



EPISCOPAL CHURCH of the  
**HEAVENLY REST**

God's Love. For All.

# *Lay Reader*

EASTER · VOLUME 13, ISSUE 3 · ABILENE, TEXAS



## From The *Rector*



# Easter and the Promise of Reconciliation

– David Romanik

*“Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ’s Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”*

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter, The Book of Common Prayer 1979, pg. 224

There are many reasons I love Easter, but few things about the holiday bring me more joy than its hymns. Whether it is the triumphant strains of “He is risen; he is risen,” or the exuberance of “The day of resurrection,” or even the somewhat offbeat melody of “Now the green blade riseth,” I find the music of Easter to be uniquely inspiring; few things more better equip me to celebrate Christ’s victory over death.

What I consider to be one of the most meaningful Easter hymns can actually be found in the Lent section of the Hymnal. The first verse of “Eternal Lord of love, behold your Church” (Hymn 149) makes reference to walking the “pilgrim way of Lent,” but the final verse points toward the promise of Easter: “If dead in you, so in you we arise, you the firstborn of all the faithful dead; and as through stony ground the green shoots break, glorious in springtime dress of leaf and flower, so in the Father’s glory shall we wake.” This text by Thomas Cain disrupts the notion that Easter is simply a springtime celebration and that the resurrection is merely a metaphor for the way the world seems to come back to life in March and April. Indeed, the reverse is true. When we see green shoots break through stony ground, we ought to think about the fact that God has promised to give new life to our mortal bodies. Easter, in other words, is not a metaphor; it is a promise, an affirmation that God’s love transcends even the power of death.

To my mind, few people in the Church’s history have understood this affirmation better than the apostle Paul. In fact, one could argue that for Paul, the resurrection is the ultimate expression of God’s love, because it creates the possibility of redemption even after death. The Book of Acts tells us that when Stephen, the deacon and first martyr, is stoned by a hostile crowd, Paul “approved of their killing him.” The very next chapter details Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. It seems clear to me that for Paul, these events were intertwined. This is made clear in his first letter to the Corinthians, when the apostle notes that after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to Cephas and the other apostles, along with five hundred brothers and sisters. “Last of all,” Paul continues, “as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain.” Paul never got over the fact that he had been a persecutor of the Church. He never stopped feeling remorse for what he had done to Stephen. And yet, he came to trust that through the resurrection, God had created the opportunity for him to be reconciled to Stephen in the new creation. By God’s grace, Paul came to trust that the green shoots of redemption and forgiveness could break through the stony ground of guilt and shame. For Paul, the resurrection is not just a symbol of new life; it is a promise that God has the power to restore all that has been lost.

**“The resurrection is...a promise that God has the power to restore all that has been lost.”**

On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded that Lent is a time for members of the Church to be reconciled to one another. This does not always seem possible. I am sure that there are many of us who feel that we have lost opportunities for reconciliation for one reason or another, not least because the person with whom we need to reconcile has died. Part of what Easter promises is that, even when the grave intervenes, there is still an opportunity for reconciliation and forgiveness, a moment when we will wake in the Father’s glory and every loss will be redeemed. Our call as the people of God is to live with an awareness of this promise, trusting in the possibility of reconciliation both here and in the new creation.

## Staff Announcement

After nearly eight years of service to this parish, Steve Gibbs has retired from his role as Parish Coordinator at the Church of the Heavenly Rest. During his time on staff, Steve was a steadfast and friendly presence in the office: always eager to help no matter the circumstances. Whether it was offering a warm greeting and a bottle of water to delivery workers, or compassionately assisting those in need with their utility bills, or visiting with members of the parish in his office, Steve always found ways to make people feel welcome. We will always be grateful for the ways that Steve helped Heavenly Rest embody the virtue of Christian hospitality.

With Steve's departure, as well as several other anticipated staff vacancies, we will be restructuring the staff as we seek to fulfill our mission. Specifically, we will be adding two key roles to the staff, including a full-time Director of Operations, who will be responsible for managing the church's operational, financial, and administrative functions, as well as a full-time Director of Communications and Stewardship, who will oversee stewardship initiatives and develop strategies to share Heavenly Rest's mission, ministries, and events with the wider community. We are in the process of advertising these positions, but if you know of anyone who might be a good fit, please feel free to contact David Romanik.

Lydia Hurt will serve as our Interim Office Manager as we work to fill these positions. Please take a moment to greet her the next time you are in the office!

### *Exploring Spiritual Treasure - Spring Session*

April 13 - May 18, Gerhart Hall, 9:15-10:15 am



Summer is almost upon us, and school is drawing to a close. Exploring Spiritual Treasure will take a summer break along with many of our Christian formation offerings. Before our last spring class, we have some terrific classes that promise to wrap up this year well.

**Apr. 13 | “None other than the way of life and peace.” - An Introduction to the Liturgies of Holy Week (Palm Sunday) with Father David**

**Apr. 20 | No Class (Easter Day)**

**Apr. 27 | History of Heavenly Rest with Jay Moore**

**May 4 | The Divine Dance – The Trinity with Dr. Mark Waters**

**May 11 | Embodied Faith – Piety and Practice in Worship and Daily Life with Dr. Darryl Tippens**

**May 18 | Evangelism with Mary Reyes and Luke Waters**

EST will carry us almost through Eastertide and almost to Pentecost when we enter the long, green growing season of “after Pentecost.” We hope all of those excellent discussions will grow in your heart and soul as you grow in your faith and as a Christian in the world.



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**HEAVENLY REST**

### May – a Month of Celebrations

#### May 4 - Missions Sunday

On this special Sunday, we will celebrate all persons involved in the off-campus missions of Heavenly Rest, i.e., St. John's Episcopal School, Thrift House, Bowie Angels, and Breakfast on Beech Street - those ways that Heavenly Rest is present and at work in the community.

#### May 11 - Senior Sunday

We will take time to introduce and celebrate our graduating seniors at 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., presenting Bibles and awarding the Dan Abbott Scholarship.

#### May 18 - Appreciation Sunday

This is a special time to acknowledge worship leaders, leaders of children and youth, adult study leaders, outreach volunteers, altar guild, kitchen and office volunteers, acolytes, choristers, bell ringers, and all others who serve in the ministries of Heavenly Rest.



## Spring Programming for Children and Families

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

### EASTER SUNDAY for Children and Families

- 9:00 am Brunch in Gerhart Hall
- 10:00 am Easter Egg Hunt – Meet in the Courtyard
- 10:15 am Unbury the Alleluia Banner
- 10:25 am Procession of Alleluia banner to Worship
- 3:00 pm Easter Egg Hunt after 1:00 pm Worship

#### \*\*Easter Egg Hunt Needs

On Easter Sunday at 10:00 am and 3:00 pm we will have our annual egg hunts for our morning and afternoon congregations. We fill about 1500 eggs, so that each child may get 10-12. We need stickers, small toys, and other items that will fit in the eggs, in addition to individually wrapped candy. (Please, NO CHOCOLATE, since the weather is often quite warm on Easter.) There is a box in the Cloister for donations. We do NOT need eggs or cartons this year, since most were turned back in last year – YAY!

### Vacation Bible School, June 2-5, 6:30-8:30 pm

**ALWAYS:**  
A story about God's Love for you

JUNE 2-4  
6:30-8:30 PM

REGISTER HERE

CHURCH OF THE HEAVENLY REST  
602 MEANDER ST, ABILENE TX

Family Vacation Bible School for all ages, children through adults, is scheduled for June 2-4, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Our theme will be "Always: A Story About God's Love for You."



Our team is planning Scripture, Bible stories, recreation, crafts, snacks, music, and more for the whole family to enjoy together. Last year, we had participants aged 2 through 83 years old! We will lead into the annual Children’s Art and Literacy Festival (C.A.L.F.) the following week using one of the illustrator’s books, Always, as we explore how much God loves us and calls us to love others.

Helpers Needed: As last year, we will have some children whose adults are unable to attend, so we will need additional adults to help shepherd “family groups” or to help by taking photos, serving snacks, etc. You may also sign up to donate needed items or funds.

Registration signups for attendees and leaders are live on Church Center under “signups” or go to <https://heavenlyrestabilene.churchcenter.com/registrations>. You may also use the QR code above.

Questions? Contact Carol Ann at [cweston@heavenlyrestabilene.org](mailto:cweston@heavenlyrestabilene.org) or Amanda Harbaugh at [astokes414@gmail.com](mailto:astokes414@gmail.com).



# Chamber Music Concert Series Spring 2025

from Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist & Director of Music*



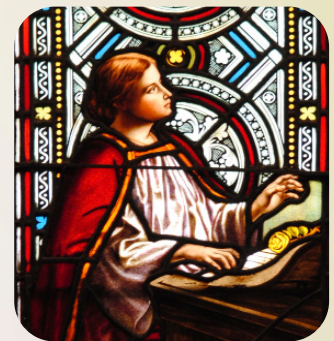
CHORUS  
ABILENE

## Where Music Meets the *Soul*

Tues. April 29<sup>th</sup> | 7pm  
Episcopal Church of the  
Heavenly Rest

Let the power of harmony move you.  
This concert will resonate deep  
within you, leaving you uplifted,  
inspired, and connected. Join  
BackBeat for a night where music  
isn’t just heard—it’s felt.

**FREE ADMISSION**



## Chamber Music Concert Series

The Chamber Music  
Concert Seies has  
offered glorious  
music performed by  
local professionals  
and world-renowned  
artists at no cost to the  
Abilene Community. To  
financially support this  
series, contact the parish  
office at 677-2091.

*continued on the next page*

## Music from the Baroque through Modern Era for Brass, Organ & Percussion Sunday, May 4, 6:00 p.m.

*Beginning with David Amlung on trumpet, the recital will also feature a world premiere of Jordan Tucker's Four Morning Preludes for Trumpet, Horn, and Organ, and will close with the Key City Brass Quintet performing Thomas Pavlechko's Solemn Procession for Brass Quintet, Percussion, and Organ.*



## Sunday, May 18, 6:00 p.m. Organ Demo before the Organ Demo!

*Join Thomas Pavlechko for his Organ "Demonstration" talk, recital and hymnfest before the Organ is "Demolished", taken apart, restored, rebuilt, expanded and improved! You will learn a lot about pulling out all the stops!*



## Eucharist

– Doug Thomas

Confronted by estrangement  
from all I'd hoped and dreamed;  
I sought a rearrangement  
so I could be redeemed.

At the altar I confessed  
my failings and conceit;  
at the altar I professed  
a hope beyond defeat.

In the Sacrament I found  
the grace to live renewed;  
by the Sacrament I'm bound  
to feast on Holy food.





La Bénédiction des blés en Artois by Jules Breton, 1857

## The Rogation Days

*Creator, we give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation. In Jesus, you place the gospel in the center of this Sacred Circle through which all of creation is related. You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life. Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow in you Spirit, for you are God, now and for ever. Amen.*

Source: A Gathering Prayer adapted from Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Liturgies, prepared for the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Anaheim, California, July 2009

Rogation Days are observed on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday leading up to the Feast of the Ascension. The word “Rogation” comes from the Latin verb *rogare*, meaning “to ask.” These days are set aside for the faithful to pray for God’s mercy, seek protection from disasters, and request blessings for a fruitful harvest.

The formal observance of what became known as the Minor Rogations began around 470 C.E., initiated by St. Mamertus, the bishop of Vienne. He designated the three days before Ascension as a time of penitence and intercession, a practice that was eventually embraced across the Western Church.

In England, the Rogation Days took on special significance and were often called “Gang Days” or “Cross Week.” After the English Reformation, the tradition continued in a modified form. One of the most distinctive customs was “beating the bounds”—a procession in which parish clergy, churchwardens, and young boys carrying green branches would walk the boundaries of the parish. The boys would beat the boundary markers with their boughs, ensuring that future generations would remember the exact locations of parish borders.

Today, many churches within the Anglican Communion still observe Rogation Days with processions and blessings over fields, gardens, and places of labor. We hope you will join us on Wednesday, May 28, for Rogation Day programming as we acknowledge God’s sovereignty over creation and our call to be faithful stewards of the earth.



# The Feast of the Ascension

Forty days after Easter, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Ascension, marking the moment after the resurrection when Jesus led his disciples to the Mount of Olives and was taken up into heaven. It is a major feast of the church, but is often inconveniently timed: it always takes place on a Thursday, generally in May, when it competes with graduations, concerts, sporting events, and other end of the school year activities.

At the same time, the Ascension is probably one of the more difficult doctrines for contemporary Christians to wrap their minds around. Even more than the resurrection, the idea of Jesus being taken up into heaven tends to rub up against our rational imaginations. The space program, among other things, has problematized the notion that heaven is somewhere high above us. Yet, as the New Testament scholar N.T. Wright observes in his book *Surprised by Hope*, the Bible does not understand heaven and earth as “two different locations within the same continuum of space or matter.” In the Biblical worldview, heaven and earth are “two different dimensions of God’s good creation.” In this sense, the Ascension means that Christ is still present in creation, even if he is also absent. In the Ascension, Wright continues, we affirm “that the one who is indeed present with us by the Spirit is also the Lord who is strangely absent, strangely other, strangely different from us and over against us.” Much is often made of the notion that Christians are called to be the “hands and feet of Jesus in the world.” While this formulation has its heart in the right place, it easily leads either to triumphalism or despair: we either assume that everything we do, regardless of ill effects, is building the kingdom of God, or we throw up our hands, overwhelmed by our inability to change things for the better. The Ascension frees us from this paralysis. The Ascension, more than any other doctrine of the Church, invites us to recognize that Christ is the one who is in charge, that Christ is the one who will ultimately bring about the reign of God.

The Ascension, in other words, is central to our life as Christians and our life as the Church. In that spirit, we will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension with a Holy Eucharist with hymns on Thursday, May 29 at 7:00 p.m. We hope you will join us.

## Save the Date!

April 29, Chorus Abilene: Where Music meets the Soul - 7:00 p.m.

May 4, Brass, Organ, & Percussion Concert - 6:00 p.m.

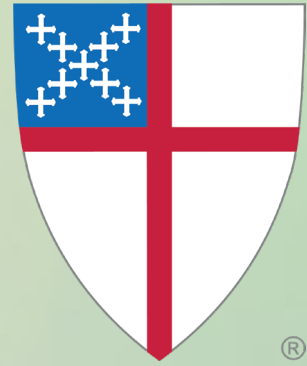
May 18, Organ Demonstration - 6:00 p.m.

May 25, Episcopal Day - 10:30 a.m. (Presbyterian Encampment)

May 28, Rogation Day Programming - 6:00 p.m.

May 29, Ascension Day Eucharist - 7:00 p.m.

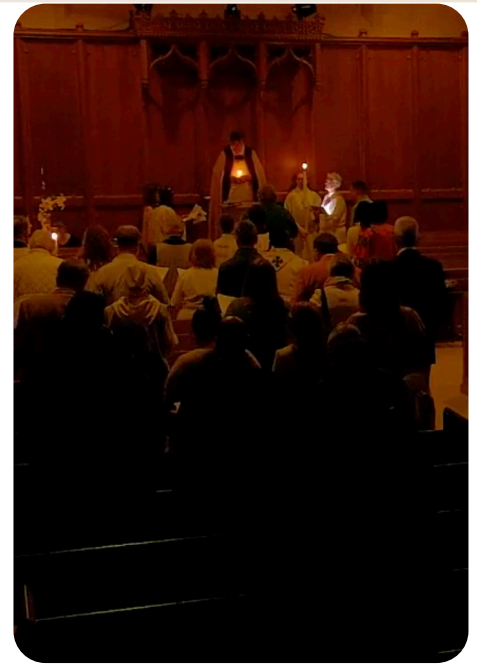
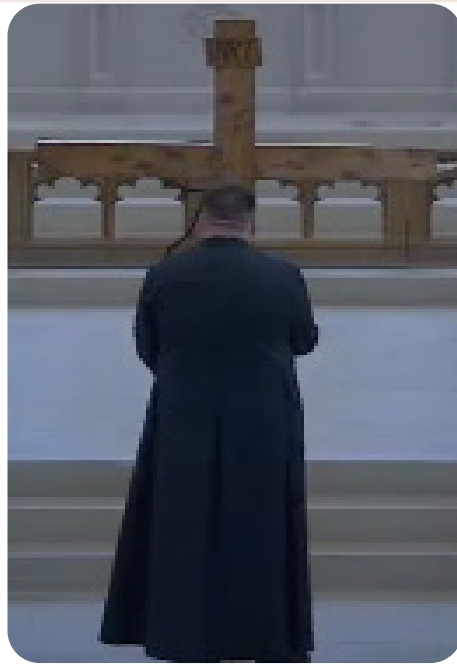
June 2-5, Vacation Bible School - 6:30-8:30 p.m.



## Episcopal Day

Sunday, May 25

On Sunday, May 25, Episcopalians in the Big Country will gather for worship at the Presbyterian Encampment in Buffalo Gap. This celebration of “Episcopal Day” will revive a beloved tradition that was an important part of our common life for many years. Members of Heavenly Rest, St. Mark’s in Abilene, St. Stephen’s in Sweetwater, All Saints’ in Colorado City, and St. Mark’s in Coleman will all gather for worship at 10:30, followed by a barbecue picnic. The service will feature a “come as you are band”: anyone who plays any instrument is welcome to bring it to accompany the hymns. Bring a folding chair and a side dish to share! Mark your calendars and plan to join us as we celebrate our life together in this community!



## The Triduum at Heavenly Rest

For much of its history, the Church has commemorated the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with a series of dramatic worship services during the final days of Holy Week. These services take place during the three day stretch of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Known as the Triduum (or “Great Three Days”), these are the holiest days of the Church year and are an opportunity to reflect on and experience the drama of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection.

On Thursday, April 17, Heavenly Rest will celebrate Maundy Thursday, the day when we recall Christ’s institution of the Lord’s Supper and the new commandment of love he gave to his disciples. At 7:00, we will celebrate the Holy Eucharist in the Nave. The service will include the ceremony of footwashing, a symbol of the servanthood to which all disciples of Jesus are called. After the Eucharist, all adornments will be removed from the church as we remember the fact that Jesus was stripped of his garments on his journey to Calvary. The church will remain open until midnight for meditation and prayer.

On Friday, April 18, we will walk the way of the cross at 8:30 am and 12:00 pm with the Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday. This service is an opportunity not only to remember the crucifixion and death of our Lord, but also to offer solemn prayers for the Church and for the world. It is a somber and beautiful service. An ecumenical Stations of the Cross, a service that enacts and embodies Jesus’ journey to Calvary, will be offered in downtown Abilene at 5:00. We will begin at St. Paul United Methodist Church and conclude at First Central Presbyterian Church.

On Saturday, April 19, there will be two services at Heavenly Rest. At 8:30 am, we will observe the Liturgy of Holy Saturday, a brief and powerful service that recalls the fact that Jesus’ disciples rested on the Sabbath after his death.

As the sun sets at 8:00 that evening, we will gather for the Great Vigil of Easter, the most dramatic service of the Church year, the night when we celebrate the fact that Jesus passed over from death to life. We will begin in the Courtyard with a new fire that symbolizes God’s triumph over the darkness. We will hear the Exultet, an ancient hymn enjoining us to rejoice with all of creation for the victory of our mighty king. We will hear stories from scripture about God’s saving action in history. We will renew our baptismal covenant. And we will proclaim the Resurrection. It is a powerful and empowering service, an opportunity to renew our trust in the God who raises the dead to life.

We hope that you will use the services during these Great Three Days as an opportunity to experience the drama, intensity, and hope of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection.



# Holy Week

April 13th - April 20th

**4/13/2025**

## **The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday**

8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist  
10:30 a.m. - Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Eucharist (service begins in the Courtyard)  
1:00 p.m. - Worship in Swahili

**4/14/2025**

## **Monday in Holy Week**

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)  
12:15 p.m. - Holy Eucharist  
*Lunch served after the service in Gerhart Hall. A to-go option will be available.*

**4/15/2025**

## **Tuesday in Holy Week**

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)  
12:15 p.m. - Holy Eucharist  
*Lunch served after the service in Gerhart Hall. A to-go option will be available.*

**4/16/2025**

## **Wednesday in Holy Week**

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)  
12:15 p.m. - Holy Eucharist  
*Lunch served after the service in Gerhart Hall. A to-go option will be available.*  
6:00 p.m. - Agape Supper and Holy Week Experience (Gerhart Hall and Nave)

**4/17/2025**

## **Maundy Thursday**

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer (Chapel)  
7:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist with Footwashing and Stripping of the Altar  
*The Nave will remain open for meditation and prayer until midnight.*

**4/18/2025**

## **Good Friday**

8:30 a.m. - Liturgy of Good Friday with Communion from the Reserved Sacrament  
12:00 p.m. - Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday with Veneration of the Cross  
5:00 p.m. - Stations of the Cross (Downtown Abilene - service begins at St. Paul United Methodist Church)

**4/19/2025**

## **Holy Saturday**

8:30 a.m. - Holy Saturday Liturgy  
8:00 p.m. - The Great Vigil of Easter (service begins in the Courtyard)

**4/20/2025**

## **Easter Day**

8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist with Hymns  
9:15 a.m. - Easter Brunch (Gerhart Hall)  
10:00 a.m. - Easter Egg Hunt (Playground and East Lawn)  
10:30 a.m. - Festival Holy Eucharist with Flowering of the Cross  
1:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist in Swahili with Flowering of the Cross  
3:00 p.m. - Easter Egg Hunt (Playground and East Lawn)

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



Follow us online!  
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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 Amanda Watson, *Assistant Rector for Community Life*

The Reverend Karen Boyd, *Assisting Priest*

The Reverend Doug Thomas, *Priest in Residence*

The Reverend Dr. Russell Dickerson, *Deacon*

Bikole Mulanda, *Swahili Minister*

Thomas Pavlechko, *Organist and Director of Music*

Shelly Reed, *Music Assistant, Choristers*

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

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

Luke Mendez, *Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries*

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**Your Lay Reader for  
Easter 2025  
has arrived!**

*Return Service Requested*

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