

The Bells of St. Mary's

August Edition



St. Mary's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
The Mustard Seed Church

The mission of St. Mary's is to unite all people into a relationship with God and each other in Christ.



“Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer wrote these words in his classic book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, on Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount. Published in 1937 as the Nazis consolidated power in his homeland of Germany, he was calling out Christians and the Church for becoming secularized and too accommodating of the world's values. Needless to say, Bonhoeffer quickly got on the Nazi radar, eventually being arrested and losing his life.

So even in the face of fascism and world war, this pastor asserted that discipleship never takes a break. Not for any reason.

I thought of Bonhoeffer and his exposition on “cheap grace” and “costly grace” recently when I came across a challenge made online by a priest in Canada to assess how our discipleship is faring during this COVID-season we have been living through over the last five months. So I share these with you so we can all take a step back from our day-to-day “coping” with this new life we find ourselves in and take stock of our spiritual formation and practices.

- How has the pandemic effected your prayer life? What, if anything, has changed about your prayer practices? How often did you pray before the pandemic and how often do you pray now?
- Has the pandemic influenced how you read scripture or how often? Do you read scripture on a regular basis? Did you before the pandemic? Is there anything you are noticing about scripture now that you had not noticed before?
- How are you engaging in Christian community now? Is it through in-person or online worship? Are you connecting with members of St. Mary's outside of worship? Have you

discovered new ways to experience Christian community given the constraints we are now living with?

- Has the pandemic influenced you to speak about your Christian faith or engaged in spiritual conversations with friends or neighbors or co-workers? Is this different than before the pandemic?
- How has the pandemic altered your acts of service to the Church and to the local community? Are you able to continue serving others while maintaining your own and others' safety?

Spend some time with these reflection questions...for discipleship never takes a holiday! And more and more we are being asked what it might be that this pandemic is teaching us, what we could learn about who we are and who God might be calling us to become.

Grace and peace,



The Mustard Seed Church Sowing Seeds in the Community...

School Supplies Drive

Our annual school drive has begun. Even though school will be different, supplies are needed. West Columbia Elementary asks that we only get the following items:

- Expo brand black erase markers (low odor)
- Expo brand erase markers (variety of colors, low odor)
- Earbud headphones
- Disinfecting wipes
- Hand sanitizer

You can bring these items to the church on Sundays (August 9th and 16th) or call the office and Dani will come pick them up from your house during the week of August 9th. You can also make a donation by placing it in the offertory plate on Sunday or mailing a check to the church (PO Box 786, West Columbia). Please make sure you indicate it is for school supplies.

Together let us help those students who cannot afford the supplies they need as well as help the teachers who each year spend their own money to make sure none of their students go without supplies.

Volunteer Still Needed!

A request was made for a St. Mary's member to volunteer to serve as a Disaster Response Coordinator. An organization of faith-based communities called "Brazoria Responds" is working to prepare for coordinated activities in preparation for and in the aftermath of hurricanes and other major events.

If you feel called to coordinate St. Mary's efforts to prepare and respond to these emergencies, please let Rev Sharron know as soon as possible. The next Disaster Response Coordinator training will be held via a Zoom call on Friday, August 14, at 10 a.m.



Blessing of the Backpacks

As students and teachers prepare to return to the classroom either in-person or virtually, St. Mary's wants to honor, celebrate, and bless them at this important time with our annual Blessing of the Backpacks. This is the outward sign of the inward belief that God is with them. This year more than ever, there is uncertainty about what the school will be like when it opens. Teachers and students are charting new territory, but they do it with optimism, hope, and adaptability. The

Blessing of the Backpacks reminds all our children and teachers from kindergarten to college, that God is there with them through it all, so they are never alone.

Bring your backpacks, book bags, supplies, etc. to church on Sunday, August 16th for the Blessing of the Backpacks. Safety protocols will be followed, and the backpacks will only be handled by their owners. Backpack tags will also be blessed and made available for those in attendance as well as those who are not able to attend. Let us embrace and support our children, youth, and teachers as we remind them "You Are Loved."



Christian Formation

Since March, Godly Play lessons have been sent each week to our children through the app "Marco Polo". Because the children will be returning to school in August and adjusting to all the changes that involves, Godly Play lessons will not be presented during this month. They will resume the Sunday after Labor Day, September 13th.

If there are any who have not been receiving these lessons but would like to, please email the office (stmaryswc@centurylink.net) or call the office (979-345-3456) and leave a message. Godly Play lessons are for children ages 2 years to 5th grade.

Summer Pledges

During the summer, it is not unusual to see a decrease in monthly pledge contributions. This summer was no different. Remember pledge contributions and plate offerings can be placed in the offering plate on Sundays, mailed to the church (PO Box 786, West Columbia, 77486), or paid through PayPal by going to the "Give" tab on our website (<https://www.stmaryswestcolumbia.com>).



News from the Vestry

The vestry did not meet during the month of July.

A copy of the vestry minutes from June will be placed on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall once approved at the August meeting. The next Vestry meeting is Sunday, August 16th at 11:00 a.m.

So True

During the June vestry meeting, Charlotte Blount read the following which she had found on Facebook. With her permission, it is being shared here.

A while back I read a story of a visiting pastor who attended a men's breakfast in the middle of a rural farming area of the country.

The group had asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls to say grace for the morning breakfast.

"Lord, I hate buttermilk", the farmer began. The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wondered where this was going. The farmer loudly proclaimed, "Lord, I hate lard." Now the pastor was growing concerned. Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, "And Lord, you know I don't much care for raw white flour." The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one to feel uncomfortable. Then the farmer added, "But Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So Lord, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen"

Within that prayer there is great wisdom for all when it comes to complicated situations like we are experiencing in the world today.

Stay strong, my friends, because our LORD is mixing several things that we don't really care for, but something even better is going to come when HE is done with it. AMEN

Message from Marvin Miller

"I'm Invisible"

It started to happen gradually. One day, I was walking my son Jake to school. I was holding his hand, and we were about to cross the street when the crossing guard said to him,

"Who is that with you, young fella?"

"Nobody," he shrugged.

"Nobody?" said the crossing guard, and I laughed. My son is only 5, but as we crossed the street I thought, "Oh, my goodness, nobody?"

I would walk into a room, and no one would notice. I would say something to my family like, "Turn the TV down, please," - and nothing would happen. Nobody would get up, or even make a move for the remote. I would stand there for a minute, and then I would say again, a little louder,

"Would someone turn the TV down?"

Nothing.

That's when I started to put all the pieces together. I don't think he can see me. I don't think anyone can see me.

I'm invisible.

I was certain that these were the hands that once held books and the eyes that studied history and the mind that graduated summa cum laude - but now they had disappeared into the peanut butter, never to be seen again.

She's going - she's going - she's gone!

One night, a group of us were having dinner, celebrating the return of a friend from England. Janice had just gotten back from a fabulous trip, and she was going on and on about the hotel she stayed in. I was sitting there, looking around at the others all put together so well. It was hard not to compare and feel sorry for myself as I looked down at my out-of-style dress; it was the only thing I could find that was clean.

My unwashed hair was pulled up in a banana clip, and I was afraid I could actually smell peanut butter in it. I was feeling pretty pathetic, when Janice turned to me with a beautifully wrapped package, and said,

"I brought you this."

It was a book on the great cathedrals of Europe. I wasn't exactly sure why she'd given it to me until I read her inscription: "To Charlotte, with admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees."

In the days ahead I would read - no, devour - the book. And I would discover what would become for me, four life-changing truths, after which I could pattern my work:

- * No one can say who built the great cathedrals - we have no record of their names.
- * These builders gave their whole lives for a work they might never see finished.
- * They made great sacrifices and expected no credit.
- * The passion of their building was fueled by their faith that the eyes of God saw everything.

A legendary story in the book told of a rich man who came to visit the cathedral while it was being built, and he saw a workman carving a tiny bird on the inside of a beam! He was puzzled and asked the man,

"Why are you spending so much time carving that bird into a beam that will be covered by the roof? No one will ever see it." And the workman replied,

"Because God sees it."

I closed the book, feeling the missing piece fall into place. It was almost as if I heard God whispering to me,

"I see you, Charlotte. I see the sacrifices you make every day, even when no one around you does. No act of kindness you've done, no sequin you've sewn on, no cupcake you've baked, is too small for me to notice and smile over. You are building a great cathedral, but you can't see right now what it will become."

At times, my invisibility feels like an affliction. But it is not a disease that is erasing my life. It is the antidote to my strong, stubborn pride. I keep the right perspective when I see myself as a great builder. As one of the people who show up at a job that they will never see finished, to work on something that their name will never be on.

The writer of the book went so far as to say that no cathedrals could ever be built in our lifetime because there are so few people willing to sacrifice to that degree.

When I really think about it, I don't want my son to tell the friend he's bringing home from college for Thanksgiving,

"My Mom gets up at 4:00 a.m. in the morning and bakes homemade pies, bastes the turkey for three hours, and then presses the linens for the table."

That would mean I'd built a shrine or a monument to myself. I just want him to want to come home. And then, if there is anything more to say to his friend, to add,

"You're gonna love it there."

As mothers, we are building great cathedrals. We cannot be seen if we're doing it right. And one day, it is very possible that the world will marvel, not only at what we have built, but at the beauty that has been added to the world by the sacrifices of invisible women.

~ Written by Nicole Johnson - <https://www.nicolejohnson.org> ~

Information to the Community

Regional hospital executives and physicians are asking all faith communities to spread the word that we can slow the spread and limit its damage on human life and health by wearing face masks, social distancing, and keeping our hands washed and/or sanitized. We can do THIS, southeast Texas!



Community Assistance

In July, we made several donations to the food pantry at Iglesia Centro Cristiano. We also helped one family with their electric bill.

If you know of anyone needing assistance, please contact Tracy Lane or Jackie Walker.

For a Laugh

A recent article from Episcopal News Service featured the Reverend Lonnie Lacy, rector of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Tifton, Georgia. Father Lacy rewrote a song from the musical *"Hamilton"* and made a video to remind his parishioners that their church would be here when the pandemic ends. The video, as he says, is "a little humorous word of hope, a promise that God is going to get us through this. There is going to be another side of this, and we will get back together."

If you want a laugh, check out the video "Dancing Priest Does Hamilton | CHURCH PARODY | "You'll Be Back"" on YouTube.



Camp Allen Events

"Camp Allen is celebrating its 100th year-Centennial milestone in 2021. We hope you will make plans well in advance to attend the official celebration at camp on May 1st 2021." (Camp Allen)

Camp Allen is opening its hotel and conference center to a maximum of 20 hotel rooms on August 18-20 and August 21-23. The stay includes 2 nights lodging, dining room with private table, swimming pools, hike/bike trails, 2 lakes, outdoor activities, Saturday Night burger bash with outdoor movie, and much more.

Labor Day Family Camp - fun-filled sock hop-themed family retreat - September 4-6, 2020

If you are interested in any of these events call (979-345-3456) or email (stmaryswc@centurylink.net) the office for more information.



Don't Forget

Remember to keep your empty print cartridges for St. Mary's. All brands and types are welcomed. We have been turning in 10 cartridges a month, earning a \$20 credit. This greatly helps defray the cost of our office supplies.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Special thanks and gratitude to:

- Marvin Miller, usher captain, and Charlotte Blount, altar guild directress, for their help in getting the ushers and altar guild organized for in-person worship.
- Theata Miller, Wendy Hankins, Colleen Matocha, Dani Mikel, and Mary Stewart for volunteering to serve on the altar guild from August 2nd to September 6th.
- Kendy Hankins and Aaron Mikel for volunteering to serve as crucifer from August 2nd to September 6th.
- Gwynne Olson, Dani Mikel, Shyanne Roddy, Wendy Hankins, and Colleen Matocha for volunteering to serve as lector and reader from August 2nd to September 6th.
- AJ Mikel, Marvin Miller, Mary Stewart, and Dan Roddy for volunteering to serve as ushers from August 2nd to September 6th.
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You are awesome, and St. Mary's greatly appreciates all you do.



Prayer Request

If you or someone you know is in need of prayer, please notify the office by email or phone. The prayer list will be updated each month, so if prayers need to continue for an individual person please fill out a new card or let Dani know.

Prayers for the sick and those in need are the joyful duty of the Christian community. Help us keep our parish prayer list current by notifying us of those in need of prayer and when those listed are no longer in need.

Dates to Remember

Sunday services are streamed on St. Mary's Facebook Live at 9:00 a.m.

August 2nd - Sunday Service
Holy Eucharist: Rite II (9:00 a.m.)

August 5th - Compline on St. Mary's
Facebook Live at 8:00 p.m.

August 9th - Sunday Service
Holy Eucharist: Rite II (9:00 a.m.)

August 12th - Compline on St. Mary's
Facebook Live at 8:00 p.m.

August 16th - Sunday Service
Holy Eucharist: Rite II (9:00 a.m.)
Blessing of the Backpacks
Vestry Meeting (11:00 a.m.)

August 19th - Compline on St. Mary's
Facebook Live at 8:00 p.m.

August 23rd - Sunday Service
Holy Eucharist: Rite II (9:00 a.m.)

August 26th - Compline on St. Mary's
Facebook Live at 8:00 p.m.

August 30th - Sunday Service
Holy Eucharist: Rite II (9:00 a.m.)

August Birthdays

Wendy Hankins - August 6

Holly Cantrell - August 8

Heather Mikel - August 12

Donna Roddy - August 21

Kaylea Anderson - August 21

August Anniversaries

St. Mary's Leadership

Rector

The Reverend Sharron Cox

Vestry

Sr. Warden: Marvin Miller

Jr. Warden: Charlotte Blount

Clerk: Gwynne Olson

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The Bells of St. Mary's is a monthly newsletter for members and friends of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Submissions for publication should be sent to the church office on or before the 25th of the month prior to the publication.