

EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the
HEAVENLY REST

God's Love. For All.

Lay Reader

ALL SAINTS • VOLUME 14, ISSUE 6 • ABILENE, TEXAS

From The Rector



Saintly Decisions

David Romanik

Without a doubt, one of the great privileges of being an Abilenean is the opportunity to hear the story of one's city narrated by Jay Moore. Jay has written a number of informative and entertaining books about Abilene's history, and he also publishes a biweekly email that profiles an Abilene luminary or recalls an event from the city's past. If you don't receive these fascinating snippets of Abilene history, you should. Give Jay your email address and tell him you want to be on the list. He'll take care of the rest.

The other day, Jay's email profiled someone well known to members of Heavenly Rest: Frank Sheffield, father of Franklynn Hall. In the 1960s, Frank ran several Abilene movie houses owned by Interstate Theatres, and he was managing the Paramount when "A Gathering of Eagles," which starred Rock Hudson as a B-52 wing commander, was released in July of 1963. Since Dyess Air Force Base had recently become the proud home of 17 B-52 Stratofortress bombers, and since the film was made with the cooperation and endorsement of the Air Force, the Paramount was chosen to host the film's premiere. The Paramount would be full of movie stars, military brass, and numerous airmen from Dyess. This presented something of a challenge for Frank. Many Dyess airmen were Black, and at this point in its history, facilities owned by Interstate Theatres were segregated. At the Paramount, this meant that white theatergoers could sit downstairs and use the main concession stand, while non-white patrons were forced to sit in the balcony. Despite the company policy, and without consulting community leaders or polling his customers, Frank made a simple and ultimately fateful decision: he instructed his employees to permit everyone to enter through the front door and sit wherever they liked, regardless of the color of their skin. With that, Frank Sheffield single-handedly integrated Abilene movie theaters. As Jay observed, Frank's "legacy just might be [that] quiet decision he made in the summer of 1963."



We are entering the season of the Church year when we pay particular attention to the lives of the saints. At the beginning of October, we remembered the life and ministry of Francis of Assisi as we blessed animals on the Heavenly Rest campus and at the Abilene Zoo. At the beginning of November, we will celebrate All Saints' Day, that great festival of the Church when we consider the examples of our ancestors in the faith. While the saints are those who exhibited "heroic sanctity" throughout their lives, they are also people who simply made a decision that shaped the way we remember them. One of my favorite examples of this is Jonathan Daniels, the Episcopal seminarian who was martyred as he attempted to register voters in Alabama. Jonathan decided to step in front of a man who was threatening a young Black girl with a shotgun. I don't imagine that Jonathan Daniels woke up that morning with the intention of being martyred. Yet it was his simple and quiet decision that reverberated through the decades, reminding us that, every so often, the decisions we make can change both the world around us and the way we will be remembered.

Of course, it can be hard to know what the right decision is in the moment. If every choice we make has the potential to qualify us for sainthood, how can we be sure we are making the right decision? It is here where we would do well to embrace an idea espoused by the recovery community: that all we can try to do is "the next right thing." We aren't going to get everything right, and we don't know which of our decisions will have a lasting impact. Most of us, however, can discern what the "next right thing" might be, and that can make all the difference. To my mind, the saints are those who did the "next right thing," no matter the cost.

As we enter through this season of saints, may we remember and give thanks for people like Frank Sheffield and Jonathan Daniels: those who did the next right thing, and whose decisions changed the world around them.



Who wants to be Ordinary?

Ashley Powers

Growing up, I attended a non-denominational “megachurch” and was deeply involved in the youth program. My parents taught Sunday school and helped run the AV and sound booths—yes, plural. I went to every church camp, mission trip, Sunday school class, and evening event.

Our church was so large that the youth had their own building across campus, packed with the latest technology. TVs and gaming consoles lined the walls, and the stage hosted world-renowned speakers and concerts throughout the year. We had the resources and opportunities that most churches could only dream of, and they drew young people in - on any given day, a hundred youth might be there. It looked like the dream of endless growth, money, and opportunity had come true. Right?

And yet, what I remember most is how often I felt completely invisible. I was introverted—so definitely not one of the cool kids—and I often felt unseen by my peers, the adult leaders, and especially my pastors. It wasn’t only that they didn’t always know my name or my interests. It felt like there was no space for the questions I carried about life and God. All the flashy technology and sand volleyball courts couldn’t quiet the fear underneath it all: Was I invisible to God too?

Now that I’m a minister, I can give those leaders some grace. The bigger our program became, the harder it was to offer the closeness and personal attention that come more naturally in a smaller group. Teenagers today may live in a very different world than I did, but this much hasn’t changed: no flashy program can compare with a place where people know your name, care about you, and give you room to ask what’s on your heart about life and faith.

As we keep asking what kind of formation we want to offer young people today, my prayer is that we never trade truly knowing and loving each person who walks through our doors for the dream of getting bigger. We will be all the richer for it, and our youth hear through us that they are known and loved by God too.

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. – 1 Tim. 4:12

Youth on Third launched this fall for all middle and high school students. It meets the third Sunday of the month (4-6pm). Students please join us for dinner as we talk about life and faith together.





Halloween

Amanda Watson

The Book of Occasional Services includes a service for All Hallows' Eve. The rubrics of that service specify that it "may be use on the evening of October 31, known as All Hallows' Eve. Suitable festivities and entertainments may take place before or after this service, and a visit may be made to a cemetery or burial place."

On Saturday, October 31, Heavenly Rest will do all of the above. Beginning at 6pm, the campus grounds of Heavenly Rest will become a gathering place for the community. Decorated car trunks will provide a fun place for children to collect all sorts of goodies. This year, we are adding teal buckets with non-food treats so that all children will be welcomed to trick or treat regardless of dietary needs. Everyone is welcome to stop by to enjoy some cool water, an open playground, and most importantly open restrooms. The car trunks will be closed at 8pm so all can enter the columbarium at 8:15pm for the Service of All Hallows' Eve.

As we enter the columbarium our hearts and minds will begin to quiet as we pray, "Almighty and ever living God, you have made all things in your wisdom and established the boundaries of life and death: Grant that we may obey your voice in this world, and in the world to come may enjoy that rest and peace which you have appointed for your people; through Jesus Christ who is Resurrection and Life." We will hear stories from scripture about the permeability between life and death and we will prepare ourselves for the festival of All Saints'.

Please help us celebrate! We will need lots and lots of candy and other treats. You may bring bags of treats and deposit them in the containers found in the narthex, parish house and in Gerhart Hall. And we need lots of car trunks. Come decorate your trunk and have great fun handing out candy and trinkets to the many goblins, dinosaurs and all sorts of strange and wondrous beings. And we will need readers for the All Hallows' Eve service. Contact Mtr. Amanda Watson, 325-370-5650, or any one on the Neighborhood Committee.



A Morning Prayer

Doug Thomas

Thank you Father for this day and all You freely give;
a day designed within Your plan and given us to live.
My all our thoughts and words and deeds
bring glory to Your name,
and may we touch some lives with grace
sufficient for their gain.

Consecration Sunday

Jen Rogers



“We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and your money - in this work to which God has called us.” - Henri Nouwen

One of my earliest church memories centered around a gallon pickle jar. In the months and weeks leading up to our mission Sunday, we heard about communities across

the globe, the work that God was doing in that space and we were invited to be a part. As a small child with no transferrable skills (yet!) and no income - the ways that I could contribute were limited. In the Rogers household, we got a gallon pickle jar where my younger brother and I could collect change. I am sure we scoured the ground looking for lost coins, commandeered change left over from a purchase our parents made, and asked those we knew to contribute to our cause.



Over the days, weeks and months, the jar slowly but surely was filled to the top. When the mission Sunday arrived, I (with help from my parents) proudly carried the pickle jar down the aisle and placed it aside pennies, nickels, dimes, dollar bills and checks. Our gifts were joined together to be a part of the work to which God had called us - work we would never see first-hand and in a part of the world where most of us would never go.

As a kid walking up that aisle with the gallon jar, I was already the recipient of the generosity of others in the room and of generations of those who had come before. I was standing in a sanctuary that was envisioned and built by people before I was born. Years before, just down the hall, women held me as a baby and sang songs of faith over me and my friends. I continued to grow, the community continued to pray over my life, teach our classes, share meals around a table and include me in the full life of faith.

When we talk about stewardship here at Heavenly Rest, in the words of Henri Nouwen, “we are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and your money - in this work to which God has called us.” Because we believe that part of the way we live out our faith is by finding ways to join in with the work of God in our community. That will look different for each of us – and will probably look different in different seasons of our lives. We hope that Heavenly Rest is both a place where you can experience the work of God through the gifts of others and that you and your gifts are a way in which others can experience the work of God in their lives.

The Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest is dedicated to serving and creating community by proclaiming the good news of God’s love for all. It takes all of us, joining our gifts together, to carry out this work of God within our community.

On October 25th, we will Celebrate Consecration Sunday in our services and then with a communal meal at noon. At its heart, stewardship is about acknowledging the gifts we have received from God and the Church and then discerning the ways we will respond. It is about ensuring that Heavenly Rest remains a place where people can experience the good news of God’s love for all. As you discern your financial gift to Heavenly Rest for the coming year, be assured, that giving any amount makes a difference. Moreover, think of your pledge as a reflection of the gifts you have experienced in this place, and as an expression of your commitment to share your gifts in this community and beyond.



Christian Formation for Children & Their Families: Aware or not, you are a part of the process. Carol Ann Weston

Christian formation for children and their families is about so much more than lessons on Sunday mornings, which is what most of us think of first. Christian formation is a lifelong process that happens in community and shapes each of us into the person God created us to be. This doesn't just happen in a classroom, but in every aspect of the life of the church. Yes, planned times of learning Bible stories, wondering, discussing what the stories meant back then and what they mean for the children's lives is important, just as classes for adults are important, but so are many other times in the life of the church.

Every interaction between children, their families, and other adults they encounter has an effect, positive or negative, on how they view the church, themselves, and their relationship with Christ. Are the family's young ones ignored, nameless, and overlooked? Or do adults look them in the eye, introduce themselves, learn their names, then greet them by name? Do they thank them for their service in worship (singing, acolyting, presenting the elements, carrying the Wiggle Worship cross, and more)? Do they bow when the Wiggle Worship cross proceeds, smile as children go down the aisle, and make time to wonder with them at cookie time or Wednesday meal about what they like best about that day? Just knowing their name and taking a few minutes to show interest in them and their family can make a huge difference.

The nursery, worship, Wiggle Worship, VBS, Children's Music, Choristers, handbells, acolytes, Stream Team, Friday Outreach, Wednesday night meals, cookie time – these are just some of the opportunities for children and youth to interact with loving adults who share the love of Christ with them and help them to form their own loving relationship with Christ and others. I pray that you will take time this week to consider your influence on children's Christian formation.

Thanksgiving Eve



At the heart of every Sunday service is a prayer of thanksgiving. The word "Eucharist," in fact, comes from the Greek verb "to give thanks." The life of our community, in other words, is centered around the act of giving thanks to God for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. For this reason, it is hard to imagine a more appropriate way to celebrate Thanksgiving than by gathering for the Holy Eucharist. Before the feast, football, and fellowship, join us at Heavenly Rest for our Thanksgiving Eve service on Wednesday, November 25 at 5:30. This year, our preacher will be Jen Rogers, Heavenly Rest's Director of Communications and Stewardship. Join us as we sing hymns, pray, and above all, give thanks for all the blessings of this life.

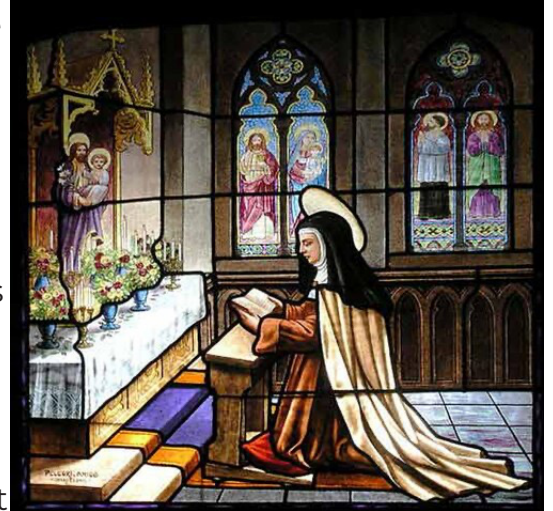
All Saints and St. Teresa

Amanda Watson

One of Heavenly Rest's favorite hymns is "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God," which concludes with this verse: "They lived not only in ages past, there are hundreds of thousands still, the world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will. You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea, in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea, for the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too."

At the mention of saints, we quickly respond without reservation, "no way, not me!" and yet we sing that "the saints of God are just folk like me." This conflict leads me to my favorite saint, St. Teresa of Avila. Although from childhood Teresa had always wanted to be a nun, she never felt her gifts were suited for the convent.

On a visit to Spain, I toured St. Teresa's convent and sat in her confessional. This confessional was a small room with a big rock in the middle of the room. Now this was no smooth round rock; it was huge and jaggedly cut, so there was nothing approaching comfort on which to sit. Needless to say, any penitent would have to sit very carefully. St. Teresa would sit on that rock all day making her confession. Now I clearly have enough sins to fill an entire day but do not have the endurance to sit uncomfortably on a rock for an entire day.



St. Teresa thought her gifts were unacceptable for life in a convent. Throughout her life Teresa was described as being unusually attractive, she loved people, was very adept at getting people to like and admire her (especially men) and the delight she took in doing so would have fitted her badly for a cloistered life. Her passion for words was surely excessive: words written, spoken, sung, bantered and riddled with marvelous metaphors that let her say even the hardest things with dazzling ease. All topped by her awareness that submission to authority would never be her strong suit.

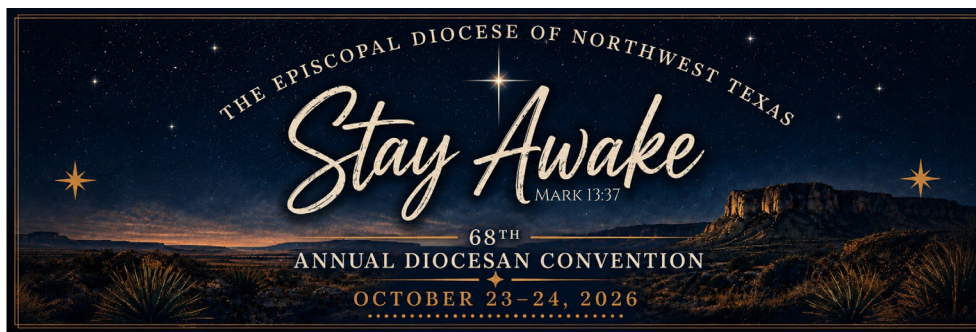
It was these very gifts that profited her to live in her world of the Inquisition and patriarchy. St. Teresa was required to teach without teaching. Forbidden, because she was a woman, to preach or even to comment on Scripture, she nevertheless functioned as a spiritual teacher for the last twenty years of her life. Before her death she founded 17 discalced Carmelite convents and four monasteries. (Discalced means unshod. The nuns wore rope sandals.) Those skills she thought imperfect for a simple nun provided that simple nun the ability to influence an entire world.

For me, she reminds us on this All Saints' Day that the gifts that we have been given are enough and, not only enough, but perfectly suited for the work that God has called us to do and to be. How empowering it is to realize that we have the skills necessary "to love to do Jesus' will," to trust in our God who generously provides and guides us in our work. Thank you, St. Teresa of Avila, for sharing with us the understanding that the power of God that lived within you, now, lives within each of us.

Diocesan Convention 2026

From October 24-26, clergy and delegates from all the parishes, missions, and communities in the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas will gather in Lubbock for the 68th Annual Convention of the Diocese. In addition to conducting the business of the Diocese and being reminded that the Church transcends our local communities, we will celebrate the ministry of Bishop Mayer, who will be retiring in June of next year. Please keep the Convention, especially the representatives from Heavenly Rest, in your prayers as we gather for this important meeting.

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel in the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



He who is Other

Doug Thomas

He who is Other
Moves
in stillness.

He who is Other
Shines
in darkness.

He who is Other
Speaks
in silence.

He who is Other
Makes
from nothing.

He who is Other
Loves
by yielding.

He who is Other
Rules
by serving.

He who is Other
Saves
by dying.

Mark Your Calendars!

October 18th | Youth on Third and
Abilene Chamber Players – “Reunited”

October 24-26th | Diocesan Convention (Lubbock)

October 25th | Consecration Sunday

October 28 | Dia de los Muertos Potluck at 6:00

October 31 | Trick or Treating at Heavenly Rest and
All Hallow’s Eve Service

November 12 | Bishop Nominees Meet and Greet

November 15 | Youth on Third and
“Remembrance” – Susie Rockett, oboe with Abigail Payne, piano

November 25 | Thanksgiving Eve Service at 5:30

November 29 | First Sunday in Advent

December 2 | Potluck and Neighborhood Caroling

December 9 | Angel Tree Wrapping Party

December 16 | Christmas Pageant and
Parish Christmas party

December 16 | Advent Quiet Night

December 19 | Ordination of Bikole Mulanda



For All The Saints

Joe Biles

The Feast of All Saints holds special meaning for me. After visiting services overseas, my first “church home” in the Episcopal Church was All Saints’ Episcopal in Minot, North Dakota, a small but mighty congregation of about three dozen folks. Other parishes had their patrons, but we had all the saints. Every year on the Sunday following November 1—in a flock not known for its gifts in congregational singing—we would belt out Hymn 293, “I sing a song of the saints of God,” with special gusto. It was there that I came to fully appreciate the significance of the communion of saints, living and dead, across time and space.

Having grown up within traditions that saw the Eucharist as memorial only, I naturally gravitated toward the theology of Christ’s “real presence” in the Eucharistic meal. I found immense comfort knowing that, having condescended to us by becoming human, our Creator still gives himself to us in the form of bread. Over time, I also gradually became aware of the way the Eucharist makes the whole church present for us. St. Augustine expressed this beautifully in a sermon to catechumens preparing for baptism: as many grains become one loaf and many grapes become one cup, in the Eucharist, the many members of the Church become one Body.

My dad, who was born on Christmas Eve, liked to joke that he and Jesus had two birthdays: the one in December and Easter Sunday. He died on Easter Sunday, April 15, 2001, and from time to time I’ve wondered whether he was making a theological statement or a last show of defiance to the IRS by not filing his 1040.

When he died, he was nominally Methodist but had stopped regularly attending services for some time. That October, I was taken aback when a member of the local United Methodist Church asked us about including him in their All Saints’ necrology list. My idea of sainthood was what a Southern Baptist imagined the Roman Catholics meant by the term, and I couldn’t yet understand why his church wanted to number him among the saints despite his spotty attendance record.

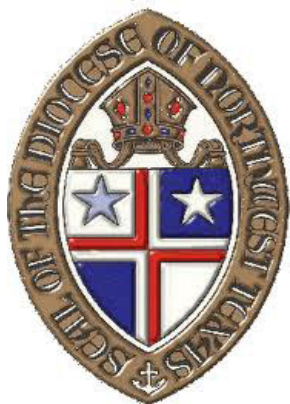
Now I do. The saints are traditionally commemorated on the anniversary of their death, and while Easter has only fallen on April 15 twice since 2001, I’ve felt in some mystical way closer to my dad each Easter. Each Christmas Eve too.

“In the Eastern Church, it is claimed that there is only one Eucharist,” our bishop reminded us in a 2025 ordination sermon: “One Eucharist forever repeated, indivisible. ... One Eucharist extending through time.” Each time we participate in this one Eucharist, we join the heavenly thanksgiving already in progress where “a great multitude that no one could count ... [stand] before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9).

I spent nearly my entire childhood in Texas, save for a year in Wyoming. Perhaps because it was the first “White Christmas” I remember, my definitive Christmas memory has always been the candlelight service at the Methodist church in Cody, Wyoming, in 1991, when I was seven. Twenty years later, I moved to North Dakota against my will and fell in love with the Peace Garden State against my better judgment. One of the best things about North Dakota is that Christmas there always feels like Christmas. It was Christmas in that little red brick church that gave me the vocabulary and the spiritual imagination to pray in union with “all the saints who have found favor with you in ages past,” and to know they were “just folk like me.”

As I’ve told people preparing for Confirmation, Anglicans have believed all sorts of things about the Eucharist over the centuries, and we likely have room for their preferred Eucharistic metaphysics too. Do we sacramentally join our loved ones at the rail, as Christ meets us there? I can’t prove it on a rationalistic basis. But I do know this: Even after Dad stopped going to church every week, he never missed Christmas and Easter.

Ordination of The Rev. Bikole Mulanda to the Sacred Order of Priests



God willing and the people consenting,
The Right Reverend J. Scott Mayer
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas will ordain
Bikole Mulanda
to the Sacred Order of Priests
in Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church

Saturday, the Nineteenth Day of December
Two Thousand Twenty-Six
at Eleven o'clock in the morning
Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest

Your prayers and presence are requested.

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

Chamber Music Concert Series

Susie Rockett

The Heavenly Rest Chamber Music Concert Series is excited to open its 2026–27 season on Sunday, October 18, at 6:00 p.m. with a concert featuring many of our talented local professional musicians. The program will include beautiful works for winds and strings by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Martinů, and Debussy.



This concert also marks the reawakening of a chamber music tradition formerly known as the Abilene Chamber Players, led primarily by beloved clarinetist Dr. Charles Coltman. In honor of Charlie and his lasting contribution to the musical life of our community, the program will feature two Nonets—one of which was previously performed with Dr. Coltman. These unique ensembles combine the colors of a woodwind quintet and string quartet, with additional instruments as needed, creating a rich and captivating chamber music experience.

On Sunday, November 15, at 6:00 p.m., oboist Susie Rockett will be joined by pianist Abigail Payne for the second concert of the series. The program will also feature soprano Serayah Peters, our percussionist Dan Harbaugh, and our organist Thomas Pavlechko.

Susie has curated a program inspired by important women in her life and will bring to the stage a wonderful collection of works by lesser-known female composers. This concert promises to be a beautiful celebration of music, friendship, mentorship, and the remarkable contributions of women composers.

We hope you will join us for these opening concerts of the 2026–27 Heavenly Rest Chamber Music Concert Series! Come enjoy beautiful music, celebrate the extraordinary musicians in our community, and help us continue this wonderful chamber music tradition.



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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Most Reverend Sean Rowe, *Presiding Bishop*

THE DIOCESE OF NORTHWEST TEXAS

The Right Reverend J. Scott Mayer, *Bishop*

PARISH STAFF

The Reverend David Romanik, *Rector*

The Reverend Ashley Powers, *Associate Rector*

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

The Reverend Karen Boyd, *Assisting Priest*

The Reverend Doug Thomas, *Priest in Residence*

The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, *Deacon*

The Reverend Joe Biles, *Curate and Pastoral Assistant*

The Reverend Bikole Mulanda, *Deacon and Swahili Minister*

Carol Ann Weston, *Director of Family Ministries*

Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist and Director of Music*

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

Aislinn Queen, *Music Assistant, Choristers*

Jen Rogers, *Director of Communications and Stewardship*

Lydia Hurt, *Parish Manager*

Brenda Fisher, *Parish Accountant*

Robert Becerra, *Sexton*

Devon Castillo, *Assistant Sexton*

Anne Jones, *Nursery Manager*

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