We welcome Alison Read, Dallas Harpist and principal Harpist with the Abilene Philharmonic Orchestra, back to Heavenly Rest to share her heavenly music!



Confirmation 2025

On Sunday, February 9, Bishop Mayer visited Heavenly Rest and confirmed the baptismal vows of 31 faithful folks at the 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. services. Morning congregants participated in Exploring Spiritual Treasure, the relational evangelism model created by Bishop Claude Payne, the retired bishop of Texas, that continues to be the guiding model of formation for all ages at Heavenly Rest. Luke Mendez and the other youth mentors directed our youth confirmation classes. Our afternoon congregation took part in a confirmation program crafted by Pastor Bikole Mulanda, Father David Romanik, and Austin Hackel. We want to thank the E.S.T. Mentors, the Youth Mentors, and all those who prepared our confirmands for this important moment in their faith journeys! Interested in Membership and Confirmation in the Episcopal Church? Contact Mother Karen at kboyd@heavenlyrestabilene.org for more information.



Holy Week

April 13 - April 20

4/13/2025

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist

10:30 a.m. - Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Eucharist (service begins in the Courtyard)

1:00 p.m. - Worship in Swahili

4/14/2025

Monday in Holy Week

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)

12:15 p.m. - Holy Eucharist

4/15/2025

Tuesday in Holy Week

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)

12:15 p.m. - Holy Eucharist

4/16/2025

Wednesday in Holy Week

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)

12:15 p.m. - Holy Eucharist

6:00 p.m. - Agape Supper and Holy Week Experience (Gerhart Hall and Nave)

4/17/2025

Maundy Thursday

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)

7:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist with Footwashing and Stripping of the Altar

The Nave will remain open for meditation and prayer until midnight.

4/18/2025

Good Friday

8:30 a.m. - Liturgy of Good Friday with Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

12:00 p.m. - Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday with Veneration of the Cross

5:00 p.m. - Stations of the Cross (Downtown Abilene - service begins at St. Paul United Methodist Church)

4/19/2-25

Holy Saturday

8:30 a.m. - Holy Saturday Liturgy

8:00 p.m. - The Great Vigil of Easter (service begins in the Courtyard)

4/20/2025

Easter Day

8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist with Hymns

9:15 a.m. - Easter Brunch (Gerhart Hall)

10:00 a.m. - Easter Egg Hunt (Playground and East Lawn)

10:30 a.m. - Festival Holy Eucharist with Flowering of the Cross

1:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist in Swahili with Flowering of the Cross

3:00 p.m. - Easter Egg Hunt (Playground and East Lawn)

Unless otherwise noted, all Holy Week services will take place in the Nave.



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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Most Reverend Sean Rowe, *Presiding Bishop*

THE DIOCESE OF NORTHWEST TEXAS

The Right Reverend J. Scott Mayer, *Bishop*

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The Reverend Amanda Watson, *Assistant Rector for Community Life*

The Reverend Karen Boyd, *Assisting Priest*

The Reverend Doug Thomas, *Priest in Residence*

The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, *Deacon*

Bikole Mulanda, *Swahili Minister*

Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist and Director of Music*

Shelly Reed, *Music Assistant, Choristers*

Laura Dickson, *Music Assistant, Children's Choir*

Carol Ann Weston, *Director of Children & Family Ministries*

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