

YOU HAVE KEPT
THE BEST
WINE
UNTIL
NOW

EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the
HEAVENLY REST

God's Love. For All.

Lay Reader

ALL SAINTS' • VOLUME 11, ISSUE 6 • ABILENE, TEXAS

From The Rector

Stewardship 2024: Brimful

– David Romanik



"Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim."

John 2:27

The second chapter of John's gospel contains one of my favorite interactions between Jesus and another person. The evangelist tells us that Jesus was attending a wedding in Cana of Galilee with his disciples and members of his family, including his mother. At one point during the festivities, the hosts ran out of wine. This is both unsurprising (wedding celebrations in first century Judea often lasted for days and involved hundreds of people) and deeply embarrassing: in a culture that valued hospitality, the idea of running out of wine was anathema. Jesus's mother approaches her son and explains the hosts' predicament. Jesus responds in a way that seems less than compassionate: "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?" While we might fault Jesus for his brusque reply (especially to his mother!), it's hard not to see his point. After all, what responsibility does he have for the embarrassment of the hosts? Why is it his job to make sure the celebration can continue? Despite Jesus's reply, his mother turns to the servants and says, "Do whatever he tells you." There is something deeply maternal about this moment: Mary recognizes that Jesus will change his mind, as long as she encourages him to do so. On a deeper level, however, Jesus's mother understands something fundamental about what it means to live in community: it is our ability to make a difference that creates our responsibility to one another. Despite his initial hesitation, Jesus acknowledges his responsibility and performs his first miracle, leaving six stone jars filled to the brim with the promise of further celebration.

One of the things I find most powerful about this story is how much Jesus seems to speak for us in his initial reply to his mother: "What concern is that to you and to me?" How often are we inclined to respond this way when we hear about something in the world that begs our attention? "What concern is that to me?", we ask as we hear about issues or opportunities that don't seem to have anything to do with us. "Why is it my responsibility to support initiatives that don't immediately affect my life?" This is a deeply human response. One of the profound gifts of the Church, however, is the way it creates space for us to look beyond our individual interests. As we hear every Sunday, the Church invites us to "lift our hearts" above our limited perspective and try to see the world as God sees it. When we do this, we begin to recognize that it is not primarily our interest, but our ability that creates our responsibility to one another. The way we build community, the way we build up the body of Christ, is by using our gifts to make a difference, even if the impact of those gifts is not immediately relevant to our experience of the world. When we exercise this responsibility, we begin to recognize that we are connected to one another in ways that we cannot fully understand.

Several weeks ago, I sat in a staff meeting and marveled at everything that is happening at Heavenly Rest. There are exciting opportunities for children and youth, inspiring musical offerings, and meaningful Christian formation activities, all planned, coordinated, and implemented by our talented staff and dedicated volunteers. In the meantime, this magnificent facility is kept clean, safe, and beautiful thanks to the tireless efforts of our custodial staff. We are, in many ways, "filled to the brim" with activity. It is important for us to recognize that this busyness is not for its own sake. Indeed, our life at Heavenly Rest is a celebration of the dynamic and generous God who created and redeemed us. The way to keep this celebration going is by acknowledging our ability to make a difference through our talent, our time, and our financial generosity, and then remembering that it is our ability to make a difference that creates our responsibility to one another. As we move into our annual Stewardship Campaign, my prayer is that we will all do our part to fill this community with the promise of further celebration.

***"it is our
ability to
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Author in Residence: Kathleen Norris

In November, we welcome the award-winning poet, writer, and author of The New York Times best sellers *The Cloister Walk*, *Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life*, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, and *The Virgin of Bennington*. Norris has written seven books of poetry and offers an intimate, meditative, reverent, and grounded reflections on spiritual life. Her work is often at times humorous, and at the same time, provocative and reflective.

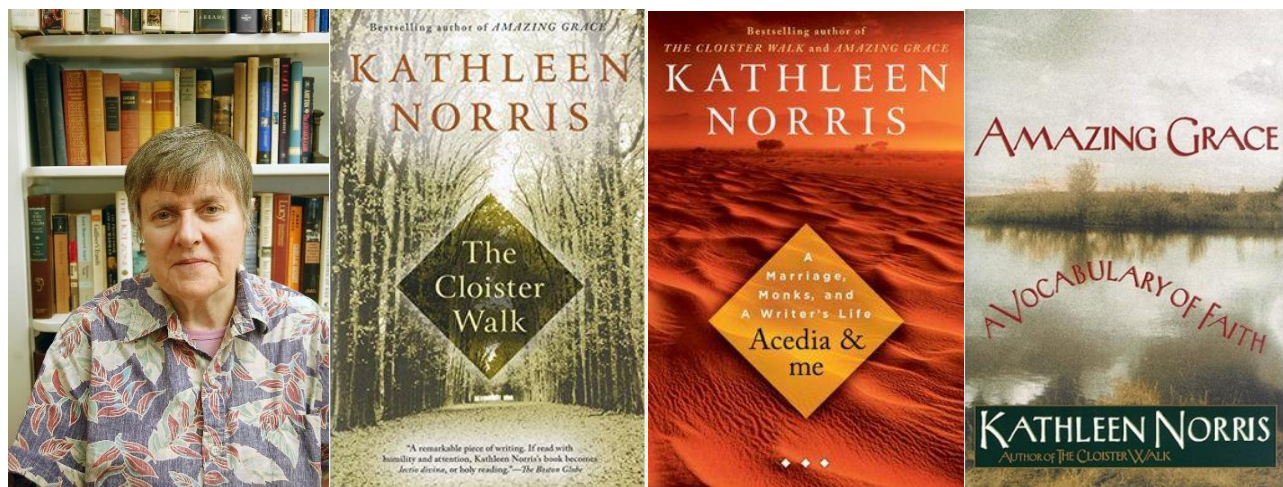
On Tuesday, November 7, we'll offer a courtyard reception book signing at 5:30 pm, followed by an intimate dinner in Gerhart Hall at 6:15 pm. At 7 pm, Norris will share new writing projects she's working on and what's exciting her in the world of faith and spirituality. Seating is limited for this ticketed event (\$50 per person). Contact ccabes@heavenlyrestabilene.org for more information.

On Wednesday, November 8, Norris will join us for our regularly scheduled Wednesday night program open to all featuring dinner at 6pm in Gerhart Hall. Norris will embrace our theme of "Invitation" and offer theological reflections at 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm in the Nave with a following Q&A session. Children and youth will have separate activities in the parish house where they will reflect on the theme of "Invitation." Nursery for our youngest children will be provided.

On Sunday, November 12, Norris will wrap up her week on the Heavenly Rest campus by preaching at the 10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite II service.

Our author in residence program is made possible by the Galloway Memorial Fund of the Heavenly Rest Church Foundation, and in partnership with McMurry University, Abilene Christian University, and Highland Church of Christ. Special thanks to Darryl Tippens for introducing and connecting us with his long-time friend, Kathleen Norris. Seven and One bookstore will be on-site on Tuesday, November 7, Wednesday evening, November 8, and Sunday after the 10:30 service for a pop-up book sale of Norris's best-selling titles.

Photo Credit: George Barcos





Formation Continues for Fall 2023

– Corrie Cabes



On Saturday, September 16, we had a festive parent part and trivia night.

We are so excited to welcome back our Director of Family Ministries, Carol Ann!
Carol Ann - I'm so glad to be back! I'm looking forward to the exciting plans we have for our family ministries this fall, and I can't wait to get to know our new families as well. I am very happy and blessed to be working with Luke Mendez and all our volunteers. I appreciate the many prayers lifted for me in my absence.



An amazing start to Exploring Spiritual Treasure this fall with breakfast, a great talk by Fr. David, and meaningful small group sharing time. Join us Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in Gerhart Hall.



A thoughtful moment from our Youth Confirmation series at Heavenly Rest.



Back to School bash at Heavenly Rest on Sunday, August 13!



Exploring Spiritual Treasure Gerhart Hall

9:15-10:15 a.m.

Engaging speakers, thoughtful conversations, and spiritual growth...this is Exploring Spiritual Treasure. There's still time to begin your journey at Heavenly Rest and a great way to get connected to serve and grow in Christ. For more information contact Mother Corrie at ccabes@heavenlyrestabilene.org



Rally Night September 6



Youth and Children's Ministry Update

– Luke Mendez

I am excited to share with you the latest updates from our Children and Youth Ministries here at Heavenly Rest. In the short time that I have been here, it has been an amazing experience, and I cannot wait to see where God leads us!

Godly Play continues to be a vibrant and enriching experience for our children, thanks to the incredible dedication and passion of their teachers. Their commitment shines through as our children explore the stories of faith through interactive and creative sessions that leave a lasting impact on the kids.

Our 3rd-5th Grade class remains a beacon of enthusiasm and faith. They actively delve into the Word of God, learning and growing together. Their dedication to building friendships and deepening their faith is amazing to witness. It's also worth noting that they maintain the largest class size, a testament to their dedication, spurred on by their teachers.

Our Youth classes have been hard at work, infusing life and personality into their meeting spaces. It's not just about decoration; it's about creating a welcoming and sacred environment where our youth can forge a deeper connection to their faith. We have also been diligently working on our vision for the youth ministry, with exciting plans yet to come!

Our High School Confirmation class is thriving, and it warms my heart to witness their dedication. With near-perfect attendance and the guidance of amazing teachers, our high schoolers are taking significant steps in their faith journey as they prepare for confirmation and the other areas of ministry to which God is leading them.

As we celebrate the growth and vibrancy of our Children and Youth Ministries, I invite each of you to consider volunteering. Your involvement can be a source of inspiration and guidance for our children and youth. Whether you have a gift for teaching, mentoring, or simply offering your support, your presence can make a lasting impact on the spiritual growth of our children and youth. For more information on how to serve in these ministries, please contact me at Lmendez@heavenlyrestabilene.org.

I am incredibly thankful for the work happening within our Children and Youth Ministries. Together, we can continue to nurture the faith of our young members and provide them with a strong foundation for their lives. We are also excited to welcome back Carol Ann to our family ministry team this month and look forward to a great fall. She will focus on special events for our families.

Time, Talent, and Treasure: What can you give?

God of grace, ever creating and restoring, you breathe life into all things and embrace us with an everlasting love; help us to grow in wonder and awe, to embody a spirit of gratitude, and to dream generous dreams; that, in gathering what we have, we may graciously offer ourselves to accomplish what you will, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“A Collect for Generous Giving” from the Diocese of York (Church of England)

For as long as there have been stewardship campaigns, churches have encouraged their members to give of their “time, talent, and treasure”. The rationale for this slogan is probably self-evident: churches would not be able to function if it were not for the volunteerism and financial generosity of their members. The formula of “time, talent, and treasure” has a neatly alliterative quality, making it easy to remember. Moreover, the reference to “treasure” also points us to Jesus’s observation in Matthew’s gospel: “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”.

In recent years, however, stewardship professionals have counseled against using this kind of language, arguing that mentioning “time” and “talent” either distracts or, worse, deceives people about the more urgent needs the church has. These stewardship pundits probably have a point: if we are being blunt, after all, the primary purpose of a stewardship campaign is to raise money.

Nevertheless, I do think it is at least worth considering the ways the gifts of time and talent shape the life of this community. There are 168 hours in a week. I often marvel about the fact that there are people in this parish who give a significant proportion of those hours to the church, whether they are teaching Sunday School, or volunteering in the kitchen, or serving on Altar Guild, or attending worship and participating in the life of the community. In many ways, time is the most precious gift we have, and it is worth acknowledging with deep gratitude all who give of their time to this beloved community.

Similarly, I am often struck by the ways this parish is an incubator for talent. To illustrate this point, I need to embarrass Robert Becerra, our intrepid Sexton. After Sharon Kelley announced her retirement and move to Waco a few months ago, we found ourselves in a place of some uncertainty. When Sharon was hired as our Hospitality Coordinator, we were serving about 30 people at Wednesday night suppers. By the time she stepped down, the numbers had ballooned to as many as 100 on Wednesday nights. The question this raised was obvious: how were we supposed to approach Hospitality, one of this parish’s most important values, given how much things grew under Sharon’s leadership? In stepped Robert Becerra. Robert indicated that he could take on Wednesday night suppers, and those of you who have been in attendance over the past few weeks can attest to the fact that he, Adrian Smith, and their team of volunteers have done a phenomenal job. Significantly, though, Robert was confident that he could take on Sharon’s Wednesday night role, at least in part, because he had observed her in action over the years. Moreover, Sharon encouraged Robert in their time working together, helping him to gain the confidence to step into leadership. One of the reasons Robert has been able to unleash his talent, in other words, is because it has been encouraged and incubated in the context of this nurturing community.

While we necessarily focus on financial generosity or “treasure” during this stewardship season, it is worth remembering that our church depends on the time and talent of those in this community. Moreover, Heavenly Rest is also a place where that time can be put to its most fruitful purpose and where that talent can be nurtured.



Our New Kitchen Crew!



“Come and See”: An Invitation to God’s Surprises

– Amanda Watson



Those evenings when I walk home from Heavenly Rest in the dark, I am always surprised. As I round the corner near the Hospitality House and turn into Seventh Street, I gasp and turn to look to see if someone is following me. I see two shadows on the sidewalk in front of me. Each time I see the shadows, I am surprised. Yet, I always stop and turn to look, knowing that the shadows come from a street light and the light from the Heavenly Rest sign.

I love that moment of realization when I recognize the true identity of the two shadows. It redirects my focus toward the One who made the shadows. I always say “Thank you, God, for being here; I see you!” I love those moments when I am surprised by God! I walk a little lighter with a smile full of wonder, wrapped in all the security of the presence and providence of God. God is here!

God surprises us, and we must remember who God is. To do this, we have to recognize the presence of God. There are great moments in the Bible when God surprises. Think of Noah when God asked him to build a boat on dry land! He must have said to himself, “Are you kidding me?!” Consider also Moses when he saw the burning bush. In both instances, the men stopped, looked around, and realized it was God. God asked Moses, a lowly shepherd, to go to the Pharaoh and demand that he let his people go. You can be assured that Moses prayed, “You better be there with me, this is going to be scary!” Think of the many times the disciples observed the miracles done by Jesus. They tried to make sense of it all, only to recognize that it was the work of God; this is God, this Jesus of Nazareth. God surprises us, and we respond with worship in thanksgiving.

We should look for and be amazed at God’s surprises. Surprises happen even here at Heavenly Rest, right here on Meander Street, Abilene, Texas. Parson Gerhart was known for giving away his brand-new coat to someone without a coat on a cold winter day. A parishioner driving down 14th street one busy morning saw a woman on the corner freezing without a coat. She went home, took a coat from her closet, and gave it to the woman. Or our resident homeless person, who uses our office for his morning coffee. Or a lonely gentleman who sits on the chair in the church office just to be here where he is loved, respected, and listened to.

Or the young girl who walked by the courtyard one Wednesday evening and saw all the children playing and came in and was made welcome. Then she brought friends, then her mother: Wow! Or the food giveaway on Friday mornings, no request for names, no social security numbers, just the question, “What do you need?” Then the surprises at BOBS, Soup deliveries are surprising.

Yes, This is a place where God surprises. Our doors are open, open for God’s surprises. Open doors say, “You are invited. Come on in.”

I love those moments when something unexpected happens, when I stop and look around, only to discover that God is there. But remember, God surprises, so where is God surprising us now? Will we stop and look? Will we see God? Will we remember?

I love surprises! I hope you do too! GOD DOES!

Because We All Share One Bread and One Cup: Eucharistic Visitors

– Karen Boyd and Luke Mendez



Almost every Sunday, near the end of the service, we send someone forth to carry the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ out into the world. As in the early days of the Church, this sacred meal is sent forth to one or more of our own, who by reason of age or infirmity, is unable to be physically present at the table.

The small, black box presented contains elements that have been blessed at the altar during that service. In this way, our table is spiritually extended so that the sacrament and hospitality of Holy Communion is extended to those to whom we go.

The names of those we visit would be known to you, especially if you have been around for a while. Most of them, in spite of their unavoidable absence continue the work that we have been given to do.

Some of you may remember Winnie Godsey. In her younger years Winnie was very active serving God and others at Heavenly Rest. She helped to create the exquisite needlepoint kneelers at the front of our altar. She worked to help gather the funds necessary to build the bell tower that now pour out musical blessings on us and our neighbors. Winnie is now in her 90s but still has her own special ministry at the facility where she lives. She has been the Ambassador and as such she helps to answer questions for prospective residents and family members. She has been president of the Resident Council and in that role has been an advocate for all who live there. She remains involved in life where she is planted. Perhaps more so, she continues to fulfill her baptismal vows to love God and her neighbor as she sits with the dying, sings to them, and prays with them as they close their eyes for the last time. Sharing the Eucharist with Winnie empowers her own ministry as she blesses those she serves.

Winnie is only one of those we visit. Each beloved has a story, a lifetime of ministry to others. These are the ones we serve.

This ministry is open to all baptized Christians. If you feel called to this special ministry, you are encouraged to come and see. You are invited to call Deacon Karen at 325-201-2277 or call the church office.



Welcoming Kathleen Norris to Church of the Heavenly Rest

– Darryl Tippens

When I think of my spiritual journey, I remember those who have helped me along the way. Most of my best guides have been close by—mostly family members and friends. But a few of my best mentors have been long-distance companions. Among these looms Kathleen Norris, a distinguished writer who has inspired, nurtured, and taught me so much. How lucky we are that this revered author will be spending a week with us at Heavenly Rest this November.

Kathleen Norris is one of the finest writers today able to plumb the mysteries of faith and help readers discover (or rediscover) their faith. Few writers are more articulate or candid about their doubts and spiritual conflicts. Norris has proven to be an able guide, a faithful pilgrim, and a winsome friend to thousands of folks like me. You won't find platitudes or banalities in anything she writes, but you will discover remarkable insights, often packaged with wry humor. No wonder *The Cloister Walk* and *Amazing Grace* ended up on the New York Times bestseller list.

Sometimes the persona of a writer conjured up by the words on the page is different from the actual flesh-and-blood author. This was not the case with Norris. The virtues of her many books you see in her life. She is one of the kindest, most accessible, and warm-hearted persons you could meet. So I discovered when we met at a lecture she was to deliver at a college in Oklahoma a few years ago. I had been invited to introduce her. The Kathleen Norris I met in the flesh was “eloquent but earthbound,” as one reviewer noted, “neither preachy nor pedantic . . .” That’s the person I have met.

Many reviewers note a paradoxical quality in Norris’s works: pointed insights delivered with dashes of understated humor. Some examples come to mind: “Only Christ could have brought us all together, in this place, doing such absurd but necessary things,” she writes. “Be careful how you unfold your wings—there are some in the world who are not content unless their teeth are full of feathers.... In spite of the cost of living it’s still popular.”

When I pick up a book by a new author (new to me), the first reading stays with me if the writing is exceptional. So it happened to me around 1995 when I picked up my first book by Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*. It opens with this epigraph: “Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are.” For too long I had been trying to find God (and myself too) in all the “high” places—in abstract theology, literature, and psychology. In *Dakota*, Norris brought me down to earth. She invited me to look a little lower and closer in. I had never thought how physical space, how living on the plains—how living in Abilene, Texas—could be relevant to my spiritual life. But Norris, building on the wisdom of the Desert Fathers, showed me how. I learned that I need to figure out where “on earth” I am. In all her books Norris shows us how to find beauty, truth, and goodness in the daily, the ordinary, and the local.

In 2019 I met Kathleen again. We were at the Harvard Divinity School where she was to give a speech and receive the Lifetime Achievement Award being presented by the Conference on Christianity and Literature, an organization in which I was an officer. She proved to be the same thoughtful, personable soul I had met years before. At Harvard we honored her for “having invited readers to accompany her on a career-long pilgrimage into the imaginative realm where Christianity and literature intersect in graced acts of poetry and prose.” The citation continued:

To read Kathleen Norris is to contemplate how the mysteries of faith await to be rediscovered in the quotidian world. Whether taking us on a journey to the revelatory bleakness of Dakota, through the festal calendar of The Cloister Walk, into the religious vocabulary of Amazing Grace, or beyond the heartsicknesses of Acedia and Me, she has demonstrated how immersion in the local, temporal, linguistic, and biographical yields unexpected resources of creativity and beatitude.”

Kathleen Norris is one of those writers whose books you feel compelled to hand to a friend and say: “Here. You’ve got to read this!” We do this because the writers’ words made a difference in our lives. I can’t wait for Kathleen to join us at Heavenly Rest because I know she will find new companions on the road into the imaginative realm where faithful words transform lives.

Save the Date!*

October 20-21: Diocesan Convention in Lubbock

October 21: Youth Work Day from 9:00 am to 3:00 p.m.

October 30: Tanglewood Trick or Treat at 5:30 p.m.

October 31: All Hallow's Eve service at 5:30 p.m. in the Columbarium

November 1: Dia De Los Muertos Potluck and Remembrance in Gerhart Hall at 6 p.m.

November 5: Combined English and Swahili Service for All Saints with Baptisms at 10:30 p.m.

November 6-12: Author in Residence, Kathleen Norris

November 19: Youth Taco Night from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

November 22: Thanksgiving Eve service at 5:30 p.m.

November 29: Advent Wreath and Crèche Craft at 6:30 p.m.

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



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