

vol. 5 no. 3
Winter 2018

illumine

enlightening and celebrating where God is at work in our midst



A PUBLICATION OF
EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE
Transfiguration

CHURCH STAFF

CLERGY

The Rev. R. Casey Shobe—Rector
 The Rev. Rebecca Tankersley—Associate Rector
 The Rev. Nancy DeStefano—Pastoral Assistant
 The Rev. Ginny Kivel—Deacon
 The Rev. Terence C. Roper—Rector Emeritus

PROGRAMS

Cindy Hauser—Director of Children's Ministries
 Alex Cavanaugh—Director of Youth Ministries
 Anne Schmidt—Director of Evangelism and
 Welcoming Ministries
 Rebecca Gingles—Director of Communications

MUSIC

Joel Martinson—Director of Music and Organist
 Stefan Engels—Artist-in-Residence
 Chris Ahrens—Director of Youth Choir
 Kimberley Ahrens—Director of Children's Choirs

ADMINISTRATION

Sophie Lowrance—Parish Administrator
 Meghan Mazur—Executive Assistant to the Rector
 Mary Hall—Controller

PROPERTY

Bracken Reece—Director of Operations
 Joseph Gerick—Sexton

VESTRY

Paul Sternweis, Senior Warden
 Nancy Jagmin, Junior Warden
 Chris Ayres, Assistant Chancellor
 Robert Button
 Frank DeLizza
 John Donaldson
 Liberty Ford
 Betsey Hardman
 Roy Heller
 Peggy Kwoka, Clerk
 Jay Madrid, Parish Chancellor
 Sheila MacLennan
 Allison Murphy, Treasurer
 Bart Stockton
 Julia Trizzino
 Evan Williams
 Robin Caldwell, Vestry-elect
 Oliver Cone, Vestry-elect
 Rosemary Luquire, Vestry-elect
 Mason McCamey, Vestry-elect

Worship Service Times

Wednesday | 6:00 p.m.

Thursday | 12:00 p.m.

Saturday | 5:30 p.m.

Sunday | 9:00 a.m.* and 11:15 a.m.*

*Childcare available for children
 6 weeks to age 5.



in this issue

Scenes from Fall Events at the church	4	The best Christmas Pageant ever?	10
A Week With Jesus	7	Noah's Story	14
St. Elizabeth's Guild	8	Our New Director of Youth Ministries	18

Illumine is a quarterly publication of Church of the Transfiguration. The word itself has two meanings: to light up or brighten and to enlighten (someone) spiritually or intellectually. The goal behind this magazine is to tell the stories of this congregation, highlight new ministries, and celebrate where God is at work in our midst.



Cover Photo by Dickie Hill from the 2017 Christmas Pageant.



From the Rector

Jesus is Coming Again

The Rev. R. Casey Shobe, D.Min.

The societal pressure for perfection is strong, and it comes at us from all directions this time of year.

I remember well a billboard on the expressway last year promoting a Christmas light-installation company that says, "Don't just keep up with the Joneses. Outshine them!" Which seems like a pretty accurate cultural mantra during December.

I call it the "Christmas Card Phenomenon." Every year we struggle to find a single picture of the family where both girls are smiling and Melody and I feel skinny, and we're all matching (but not too closely!). We want to be happy and pretty and composed, but it's a futile pursuit, because the pictures can only portray the people in them, and we are far from inhabiting a pristine, Christmas-card picture kind of life.

Thankfully, God is not interested in our self-obsessed notions of perfection. That's not what this season is about. God did not wait until we had the world in perfect shape before choosing to send his only Son to join us. Quite the opposite. God decided to send his Son precisely because we are a red-hot mess. If the trigger for the Incarnation was human perfection, December would be a dark and quiet month, because there would be no Christmas to celebrate.

God did not set the bar for choosing to join us at our ability to create a perfect world, or a perfect Christmas, or a perfect life. God chose to be with us because he knows we are lost without him. It's easy to

let ourselves be tricked by the chocolate-filled Advent calendars and quaint Christmas pageants starring adorable shepherds and angels into forgetting that the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas are not actually about us creating our best world.

They are about God's willingness to save our very worst world.

What we celebrate at Christmas is God's decision to come among us, despite knowing full well what we're capable of and how little we deserve it. That's what divine love is about. Which means that our goal over the next several weeks should not be the attainment of Christmas Card perfection, but the wholehearted pursuit of holiness. We shouldn't seek some sort of Rockwellian fantasy fulfillment, but to focus more on striving to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. And we can spend less time obsessing over all the details of how we'll celebrate the holidays, and more time focused on orienting our lives toward the one who was born in the least glamorous circumstances imaginable.

So maybe your house's Christmas lights don't outshine the Joneses. Maybe you are a lot more National Lampoon than 'It's a Wonderful Life.' Don't worry. God's not counting on you to be perfect. He has that covered. What he desires is for you to put all that hopeful energy to work for the sake of love. Jesus came once, and is coming again, not because we deserve him, not because we are perfect, but because he loves us exactly as we are, and too much to let us stay that way. 🙏

A HOMEMADE NATIVITY

By John Makowski

I have over a hundred nativity sets, collected over the years. It all started with my mom. My first year away from home, she sent me a small white ceramic nativity set. Over subsequent years, she sent me a few more. Then I started collecting them on my own. It wasn't until my mother died that nativity sets became more meaningful to me; it was then when I inherited my mother's nativity set.

My mother and I made a nativity set together over many years. She had seen a craft book that showed how to make a nativity set out of small sewn clothes that had been stiffened with wallpaper glue. She sewed, so she made the clothes for all the figures. She also crocheted the halos for Mary and Joseph. It took many steps. The set was displayed for several years in various stages of completion.

I finally finished it when I was in college by painting the faces. My grandfather made the manger from bark and twigs in my grandmother's



garden. My father found plaster animals in a Mexican market, even if they are a little small.

After I inherited the nativity set, my husband Robert made a stable from branches from cedars on our property. The priest that married Robert and me repaired the baby Jesus that had suffered damage due to years of use over fifty years. A dear friend who was one of the witnesses at our wedding gave us the star for the stable.

This special nativity set has become a symbol of generations of family and chosen family. I am grateful for the gift of it each year. 🙏





Our annual Solemn Evensong for Holy Cross Day in mid-September is also the founding day of Transfiguration as a parish.

FALL EVENTS

—at—

Church of the Transfiguration



On Ministry Fair Sunday in August, our new Youth Minister, Alex Cavanaugh, visited with parents and students. This year, each ministry processed forward with banners and badges to represent the many ways people serve in the church.



Participants in our inquirer's catechumenate class, The Way, meet weekly on Tuesday night to learn about the faith.





The annual procession of pledge cards to the altar at Stewardship Ingathering. At Fig Fest this year, we built a long table to enjoy a meal outside together.



iParentX baked 83 homemade pies for Austin Street Center's Thanksgiving Eve Meal, served by 51 volunteers to 400+ homeless neighbors.





Following the All Souls' Requiem, the names of those who died this year along with those interred in the columbarium were read aloud by candlelight in the Memorial Garden.

On All Saints' Day, we joyfully celebrated First Informed Communion and three baptisms.



MORE FALL EVENTS

On November 11, we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI with a Transfigured Nights Concert, O Day of Peace, that included compositions by Joel Montinson and readings from WWI poets.



The Kirking of the Tartans celebrates the Episcopal Church's heritage from the Scottish Episcopal Church.



— A Week With Jesus —

By Brooke Grona-Robb

So, our #jesusatthefig week started with our having trouble finding Jesus. That's not too surprising, since my kids have trouble finding most things. We looked for him at church, as you would expect, but no Jesus. To be honest, my kids don't always seem to be finding what I want them to there, either. User error, to be assured, not due to programs or opportunities.

I was supposed to get Jesus at a meeting, but I got sick. Turns out, he was there, and I wasn't. But, of course he was.

Monday: today was busy. No extra time in the schedule to get Jesus. What does that say about my day? Probably nothing good, but there's the truth nonetheless. It seems we don't always make time for Jesus. But, tomorrow, I can run to get him over lunch.

I asked Linda today if she thought he was lonely, sitting there, all alone, and if she thought Jesus was ever lonely. She says no, that she's sure he always remembered the people who love him are in his head and in his heart, and that keeps him from being lonely.

Wonderful to hear her repeat to me what we've discussed when answering questions about death and remembering people who



we've lost.

Tuesday: Tonight, I'm thinking of him, sitting in the labyrinth, waiting for us. What a world to jump to, 2018. I hope he is holding us in his head and in his heart.

Wednesday: Picked up #jesusatthefig today. The kids were excited to see them. Maxey wanted to show him a video game where he plays as a dinosaur. He was sure Jesus had seen dinos before, but maybe not in a while.

Thursday: #jesusatthefig stayed home while we went off to work and school. I wondered

what he would do, and thought of the long list of chores I have that need to be done. But Jesus is more like Mary, not Martha. I just don't know how to get my life so that I have time to be more Mary and less like Martha.

Sunday: I thought #jesusatthefig was going to come into church with us as a final goodbye, but Sarah returned him before the service. Guess we're back to looking for Jesus. 🙏

Originally posted on September 11, 2018 during the Robb Family's assigned week.

#jesusatthefig Take Jesus with you *wherever* you go!



Sign up for a week with Jesus at
www.transfiguration.net/jesus-fig



St. Elizabeth's Guild

A MINISTRY OF FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP

By Kristin Cutts and Tessa Samarripas

How long have you been attending St. E's?

K: Tim (my husband) and I have been attending St. Elizabeth's since 2015. After a few visits to Transfiguration, we were invited to the upcoming St. E's Potluck dinner. We thought it would be a great way to meet people and of course, enjoy wonderful home-cooked meals!

T: Since August 2017

How did you initially get involved with this ministry?

K: After our first St. E's potluck we kept going back every month and eventually we started offering to help greet, set up and clean up. We basically just became one of the "regulars", kind of like Norm from the TV show, Cheers. I never have an issue telling people how much

I love St. E's. I mean its home-cooked meals, fried chicken and some of the best desserts you will find in the DFW area!

T: Admittedly, I had not ever been to St. Elizabeth's potluck but I always wanted to go. I just never took the extra step to do it. It took Kristin coming to me and one of the previous organizers

letting me know that Kristin was probably going to need help in organizing the group. The first St. E's potluck I ever attended, I also co-chaired! Just goes to show you, if you are willing to get involved The Fig needs your time and talent!

When did you take the reins as organizers?

K: The previous organizers were ready to hang up their hats and pass the job along to someone new. I was approached in 2017 and I just couldn't say no but I knew I couldn't do it alone so I asked my new friend, Tessa Samarripas, if she had any interest in being a co-organizer and thankfully she said YES! I couldn't imagine doing St. E's without Tessa.

What do you see as the role of St. Elizabeth's Guild in the wider congregation?

K: I recently read an article titled, "Science confirms it: Food really does bring us together" and in the article it talks about how "eating similar foods together can promote trust and closeness between



Ministry
Spotlight



strangers.” I believe that St. Elizabeth’s Guild does just that—brings a closeness between strangers. We provide a setting for those to come together and enjoy a meal. You could say, we are helping to build a longer table. Come to St. Elizabeth’s, come sit at our table and let us get to know you!

T: St. E’s is all about building friendships, and fellowship in a social standing. An outlet for new and not so new members to meet other parish members.

What is your favorite part of the monthly potlucks?

K: The fellowship and the fried chicken! KFC is always a staple at St. Elizabeth’s but honestly, nothing beats the fellowship. This is a *GREAT* outlet to get to know and connect with other parishioners.

T: Mark Ramsay’s dessert. That man can bake! Seriously, besides the amazing food, getting to know others in a relaxed atmosphere. Sitting down at a table to share a meal with six or seven other people that you may not know and getting to make friends and learn about their lives. It is very easy on Sunday to come to service and then quickly make your way to the parking lot. Being part of St. E’s has let me actively be part of the living community of The Fig. We (my husband Anthony and I) have met some amazing people and continue to be blessed with new friends each month.



Did you know...?

St. Elizabeth’s also runs a meal ministry for parishioners to request meals when experiencing a loss, illness, or life adjustment. Members can also sign up to make and deliver meals.

Tell us more about the meal ministry—who it is for, how to request meals, how to make meals, how to deliver meals

K: The ministry is for everyone at Transfiguration! If you or someone you know is sick, just had a baby, moved, had surgery, etc. contact the meal ministry. We have a group of wonderful volunteers who can make a meal, purchase a meal and deliver a meal to those in need. We are more than happy to help so please don’t hesitate to reach out. You can contact the meal ministry at meals@transfiguration.net.

How do new people become involved in the meal ministry?

K: Anyone who wants to get involved can email me at kecutts@gmail.com. Your name will be added to our growing list of volunteers. You can choose to make and deliver a meal or just simply one or the other.

What else should we know about St. E’s?

Come join us the second Thursday of the month starting at 6:30 in Roper Hall. Everyone is invited! 🍷





A host of animals and angels participated in the newly revised pageant, directed by Delynda and Kipton Moravec.



Shepherds prepare for the pageant in the Parlor; Co-director Delynda Moravec (below) at the Advent Festival.



the best Christmas pageant EVER?

By Delynda Moravec

Last year, my husband, Kip, and I were asked to direct the annual Christmas pageant at the 3:00 service on Christmas Eve. I had helped with the Christmas pageant in the past herding children before and during the service so we were thrilled to take an more active role.

I have a long history of working in the theatre as an actor, director, and during the day, I work at WaterTower Theatre. So how hard could directing the Christmas pageant be? I am sure you have heard the old theatre adage, "never work with children and animals". I am just glad that all our animals are humans.



PHOTOS BY DICKIE HILL



Jodi Dalton reads to a heavenly host in the Parlor.



So first, we had to find a script that we liked and hold auditions. Auditions ranged from the very exuberant who come in with choreography to those who came in with eyes filled with tears. We had those who absolutely did not want to speak and those who were bursting to spread the good news of the birth of Jesus! It was inspiring. And of course, I am a huge softie so I wrote in extra parts because I had so many who wanted to participate.

Next, we had costume fittings and rehearsals. As you can image, rehearsing with 50+ children can be a challenge and I was so grateful to Kip, Cindy, and all the volunteers and parents who were there to help out!

After all the preparation and rehearsing of the various groups, it was the day of the show—Christmas Eve. You can imagine the amount of nerves and excitement everyone was feeling—both adults and children.

Kip and I had put a lot of thought into the pageant—about how we wanted to make it different and more meaningful for both the congregation and the children who were participating in the pageant. We decided to have the children process at the beginning of the service in their various groups and then take their seats so they could watch the pageant as well as be a part of it!

When I watched the children walking down the aisle towards the altar, my heart swelled with such love. Watching their joyful faces took my breath away.

Now if the pageant had gone perfectly, then it wouldn't have really been a "real" Christmas pageant. We actually got to do one scene twice when things got a little out of order.

At the end of the program, all 50+ children were standing on the altar singing "Go Tell It on the Mountain," and no matter happened prior to that moment, it did not matter,

So, was it perfect? No. Was it the best Christmas pageant ever? Yes!

Will this year's pageant be perfect? I doubt it. But our prayer is that it will bless our congregation and the children who will witness and participant in this act of praise. 🙏





Invite-Welcome-Connect (aka Evangelism)

By Anne Schmidt—*Director of Evangelism and Welcoming Ministries*

I grew up in the church. My dad is an Episcopal priest so this is a literal as well as figurative statement. Our family life revolved around the churches my dad served and the members of those congregations became our extended family. As a preacher's kid people knew who I was and took an interest in me and what I was doing and supported me as I grew in age and faith.

It wasn't until after I was married to my husband Walt, and we got transferred to a new city and state, that I ever had to experience church "shopping" and what it is like to be a newcomer in a congregation. It was pretty daunting even though I had a broad knowledge of the worship, structure, and language of the Episcopal Church.

After time in several congregations we eventually landed in a church plant that was brand new and worshipped in a school cafeteria. The mission of this unique Episcopal church was to reach out to the unchurched people in the community. We had to be very intentional about not assuming guests knew anything about how we worship, our beliefs, or norms. We were careful to make sure folks knew they were welcome whatever their background or experience. We also had to look

for creative ways to spread the word of our existence and invite people in.

These experiences were formative and they, along with some great new resources from, and discussions with, thought leaders in the Episcopal Church will guide my work as Director of Evangelism and Welcome at Transfiguration. One such resource is a model for evangelism called Invite-Welcome-Connect, created by Mary Parmer from the Diocese of Texas and now of Sewanee. This model simplifies our efforts

into three components that help congregations evaluate and focus their efforts in sharing the Good News.

We at Transfiguration have a reputation for being good at welcoming, so we'll be looking for ways to expand on the things we already do well. Our Greeter team is fabulous, and we host a lovely newcomer brunch. We follow-up immediately with our visitors, and we are friendly and inclusive. But are there other ways we can make sure people feel welcome? Are we speaking with and acknowledging

“**Making sure that our newcomers get connected and become part of the community is a challenge in many congregations.**”



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE REV. SHERILYN PEARCE

Transfiguration was proud to host Invite Welcome Connect Facilitator Training the last week of November.

all people who sit with us in the pews? Are our groups and ministries equipped to make sure guests feel welcome? We'll be looking at all of this to see if we can be even better than we are now at welcoming.

Making sure that our newcomers get connected and become part of the community is a challenge in many congregations. It involves follow-up with folks and making sure there are clear paths to becoming a full part of the community. I will be working with you to make sure we are able to help new members find the ministry and community that helps inspire their gifts and passions.

I think the hardest step of this model is the Invite piece. We imagine Evangelism being something in the vein of a cold-call; approaching strangers and asking them to come to church. We do not like to impose on others so thoughts of this makes us very uncomfortable. Leading Evangelists in the church tell us that "invitation" is really about three things. The first is to be aware of opportunities for invitation. These

will most likely be in your day-to-day interactions and with people you are in contact with regularly. The second is to be a good listener. Being a good and intentional listener does not come naturally to most of us. It is a learned skill. We will work on this together so that when we meet people we are really hearing their story. The third part is being able to tell our own story so that we can find commonalities between them and us. How did we come to our faith? How is God working in our lives? Where do we struggle? What does it mean to us to be a disciple? We as a community will look at our daily spiritual practices and make sure we are grounding our faith in prayer and study. We will also start to find words to articulate our faith and practice telling our stories. Once we have the words and can recognize opportunities it should be easy for us to issue an invitation into our community's walk with Jesus.

In her new book about this model appropriately named *Invite. Welcome. Connect*, Mary Parmer invites us to dream:

- ◆ *Imagine a church filled with members who are bursting with love for one another and God, who feel compelled to invite others to experience the same joy...*
- ◆ *Imagine a church filled with people who have cultivated the ability to really see the other with the eyes of Jesus and truly welcome them...*
- ◆ *Imagine a church filled with holy listeners, hearing the stories of those with whom we worship and whose who have entered the doors of our church for the first time...*
- ◆ *Imagine a church transformed by a loving God.*

I am so excited to be here and to continue this work with you.

Anne and her family, husband Walter and children Andrew and Caroline, have been members of Transfiguration for almost 12 years. Anne is returning after 14 months at Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church serving as Director of Membership. Anne also serves on the boards of directors of Forward Movement (chair), The Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP) and the Office of Transition Ministries (OTM), and she is a facilitator for Gathering of Leaders. In addition, Anne also helps congregations and dioceses in times of transition by guiding their search teams in the process of calling a new rector/bishop. 🙏



Why Transfiguration?

"...we will do what we can and be thankful that we have been able to return to the place where our lives together began."

Allan and Connie Watson

We were married by Father Niles at the Church of the Transfiguration in 1974, and that is where our connection begins. At the time of our wedding, Allan was serving as Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs at UTD and Connie was teaching at J.J. Rhodes in south Dallas. We wanted to get married during Spring Break, which happened to coincide with Easter. Father Niles said he "would take care" of getting permission from the Bishop, but you can't miss the purple draped altar cross in our wedding photos!



Soon after the wedding we moved to San Marcos where we lived for the next 10 years. Allan was Vice President for University Affairs and Connie taught at a private kindergarten. At St. Mark's, Allan served as lay reader, chalice bearer, and Senior Warden, while Connie served on the Altar Guild. During his second term as Senior Warden, we were pleased to help with the founding of St. Stephen's, a mission church in Wimberley that quickly grew into an independent parish.

From there, we moved to Washington, D.C. (where Allan had lived before) to accept a position as Vice President of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. We headed straight for Bethlehem Chapel and The National Cathedral, where Allan had previously attended while in graduate school.

We got back to Dallas in 1991, when Allan became President of the Alliance for Higher Education. Over the next several years, we intermittently attended Transfiguration while visiting several Episcopal churches close to us in Plano and/or Frisco. Much of our Sicilian family remains Roman Catholic, and we also visited several Roman Catholic parishes. Finally, we decided that we would return to Transfiguration.

Like many of you, we do not mind the drive from Frisco to Hillcrest and Spring Valley in Dallas. We normally attend the 5:30 Saturday service, and that has made it a bit more difficult to get to know as many folks as we would like. In addition, over the last few years, we have had some health issues that have limited our involvement. We love the liturgy at Transfiguration, the music when we make a Sunday morning service, and we are impressed with Father Casey's leadership. We feel that he has made a significant difference in the life of the church and in our lives. Father Casey, Liz, Erin, Shea, and Ginny have been extraordinarily supportive as we addressed our recent health issues. And when Connie's sister lost her husband, they were right there to help.

This year, we increased our support of the work of Transfiguration by increasing our pledge. We also recently modified our wills to provide for the continuing work of this parish. We hope, as our health improves, we will be able to contribute in other ways to the ministry of the church. In the meantime, we will do what we can and be thankful that we have been able to return to the place where our lives together began. 🙏

NOAH'S STORY

By Brian Ladr

My son Noah turned four years old on September 1. But following his cancer diagnosis on April 25, our family spent the entire summer wondering whether or not he'd ever celebrate that birthday. Following late-night emergency surgery on the 24th for a suspected intestinal blockage, the doctors gave us the grim news that Noah was actually suffering from Burkitt's lymphoma. Before the day was over the pediatric oncology team at Medical City shared with Grace and I their intended plan of attack, and 48 hours later an intensive regimen of chemotherapy was begun.

We were already well aware of the fact that Noah is a fighter: Having been born with a congenital heart defect called Interrupted Aortic Arch, he had undergone reconstructive cardiac surgery one week after being born and again in March 2016. To all appearances, however, he was a healthy, normal kid in spite of this challenging start.

How much can one little person be asked to endure? That was the question that stuck in our minds as a result of April's diagnosis. It all seemed to be a gross violation of basic fairness by any definition. Really? Now this? For him? Hasn't he been through enough during his first 3.5 years? The very notion of childhood cancer can strain one's faith to the breaking point.

In Noah's case it certainly felt like piling on; the addition of insult to injury in the extreme. And throughout the ensuing months one of the most difficult aspects of the experience was our inability to explain to him what was going on; why, all of a sudden, this combination of confinement and physical suffering had descended upon his little world.

Once the chemotherapy began to do its work, Noah's immune system started to exhibit the signs of compromise that are often an unfortunate and dangerous side effect. It wasn't very long before he developed a condition called pleural effusion, a buildup of fluid around the lungs. As efforts to alleviate this situation met with incremental success, our impulse to celebrate was overcome by the fact that fluid then began to build up inside his lungs ... pneumonia. This problem worsened steadily, seriously limiting Noah's ability to breathe. On Sunday evening of Memorial Day weekend, after the medical staff had exhausted all



other options, he was put into a medically-induced coma and attached to a heart/lung/kidney bypass machine. Noah remained on life support, in this state of suspended animation, for the next month and half. Our primary consolation during this period was the simple assurance that he was not in any pain.

In late June an assortment of bloodwork, x-rays, and information displayed on an array of monitor screens began to tell a more hopeful story. Glimmers of light appeared. In retrospect, Noah had definitely turned a corner. While the drugs had taken a brutal toll on his system, there were also clear indications that it had done a good job of pushing the disease into remission. The dogged, round-the-clock efforts of the vast PICU medical team were paying off. Slow progress continued and small, daily improvements were celebrated throughout July and the first half of August before Noah was discharged on the 17th. It was the answer to thousands of prayers lifted up here in Dallas and around the country during the four-month period in question.

From the very first day of Noah's hospitalization, Grace's mom asked that we keep a copy of the scriptures in his room and have it opened to the 91st Psalm. Its promise of God's presence and sustenance in the face of trouble were an invaluable reminder and source of strength in the midst of some very dark days. So, too, were the presence, prayers, and counsel of Deacon Ginny and the entire pastoral staff here at Transfiguration, as well as the efforts of those who lovingly provided our family with countless meals during this ordeal. No words will ever be adequate when it comes to expressing the extent of our gratitude. From our point of view, you were (are) among that band of angels (see Psalm 91, v. 11) in whom the love of Christ was made real and powerful and restorative.

Noah has finally returned to one of his favorite places, i.e. the nursery/playrooms here at church during the 11:15 Eucharist! If you have a chance, stop by and say hello some morning—and see for yourself an example of what the power of prayer can achieve: a little miracle bouncing around on two legs and wearing a great big smile. 🙌

Common Ground: Facing Aging Together

Saturday, March 2—A Workshop Facilitating Conversations Between Gen X/Millennials and the Silent Generation/Baby Boomers

This one-day workshop is designed to bring together those in the second half of life with those facing their parents' aging and future care needs.

We don't like to talk about aging, our own or our parents'. And yet, as parents age and children become parents to their parents, every family reaches the point at which decisions about independence and care must be made. When families arrive at this point without ever having talked together about one another's wishes and concerns, these decisions become difficult.

This workshop is a first step in helping bridge the generation gap within our families. The program will equip participants of all ages with the courage, compassion, and awareness to generate meaningful and caring conversations about how and when important decisions will be made and implemented.



Are you a card-carrying member of the “sandwich generation”?

If so, you may have wondered—

- What resources are available for my aging parents?
- How do I have a conversation about giving up the car keys or the house?
- What if I can't face the idea that my parents will die?
- How do I balance my parents' needs with my children's and still have time for myself?
- How do I help my parents understand what it's like to be caught in the middle?

Are you an older adult? If so, you may have wondered—

- What resources are available for me as I age and my needs change?
- Do I need a living will?
- When do I need power of attorney and who should I appoint?
- How do I have a conversation with my children about my end of life wishes?
- How do I help my children understand what it's like to get old?

The day will feature a key note a keynote speaker: Suzanne Asaff Blankenship, author of *How to Take Care of Old People Without Losing Your Marbles*. **We will then offer several break-out sessions including:**

- “When Will You Know You Can't Do It Anymore?”
- “Legal, Financial Insurance and Housing Options”
- “Compassion, Boundaries and Empathy”
- Preplanning a Funeral Service
- “How to Have the Conversation about End of Life issues”
- “Let's Talk—What I Really Want My Parent/Child to Know”

This workshop is open to adults of any generation: those who are themselves aging and beginning to think about their final decades and those who have aging family members for whom they may be called upon to act and advocate. While some may wish to participate as families, doing so is not necessary. This workshop will be helpful whether you live next door to your parent/child or across the country from them. Join us! 🙏



Real People Real Life

**By The Rev. Nancy DeStefano—
Pastoral Assistant and Spiritual Director**

Earlier this fall, several of us from the 2nd Half Sunday School class went to the Angelika in Dallas to watch a movie entitled “What They Had” with Blythe Danner.



Danner portrays an older woman who is experiencing issues regarding dementia. The story of how she, her husband, and their two grown children deal with this disease and struggle to be a family is a profoundly moving tale.

What makes the film so very meaningful is the real-life dilemma that this family is facing. As they seek to find a living arrangement that is best for their wife/mother, the conflicts between them that lie just beneath the surface most of the time erupt. Each person is dealing with his or her own life issues and the roles that they play within the family. Each person wants to do something to help and to be loving to everyone else. Each person, as is so often the case, is so immersed in their own perspective and viewpoint that they cannot see the needs of the others.

The film brings home many family dynamics and struggles that are all too real and often very painful for every member of the family. Perhaps the bottom line is that each person is unable to listen to the needs and pain of the others, because of their own deep and unresolved pain and need.

There are no “good guys” and “bad guys” in this story; there are only real people trying to deal with real life and the difficult situations in which they find themselves.

Each character can move you to tears as you feel so deeply their profound grief.

On March 2, our 2nd Half of Life and iParentX ministries are co-hosting a conference on building bridges between the generations to help with some of these life issues. Those of us who are in the second half of life and those who are now caring for, or may soon care for, their aging parents need to be able to listen to one another, hear the others' pain and hopes, and walk together into the future.

If you are in either of these two life-stages, this workshop is for you. You need not attend with your own family members who are in the other generation but you certainly can do so. Dementia will not strike every family but every family will likely deal with aging and the changes that come with it. It is our hope that being able to bridge the generations and learning to walk in the others' shoes by truly listening to one another, we can make this time in the lives of our family a time in which beautiful and meaningful memories are made that will last for generations. 🙏





Wisdom from South Africa: Restorative Justice at Pollsmoor Prison

By Jane Biggio



On the second day of our pilgrimage to South Africa in June, we arrived at Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town. We were all surprised at the vastness of the prison but also amazed how immaculate and manicured it appeared as we were driving up to the guard gate. The van was admitted through sliding gates and directed to the Main Administration building. We were told to leave our cell phones and cameras in the van. We were then ushered into a large meeting room where we met Jonathan Clayton, who leads an organization called Hope Prison Ministries. He explained his involvement with a program he leads in a restorative justice movement. The program seeks to restore the relationships damaged by the offender's actions, to prepare the offenders to come to terms with the damage they inflicted and eventually meet with the victims and/or their families.

After intense counseling, accepting responsibility of the wrongs done, and with a sincere desire to make amends, these individuals are able to offer closure to the victim. These steps help the offender to grow as a person, overcome the issues that ignited their initial behavior, and create the possibility of reconciliation.



As Jonathan Clayton spoke to our group we were all struck by his intensity and conviction regarding restorative justice and the actual possibility of changing lives. He invited us to participate in a meeting with 22 female inmates taking place inside the prison in approximately 10 minutes! This was not originally scheduled but when offered, we all were eager to participate.

We travelled down water-stained, damaged hallways, surrounded by cells full of women. As we walked, we experienced the gloom of prison. We entered a large room where the female inmates were sporadically seated in a circle. We took seats among them—and it was a bit awkward for everyone.

Then Jonathan spoke. He revealed the restorative justice program in a booming and demonstrative voice. Slowly the body language of the women prisoners changed from stiff and uncaring to interested, then gradually to listening in a soft and responsive manner. One woman asked for more information. Others began to speak and interact. We all watched in fascination.

Then Jonathan revealed his story—one of being a former prisoner himself in Pollsmoor Prison and the changes he made in his life that culminated in this ministry of hope and reconciliation. Jonathan asked if we had any questions or comments. There was silence in the still awestruck crowd.

Then Cherrie Merriman's voice began to softly and gently cut through the silence. She said: "As I look around this room I see so much anger, so much sadness, bewilderment. Mostly I see courage. What courage it took for you to share your lives with a group of strangers. I know you have the courage to work through this process and that you will succeed. Thank you for sharing your lives with us."

At that point I truly felt like we were all suspended in time. As Fr. Casey remarked in a sermon after the trip, it was "like a glimpse of the Kingdom of God". Still in a cloud of love and hope and feeling as if all things are possible, we were all standing, hugging, crying, speaking words of encouragement and prayers. Reluctantly, we prepared to leave.

I entered the room crying because of sadness at the bleakness of the prison. I left crying tears of joy and hope while departing from these brave women—my new sisters!

We were later told that these women thought we came from Texas just to meet them and considered us angels sent by God. (Cried again here...) Fr. Casey and Shawn Small (from our tour provider, Wonder Voyage) agreed to partner in sponsoring these women as they go through the Restorative Justice Program. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God spoke to all of us that day and encouraged me to serve as a liaison to this ministry. A group has come together to commit our time, prayers and letters of encouragement to these women.

Many months have passed since our visit with the 22 women in Pollsmoor Prison but the "holiness" of that day remains in my heart and soul. We can all support those women through prayer. It is my hope that each and every one of them will be successful and experience positive changes in their lives and well as they lives of the victims and their families. 🙏



FACTS:

- Pollsmoor Prison was established in 1964 and houses some of the most dangerous criminals in South Africa. They have a staff of 1,278 and capacity to accommodate 4,336 male and female offenders but the current inmate population is over 7,000 and fluctuates daily.
- Pollsmoor comprises 5 prisons: with centers for juveniles, women, and men serving various sentences
- Nelson Mandela was kept in solitary confinement near the end of his 22-year sentence, and the cell, while off limits to the public, is not used by the prison today, but is preserved as a sort of service to his memory. The pilgrims has a chance to visit it.

Bringing My Child on a Pilgrimage to South Africa

The Rev. R. Casey Shobe, D.Min.

This past June I traveled on a pilgrimage to South Africa with 17 members of my church in Dallas. One of my fellow pilgrims was my eight-year-old daughter.

Actually, my wife and I had not always thought she should come with me. She certainly wanted to (“I want to see giraffes in the wild!”), but then, she wasn’t the one paying for it. Added to concerns about the expense was a faulty initial understanding about the impact of kids on travel. A few years ago I read a [hilarious blog post](#) about the difference between a trip and a vacation. “A vacation is best described as time away from a job and/or the monotony and frustrations of day-to-day life, with the goal of relaxing and having fun,” the writer opined. “Not to be a super downer, but chances are, if you have kids (and they are coming with you), you aren’t going on a vacation at all. You’re going on what I like to call... a trip. You see, a trip is simply a journey to a place.”



I can’t help but laugh at this blog, even if it’s a bit snarky and overblown, because behind the humor is a reality that most parents feel: the presence of your kids usually means your attention and energy will be nearly entirely focused on their health and wellbeing. That’s why vacations—if you subscribe to the blogger’s definition—can’t possibly include your kids.

Maybe that’s why I hesitated to bring my child on this pilgrimage, because I was focused on the ways she might impede the goals of the experience. But a pilgrimage is not vacation, it’s a very particular kind of trip, the kind where you go for the specific purpose of encountering God in a new way. It is a trip in which you intentionally look for God, trusting that God has shown up in remarkable ways to people who have journeyed there before you. Pilgrimages are trips in which the goal is not so much relaxation of the body as restoration of the soul, and you measure the

trip’s “success” by the number of times you experience awe and wonder, rather than how many drink coupons you had left over at the end of the week.

When that truth finally settled into my mind, I realized God had been calling my daughter onto this pilgrimage just like the rest of us. From that point on, I never doubted that she was supposed to be there.

Obviously, it did change the experience though. For starters, there was much less time for contemplative prayer or journaling or just about anything you might characterize as “quiet.” And meals were pretty stressful (“Sorry, kiddo, but they don’t have Annie’s mac-and-cheese in South Africa. Try this biltong!”). But for every way my daughter’s presence prevented me from repeating some of my favorite aspects of past pilgrimages, it also facilitated new holy experiences I would simply not have had were she not there. For example, I couldn’t just go to the District Six Museum to quietly look at artifacts of apartheid; I had to find words to describe to an eight-year-old how a society could choose to do such things to people. I couldn’t just enjoy the experience of meeting with Archbishop Tutu; I first had to teach her who he is and impart to her the incredible truth that the loving way of Jesus really can change the world.

Frankly, we spent a lot of time doing “grown up things.” We went to a prison to learn about restorative justice. We toured the projects of a multinational relief agency that serves poor communities ravaged by HIV/AIDS. Even when we were hanging out at the tiny preschool that my church has supported for nearly 20 years, we spent as much time listening to administrators and teachers as we did playing with kids.

And yet, she was up for every bit of it. She’s a kid, so she had a remarkable ability to find joy everywhere we went. I swear she could smell a playground from a mile away. She insisted our trip leaders tell funny stories to pass the time on long drives. And her love of singing encouraged all of us to sing as we prayed in the mornings and evenings and other times during the day. I will always remember the night we drove out on safari and the driver turned out the lights of the truck so



we could see the stars, and after a few minutes of quiet rapture, my daughter began to quietly sing the Alleluia refrain of “Seek Ye First.”

I am absolutely sure that the other adult pilgrims loved and appreciated her. She began as a sort of adorable mascot, but she became a true fellow pilgrim in her own right. Her wonder-filled eyes helped the rest of us look for awe and wonder. Her lack of cynicism helped all of us release ours. Her faith came to inform our faith.

Time will tell how the whole experience will impact her life, but then, isn’t the same true for all the adults who went on the pilgrimage? Aren’t we all still unpacking the many gifts God gives us on such journeys long after we return home? Isn’t the point of the experience about more than successfully traveling there and back again? This is where my role as parent comes in. Whenever we look back at pictures and videos of our adventures, I try to gently turn the conversation to wonder where and how God was with us, and I invite her to think about what God may have wanted her to see and experience. Frankly, I need to ponder these questions, too, so this is yet one more holy aspect we get to share.

I don’t know that I’ll bring one of my kids on every pilgrimage I undertake, but I know I won’t hesitate when another opportunity arises.

And not just for their sake. For mine, too. 🙏

This article was originally published on September 7, 2018 on [growchristians.org](http://www.growchristians.org) (<http://www.growchristians.org/2018/09/07/pilgrimagewithkids/>) and is republished with permission from the editor.

Getting to Know Alex Cavanaugh

AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR

Director of Youth Ministries

Tell us about your background

I'm a native Texan, born in Corpus Christi, though I spent a good chunk of my childhood living in Salem, Oregon. My dad, Bill, had been called there as Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church until we came to Dallas and my dad took the position of Rector at Epiphany. My mom, Melissa, is a trained choral performer and currently lives in her hometown, San Antonio, working at a catholic school and playing French horn in many of the local bands. My brother lives in the same apartment complex as I do, and has found success in retail. The overall family dynamic is very close, despite my parents separating, and we all keep fairly routine contact with each other, even though we are spread from Connecticut to Texas. I go to school at the University of Texas at Dallas, majoring in Accounting.

What drew you to youth ministry? Tell us about working at All Saints and Epiphany.

I've grown up being a part of a youth group all my life, and some of my closest friends are from youth events at Epiphany and from diocesan events. I had volunteered for years out of responsibility to my dad, but later I became a summer counselor at All Saints, the diocesan camp and conference center. The blitz that is working

for six weeks at camp is exhausting physically, mentally, and emotionally, but coming out on the other end I had nothing but satisfaction and positive memories. I hadn't found more fulfillment in anything else, and so I knew where I was being called. I had begun teaching and leading Sunday school at Epiphany shortly after my first summer as a counselor, and after serving in 2017, I worked as a volunteer with my roommate, Alex Pounders, at St. Mark's in Irving to help run his brand new youth program there. The highlights of my week were always Sundays despite being incredibly busy because Sunday School and Youth Group were both so much fun and fulfilling.



Meet Our Youth Musician

Austin Cope was hired this fall to help lead worship for Youth Crossover on Wednesday evenings. A little bit about him:

I'm a worship leader and a music director for bands/churches around Dallas. I also produce music for song writers and artists of all types in a home studio that I built myself (in a space that my wife was kind enough to let me have). I have the cutest dog in the entire world which the studio is affectionately named after "King Henry Studios." I like to cook gourmet meals for my wife and people I love most, because my love language is food. Paris, France (not Paris, Texas) is my very favorite place in the world besides my studio or behind a drum kit. For the youth, we have been singing a mixture of modern contemporary Christian and traditional Episcopal hymns led from the instrumentations of an acoustic guitar.



What is your favorite aspect of working with young people?

My favorite aspect of working with youth is their personality. The variety of people and personalities that you meet in a youth group is priceless. It binds together people from so many backgrounds that likely wouldn't know each other otherwise. I love seeing the opportunity for the students to be their true selves, and the fun and fellowship that comes from that opportunity.

What are you most excited about doing at Transfiguration?

I am most excited about the various programs that we have going for youth, and I'm excited to help expand those roots. The rich tradition that Transfiguration has, set in spiritual commitment and fellowship, is beautifully realized in our pilgrimage. I hope to provide more opportunities for our youth at Transfiguration to experience fellowship in Christian community like they do on the pilgrimage.

What is your favorite season of the church year?

As cheesy as it sounds, Advent is my favorite season in the church calendar. I love the smells and bells that frequent the season, I love the reason for the season, and I love the nostalgia that Advent brings.

What are your favorite things to do outside of church?

My interests are all over the place, and while I will take any

opportunity to go on a long hike, I'm (not so secretly) super nerdy, and when I'm not busy at church or school, I will generally be playing a video game. Some past favorites are Destiny, Mass Effect, and Skyrim, and I have been playing Pokemon:Go fairly compulsively.

Anything else you want us to know?

Ask me! 🙋

Update from the Capital Discernment Committee

By Mat Thekkil—Committee Chair

Greetings from the Capital Discernment Committee! We are excited to be in the final stages of our work and would like to give you an update on our progress.

We are carefully examining the church's immediate capital needs, assessing our future needs, and considering how to handle our yearly regular maintenance. While we have shifted our focus from a chapel to urgent capital needs, we are also evaluating other potential projects that could have a positive impact on our parish.

You are a part of the discernment process and we hope you have given us your thoughts either through the information session in July or through the online survey in November. We are taking your feedback into consideration as we complete our analysis and prioritization of repairs, maintenance, and projects. If you missed the information session in July, the presentation along with some supporting documentation is available on the church website at www.transfiguration.net/publications.

Our main closing tasks and priorities are:

- 1 Finalize immediate capital needs vs. regularly occurring replacement/capital needs.
- 2 Finalize estimates of yearly preventative repairs.
- 3 Determine the cost of annual upkeep and maintenance of plant and being code compliant.
- 4 Estimate the costs of any potential additional projects.

It is our hope to present our final analysis along with a variety of options to the Vestry prior to their retreat in early 2019. Ideally, money

should be raised that could be used for immediate needs and set up an endowment/trust for future needs. It is our hope that we can raise even more money to address other capital projects such as building a new chapel, sacristy, and/or renovating other spaces. These additional projects would need to be prioritized before including them in any fundraising campaign.

Eventually the vestry will prayerfully consider the analysis, come up with a plan to raise the funds, and present the plan to the parish in 2019.

Please keep the Capital Discernment Committee in your prayers as we wrap up our work. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mat Thekkil at rthekkil@gmail.com. 🙋





Same Sex Marriage Blessing & Celebration

Saturday, January 19 | 5:30 PM

Join us for this long-awaited, joyous celebration for our church community!

Volunteer • Donate • RSVP in  realm