



EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the

HEAVENLY REST

God's Love For All.

Lay Reader

Fall 2023 · VOLUME 11, ISSUE 5 · ABILENE, TEXAS

ISAIAH

ISAIAH

JEREMIAN

EZEKIEL

From The *Rector*

The Power of Invitation

– David Romanik



“Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your name. Amen”

A Prayer for Mission from the Book of Common Prayer, page 101

Over the past few months, my girls have become fans of a Netflix show called “Is it Cake?” The premise of the show is fairly straightforward, though its execution ends up being a little convoluted: bakers with a talent for making cakes that look like everyday objects attempt to fool a panel of three judges into believing that what they have baked is something other than cake. The judges examine the cake, alongside several decoy objects, from a distance, and are given 20 seconds to decide which of the items before them is, in fact, cake. The most dramatic moment of the show takes place when the host confronts the judges’ selection with a knife, which either slices through a thick layer of fondant or bumps up against a genuine version of the object the cake is imitating. Depending on the result, the bakers, who until now have been stoic and poker-faced, either groan with disappointment or cheer triumphantly.

What is interesting about this process is that it seems designed to overwhelm and confuse the judges. The timing, the lighting, and the presence of the other two judges all conspire to make the act of deciding difficult. As a result, the judges often pick an object at random or are so paralyzed by choice that they fail to make a selection at all. In this sense, there is an extent to which the process undermines the premise of the show: instead of marveling at the abilities of these extremely talented bakers, the judges are overwhelmed by the pressure to make a decision. It is only when the judges are invited forward to taste the cake and examine it more closely that they can appreciate what the bakers have done: the detail that has gone into their decoration, and the care that has been taken with the recipe. The invitation, in other words, becomes how the judges can experience what is possible.

After encountering Jesus in the first chapter of John’s gospel, the apostle Philip approaches Nathanael and reports, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” Philip’s enthusiasm is palpable: he is excited to share his experience with someone whom he loves and respects. Indeed, we can probably assume that Nathanael ranks ahead of Philip in some way, so Philip is eager to make a good impression. Imagine his disappointment when Nathanael replies derisively, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” It would have been easy for Philip to slink away dejectedly, embarrassed to think that he could have been so foolish to assume he had something meaningful to share. Instead, without missing a beat, Philip invites Nathanael to “Come and see!” Philip recognizes that invitation is the only way to experience what is possible.

During the course of a single week a few months ago, I had a series of conversations with non-parishioners about the same basic topic. These people all expressed both a deep affection for Heavenly Rest and a restlessness about where they currently are in their spiritual lives. In previous years, I might have ignored these sentiments or said something noncommittal. Instead, my invitation to all these people was some version of, “We’d love to see you at Heavenly Rest sometime soon!” For the most part, the responses I got were a combination of everything from, “Well, maybe” to “I don’t know if I’m ready yet.” While I confess to being mildly disappointed by these tepid replies, I would have been more disappointed if I had passed up the opportunity to invite these people into the life of this community. As Philip and the judges from “Is it Cake?” remind us, it is only when we offer an invitation that we can begin to experience what is possible.

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I mention this because I can't imagine that I am the only person from Heavenly Rest who has had conversations like these. In these moments, I suspect that our inclination is to avoid coming on too strongly: what if the people we are talking to aren't interested in having such a conversation? We need to remember, however, that if someone starts talking to us about church or where they are spiritually, they have made the first move. They have invited us into a deeper conversation about faith and life. What would it look like if we took these opportunities seriously? What would it look like if we remembered the power of invitation? What if, when we hear people express curiosity about Heavenly Rest, we respond by saying something like, "I have found a spiritual home at Heavenly Rest, and I would love for you to come to church with me some Sunday." The worst that can happen is that the answer is "no," and we can be confident that we have offered something meaningful to someone we care about. At the same time, the answer might be "yes," and we can rejoice that we are going to share this place with someone we love. I feel like I should clarify that I am not talking about knocking on doors and inviting strangers to church. Rather, I am talking about those conversations that we have all had at one point or another: conversations with friends who are searching, who are restless, who might be looking for an invitation to "come and see."

In this issue of the Lay Reader, you will read about several opportunities to "come and see" at Heavenly Rest over the coming months, including lectures, cultural festivals, concerts, and times for fellowship and formation. As you mark your calendar with these events, I challenge you to invite a friend to join you, remembering that it is only when we offer an invitation that we begin to experience what is possible.



A Personal Introduction

– Thomas Pavlechko

It will be my honor to plan, play, direct, lead, compose and arrange music for the family of Heavenly Rest! Your gracious welcoming over the past few months has been very inspiring. To introduce myself, here is a brief history of my experience as a musician.

Born into an Ohio family of organists, pianists, accordionists, vocalists and dancers, I was dancing to the music of family polka bands at the age of 4, learning the piano by age 7, in the school band learning the glockenspiel and tuba by 10, and, as nervous as could be, playing my first organ prelude in church at 13. Then on a wintery Sunday, January 1, 1978 at the age of 15, I became the organist at my home church, St. John's Lutheran, for the worship services spoken and sung in Slovak. I accepted my second position as organist at the age of 17, then, a few days after my high school graduation, finally took my first organ lesson at the Cathedral of St. Columba, going on to earn my degree at the Dana School of Music at Youngstown State University.

While attending graduate school at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, I served my first Episcopal Church, All Saints, as organist-choirmaster. The second Episcopal Church I served was St. Paul's Bristol Parish in Petersburg, Virginia, founded in 1643, where I had the console of the 1923 E. M. Skinner organ rebuilt. Then I said, "Texas, here I come!"

From 1994-2000, and again 2006-2016, I was music director and organist at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in downtown Austin. Between these tenures, I accepted a call from Calvary Episcopal Church in downtown Memphis where I oversaw the restoration of the Great and Pedal divisions of the 1935 Aeolian-Skinner organ. (Are you picking up on the Skinner organ connections?) My most recent position for the past six years has been as music director and principal organist for the 8,000-member Christ the King Catholic Church in the Park Cities enclave of Dallas.

Beyond playing and directing, I have enjoyed composing hymns, service music, Psalm settings, choral anthems and motets, and instrumental arrangements. Co-writing the liturgical music planning books for the Episcopal Church, currently completing the second editions, and serving on an editorial team for the Lutheran hymnal have been especially fulfilling. As an educator, I have taught on the adjunct faculties of the Richard Bland College of William and Mary in Virginia, and the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, Austin.

I look forward to leading the ministry of music here at the Church of the Heavenly Rest!



Invitation of the Soul: Formation Fall 2023

– Corrie Cabes

Fall is a time to return and reengage at Heavenly Rest. It's also a time to renew and explore our spiritual lives in Christ. This year, we invite you to dive into community and formation life with several options to connect you to the holy as we kick off a new program year.

“O God, you prepared your disciples for the coming of the Spirit through the teaching of your Son Jesus Christ: Make the hearts and minds of your servants ready to receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that they may be filled with the strength of his presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”



**Exploring Spiritual
Treasure**
Gerhart Hall
9:15-10:15 a.m.

Engaging speakers, thoughtful conversations, and spiritual growth... this is Exploring Spiritual Treasure. It's the place to begin your journey at Heavenly Rest and a great way to get connected to serve and grow in Christ. Join us for breakfast and spiritual food on Sunday mornings. This class is for those new to the Episcopal Church, those interested in confirmation and membership, and those seeking a deeper spiritual life.

For more information contact Mother Corrie at ccabes@heavenlyrestabilene.org

Youth Confirmation

Parish House - Library
9:15-10:15 a.m.

Youth confirmation at Heavenly Rest will consist of an intensive 9-week Sunday morning course for high schoolers and mentors beginning on August 20. The class will feature sessions on beliefs, sacraments, mission, and more. Young people will have the opportunity to share where God is showing up in their daily lives while learning applicable lessons. This leads to a mature profession of faith with confirmation. Contact ccabes@heavenlyrestabilene.org for more information about youth confirmation.

Preaching the Good Word: A Look at the Lectionary with Clergy

Parish House - Bishop Garrett Room
9:15-10:15 a.m.

Join us on Sunday mornings to look at the lectionary, the Bible readings for Sunday. With Fr. David and other clergy, we'll dive into the scripture readings for Sunday and take a look at how they continue to speak to us. This class will take a look at “preachable moments” and consider how we can take the message of the Biblical texts into our week in a more intentional way.

Wednesday Nights Return!

Gerhart Hall
6:00 pm

You are invited to join us for a kick-off of the program year with hot dogs and hamburgers on Wednesday, September 6. We will celebrate the ministries that make Heavenly Rest great and offer new ways to connect with sign ups for small group gatherings and kiosks to update your parish information. Activities for children and snow cones will make this an unforgettable night! Contact conniecollier11@gmail.com about the kick-off event.

Wednesday nights begin with a service of healing with the Holy Eucharist at 5:30 p.m. in the chapel and dinner at 6 p.m. in Gerhart Hall. Programs for children, youth, and adults take place from 6:30 p.m. until 7:20 p.m. and the evening concludes with a short compline service (bedtime prayers). There's something for everyone on Wednesday nights. Childcare for little ones is available.

Save the date for our first Wednesday night program, “The Holy Land” with the Rev. David Romanik. This three-week program is an in-depth look at our rector's recent trip to the Holy Land, beginning on September 13, 20, and 27.



Education for Ministry

– Amanda Watson



“And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”

A Post Communion Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer, page 366

“What is the work that God has given me to do?” We all have asked ourselves that very question. For Carolyn Dycus, an EfM graduate, the answer for her was her daily prayer: “Show me, Holy Spirit, where you want me today, thus joining that great cloud of witnesses, some of us still on earth, like my brothers and sisters in EfM.” She continued, “I can only begin to describe how a Church of Christ girl (78 years young) experienced God’s presence, grace, and richness” which culminated in an “awesome year of discussion together with the EfM books” creating a “family-relationship spiritually and physically.”

EfM is a program of growing spiritually and academically through the process of discovering what “God has called us to do.” It is through reading the entire Bible that we continue to discover our God, realizing that this collection of stories we call the Bible is the story of a loving God, a God who loves all God’s children. We are called to recognize the truth revealed in that great Collect for the Church: “Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior.” (p. 816 BCP) And, finally, in the Fourth Year, we can begin to speak to and clarify exactly our beliefs as Children of God and followers of Jesus Christ our Lord.

EfM is a place where each can begin to prepare, strengthen and become “the work that God has given us to do.” It is a place where each has the opportunity to “hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the holy Scriptures” to prepare “to love and serve as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.” EfM enriches our spirit, wisdom, and understanding all within the context of a community, a close, caring family (I call EfM my 3-o’clock-in-the-morning friends) in which no question remains unaddressed (even those questions we never thought to ask).

Join us this year and let us together grow in spirit, body, and mind into “the work that God has called us to do.” Contact Rev. Amanda Watson, at 325-677-2091 or awatson@heavenlyrestabilene.org.

Tamasha la wa Afrika: “Kuja Uone” Come and See

On Sunday, October 1st, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest will host the third annual Tamasha la wa Afrika (“Celebration of Africa”), a festival of African music, culture, and cuisine. The theme of this year’s Tamasha is “Kuja Uone” (“Come and See”).

This event will feature music from Heavenly Rest’s own “Alleluia Choir,” along with special guests from throughout the African community in Texas. The festival will also include traditional East African food, as well as cultural demonstrations from members of the Heavenly Rest congregation. A key objective of the festival is to educate the surrounding community about African traditions and cultures. The festival also ensures that these traditions and cultures are not forgotten.

For more than a decade, Abilene has been home to a growing population of refugees and other newcomers from East Africa. Tamasha la wa Afrika is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about this community, celebrate their culture, and acknowledge their contribution to Abilene.



Umoja wa Wamama: The Mothers' Union

Regina Paul Kasongo and Tanine Mukokia lead the mothers of our Swahili-speaking congregation. The mothers ground their support of the parish and the surrounding community in prayer. In addition to helping the sick, the widows, and the orphans in the congregation, they provide food to the needy and diapers and other supplies to new mothers. The group is looking for new ways to help the homeless in our community.



Our Swahili Congregation

– Bikole Mulanda

The Swahili-speaking congregation meets each Sunday at 1:00 pm. The congregation celebrates the Holy Eucharist the third Sunday of each month, and it holds a Morning Prayer service on the other Sundays. The people are grateful for the support they receive from the wider parish community. Each month, the parish allocates \$1,000 to the group. This money pays for food, utility bills, supplies for new mothers, and gas for those in need. A committee in the congregation monitors the use of the of allocated funds, which are dispersed by Baya Lushiawe (accounts payable). Again, the Swahili-speaking community in our parish is very grateful for the help and support that they find here.



The Mothers' Union: An Introduction

The Mothers' Union is a global, Anglican movement of 4 million people in 84 countries. Its five main objectives are to:

1. Encourage parents in their role to develop the faith of their children.
2. Maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service.
3. Promote conditions in society favorable to stable family life and the protection of children.
4. Help those whose family life has met with adversity.
5. Promote and support married life.

The Mothers' Union supports all people and their families "to eliminate gender-based violence and abuse, to promote equality, to help build healthy relationships, and to support women in the key role they have in building communities and bringing peace and reconciliation." To learn more about the Mothers' Union visit their website at www.mothersunion.org



Welcoming the Blessed Stranger: Invitation in Action

– Courtney Messer

Our family dove into ACU's Home Away From Home (HAFH) program last year. This program pairs ACU international students with local Abilene families to make connections and help ease homesickness as they navigate college life far from home. From the moment we met our student, Yoyo, I knew that this would be a good experience. Yoyo is from China and was immediately appreciative of having another friendly face to help her feel more comfortable in her new surroundings.

With a busy family life at home, a full-time job, and too little time, I was initially concerned that we would not be able to give Yoyo enough time. But that was not the case. I would send her a text once a week to check in throughout the school year. We had her join our family on four different occasions so she could get a taste of what family life was like, and so she would have a way to get off campus. I learned that most international students do not have transportation. Additionally, through this program, my children had the experience of learning from someone from overseas.

Yoyo has blessed us with many new experiences, and she shared a ton of pictures of her family and home. In addition, she happily prepared delicious meals for us. Yoyo's excitement at having a fully stocked kitchen to cook in was fun to see. It was a great experience for my children to learn how much we all have in common - no matter where we come from.

I encourage you to consider this experience. As a reminder, this is not a homestay. You would be volunteering to come to an ice cream social in September for an initial meet & greet. You would then be asked to reach out to your student to check in on them and to find some times when you can bring them along (ideally to something that you already had planned) so they can experience a little bit of American culture and so they can see more than just the ACU campus during their time here in Texas. If you have questions, I am happy to answer any questions and to make a connection for you with ACU's HAFH staff so you too can make a difference!

For more information about Home Away From Home, contact Courtney Messer at crm22c@acu.edu or contact the program director at acuhafh@gmail.com to learn more.

Courageous Love: An Invitation to Community



– Karen Boyd

I remember as a child hearing my father say, “Good fences make good neighbors.” I’d always accepted the wisdom of my father and didn’t give it a second thought. I suppose I heartily agree when I let my wee 7-pound chihuahua out in the yard and he runs to the fence to instigate his ongoing argument with the beastie with the gigantic “WOOF!” that lives on the other side of the fence. Yet, I do not know Anubis’ adversary, nor do I know his master and best friend. The fence is tall and I have never ventured to the other side.

My father must have read Robert Frost’s poem, “Mending Wall.” I assume this is where he heard the aphorism, but in this poem Frost meditates on the necessity of barriers between neighbors. I have been thinking a lot about this lately. What are the barriers and walls we put up and why? Do they protect or do they isolate? Certainly, some of these walls end up isolating us, or possibly in some weird and terrible way, protecting us from the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” Can we truly do this hidden behind our walls? I can only conclude loving as Jesus loved requires us to open ourselves boldly, to be vulnerable, to invite others, and love courageously, yet this courageous, vulnerable love can be filled with fear and worry.

Last autumn, winter, and spring, during our program year we explored friendship. Most would agree that friendship is based on some sort of commonality and requires a commitment between people. Love, on the other hand, is simpler and at the same time much more difficult. We often slide into a friendship over time as we share bits of our lives. Friendship is often by chance as someone happens along in our lives. The love that Jesus commanded of us is intentional. Love for one another requires courage and vulnerability. This is the love that begins with God and flows through us to the world.

It is easy to fear rejection as we offer the invitation to others to enter our space for a time. We often see the obvious differences in each other and decide this might take more energy than we have, or that we would face a disappointing rejection. By opening ourselves to real conversation and connection invites community. And community is what this world with each other is all about.

Just lately I have discovered a podcast that explores the idea of building community and looks at the barriers that might get in the way. The podcast is called, simply, ‘How To Talk To People.’ I recommend it to you, it is well worth a listen.

Loving each other as Jesus loves us is a tall order indeed. But I am certain that when we take the chance to show courageous love to everyone, we will chance upon beautiful connections that we otherwise would have missed and might even surprise us. We most certainly will live in the Kingdom, the Community of God.



Rally Night Preview

Usher Ministry

– Joe Biles and Michael Christie

Are you passionate about serving others and creating a welcoming atmosphere? Heavenly Rest ushers are community ambassadors and worship facilitators. Ushers are among the first people to greet and assist both visitors and members at each service, creating an environment where everyone feels embraced, uplifted, and inspired. They are integral to making sure visitors feel welcome and that all aspects of our worship services flow smoothly by recording attendance, collecting plate offerings, and assisting with communion. They also serve as focal points for the church's safety/emergency plan. Our ushers serve on rotating teams, according to their schedule and service time preference. Older teens through senior adults are invited to serve. Training will be provided. Contact Michael Christie at mickwhipschristie@gmail.com for more information or to volunteer.



Episcopal Young Adults (EYA)

– Melody Brown and Luke Mendez

Young adults experience a variety of transitions, and a community of faith creates an atmosphere of support during this stage of life. Out of this sense of community, young adults seek ways to live out their Christian calling. Young adults at Heavenly Rest engage with God through the Episcopal tradition and experience. The Episcopal Young Adult Ministry group consists of college ministry outreach, evening prayer, and fellowship. It is a diverse community that recognizes, challenges, supports, inspires, and engages in honest dialogue around faith to foster growth and a sense of belonging. The EYA community regularly engages in shared meals, worship, pastoral care, community service, and participation in other parish ministries. For more information on current events and updates, please contact Luke Mendez at lmendez@heavenlyrestabilene.org or Mother Corrie Cabes at ccabes@heavenlyrestabilene.org for more information. EYA can be found on Instagram @heavenlyrest_EYA!

Manna Meals

– Tyler Gurley

Our Manna Meals ministry provides meals to parishioners who have recently been in the hospital or experienced an illness and would like a special meal or home-cooked meal provided by our team of volunteers. The ministry was started by The Reverend Susan Pigott and has offered help through a comforting meal to so many of our parishioners at Heavenly Rest. As the ministry has grown, there is a need for new volunteers who could help provide meals to families in need. Please contact Tyler Gurley via text at 325-280-8328 or email at tcgurley1@gmail.com if you are interested in volunteering with Manna Meals.



Save the Date!*

- August 20 - Sunday School Begins
- September 6 - Rally Night 6:00 pm
- September 13 - Wednesday Night
Programming Begins 6:00 pm
- October 1 - Tamasha la wa Afrika
2:00 pm
- October 4 - St. Francis at the Zoo
6:00 pm
- October 8 - Blessing of the Animals
5:00 pm
- October 11 - Stewardship Presentation
6:30 pm

*You can remove this page and put it on your refrigerator!



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The Reverend Corrie Cabes, *Associate Rector*
The Reverend Amanda Watson, *Assistant Rector for Community Life*
The Reverend Doug Thomas, *Priest in Residence*
The Reverend Karen Boyd, *Deacon*
The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, *Deacon*
Bikole Mulanda, *Swahili Minister*
Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist and Director of Music*
Shelly Reed, *Children's Music Assistant*
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