



# DoveTales

A publication of Holy Spirit Episcopal Church ❖ Winter 2010

## Connect with Visitors, Members

It's Sunday at Holy Spirit. You stride down one of the walkways, taking note of the attractive new banners which guide you to your worship service of choice. In front of the worship service, you spot a Welcome Center for visitors. Your eyes are then drawn to a Connection Station. Stop here. Grab a pen, sign your name in the Connect Book and slap on a name tag. We're changing things up a bit here at Holy Spirit, but it's all about deepening our connections.

"We have been asking ourselves how well we as a church community make connections. Are we open and inviting to new visitors? Are we reaching out to those undergoing pain or trauma in their lives? Are we creating a place where all feel at home—a place where people feel comfortable connecting to others and growing in their relationships with Jesus Christ?" challenges Father Patrick Hall.

Below are a few ways we're stepping out of our comfort zone to reach others and deepen our experience of community:

### Welcome Centers

Outside of both the traditional and contemporary worship services, we've added a Welcome Center. Visitors can stop by on their way into and out of church to chat with our greeters and pick up one of our new welcome folders. This folder provides an introduction to who we are at Holy Spirit, a map of our many ministries, quick FAQs, contact information and a DVD with a welcome message from Father David Puckett. Additionally, we've included *Connect* newsletter, our monthly calendar of events; *DoveTales*, which shares stories about the life of the church; and several brochures about the Episcopal Church.



*Greeters Tom and Laura Konitzer reconnect with Ryan Caldwell, son of Jack and Cathy Caldwell.*

### Connection Stations

There are three Connection Stations located outside the traditional service and two stations outside the contemporary service. "Whether you've been here 20 years, two years or two weeks, we want you to wear a name tag—they're an easy way for newcomers to feel at ease and get to know others around them," explains Ronnie Richardson, who leads Holy Spirit's Greeters' ministry. Sign your name in the Connect Book and feel free to note any changes to your contact information. This is also a good place to indicate whether you have a pastoral concern you'd like to discuss with the clergy.

### Care Callers

You may have already had a call from one of our new care callers. The volunteers involved in this new ministry are ringing up church members for no other purpose than to check in and say hello. These calls are an opportunity for church members to share prayer requests and pastoral concerns in a confidential setting.

### Lay Eucharistic Visitor Corps

We've worked to increase the number of volunteers for this needed ministry, and since the beginning of the year have delivered more than 80 home communions to those who are sick, hospitalized or home-bound.

Father Patrick explains that the new changes being made at Holy Spirit are not intended to be like *Big Brother*. "If you haven't been to church in four weeks, we're not going to show up at your home. But we do want to know if something is wrong. These are tools to do just that—to help us become more responsive and connected with our church community."

### Create Connections!

Reach out to others and help improve our connections within the church community by joining one of these ministries:

**Greeters.** Contact: Ron Richardson, [vintageequity@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vintageequity@sbcglobal.net), 713/898-0128.

**Lay Eucharistic Visitor Corps.** Contact: John McGarvey, [macleach@swbell.net](mailto:macleach@swbell.net), 281/556-0181.

**Care Callers.** Contact: Ricardo Suarez, [HS.CareCalls@yahoo.com](mailto:HS.CareCalls@yahoo.com), 281/347-8743.

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## A Word from the Sr. Warden

First we prayed, then we ate, then work began. Sound like a church function? It was indeed, but this function was not business as usual. As the rain pelted the Houston area one Friday evening and on into Saturday morning, clergy and vestry sat down to tackle the question of all questions: Who are we as a church community?

Through prayer, contemplation and lively small group discussions, we sought to understand why we exist and what we are committed to do. What came out of this meeting is Holy Spirit's new mission and core values statement:

**Holy Spirit Episcopal Church is a community with Christ as the cornerstone. We reflect the Holy Spirit to the world through:**

- A** **acceptance** – We acknowledge God's call to accept our differences as we join together on our spiritual journeys.
- C** **onnections** – We become the Body of Christ through a broad footprint of ministries that foster deep relationships, caring for one another, fun and fellowship.
- T** **eaching** – We develop disciples through thought-provoking worship, our parish school and a variety of educational opportunities.
- S** **ervice** – We follow Christ's example of sacrificial love by serving people in need wherever they may be.

This mission and core values statement defines who we are and will serve to guide us as we set about doing the work Jesus Christ has called us to do. We hope you can see yourself in this statement, and we invite you to explore ways you too can become an active member of the Holy Spirit family.

Faithfully,  
Ron Merrett

# From the Ground Up

**A**re you having trouble knowing where to turn? Are you searching for direction on Sunday? Just look up! No, we're not talking about consulting the Almighty—this time. We want you to look up and around you as you drive into the parking lot on Sunday and head down the walkways into church. New custom-designed street banners, which will change design with the seasons, are located at our north and west entrances and provide information on worship times. Banners located along the walkways direct newcomers and church members to two worship services. Also, be on the look-out for new guest parking signs and updated ADA parking markers which feature the same design and color scheme as the banners.

And good news on the sound system. Parish Administrator Gardner Headrick says that the projectors in the Parish Hall that were damaged by the lightning strike last summer have been replaced and the church is hoping to add a new and improved sound system in the Nave as well.

Gardner also wants to remind everyone to thank our sextons, Francisco and Juan, when you see them. "They work very hard keeping up with the care and maintenance issues that arise on a church campus of this size and age. They truly keep our community operating wonderfully," he says.

## Success!

**I**t's game, set, match when it comes to reducing Holy Spirit's debt. In response to a generous \$100,000 matching program, initiated by an anonymous donor, church members have risen to the challenge and the church debt has now been reduced by \$200,000. Thanks to everyone who participated. We are, as always, still accepting funds designated for debt reduction, however, the matching program has been concluded.

Also, just a gentle reminder to please stay current on your pledge payments. We experienced a bit of a lag over the summer months—which is typical—but we need to get caught up now!

## New Website

**T**he walls are painted, the furniture is in place and we're ready for visitors. Holy Spirit's website recently underwent a complete redesign, thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteer website architect Melonye Suarez (and the input of

many helpers!). The new site is designed to be easy to navigate and allow visitors to quickly access information on events and activities going on in the life of the church.

*Take a look at the new site:*

[www.hsechurch.org](http://www.hsechurch.org)

### Christmas Worship Services

Christmas Eve

4 p.m., Contemporary (Parish Hall)

6 p.m., Traditional (Nave)

11 p.m., Traditional (Nave)

Christmas Day

10:30 a.m., Rite II (Nave)



# Are You Part of the Conspiracy?

## Religion of Jesus vs. Religion of Consumerism

**W**orship fully. Give more. Spend less. Love all. Simple phrases. Huge impact.

This year, celebrate Christmas differently by participating in the Advent Conspiracy, a grassroots movement that has raised \$3 million for relief projects around the world, including providing clean water and medical attention to communities in need.

More than 1,000 churches in 17 countries have joined as “co-conspirators,” and Holy Spirit is no exception. Last year, the Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) became a part of the Advent Conspiracy, inspiring members of Holy Spirit to give more than \$3,000 to Humanity First. The donation was used to build water wells in Guatemala, Liberia, Tanzania and Ghana.

*We have the opportunity to join Jesus in helping those most in need in our community.*

According to the World Health Organization, water management is key to overcoming extreme poverty and to building secure and prosperous lives for hundreds of millions of people in the developing world.

Now, church members have a chance to participate in the conspiracy once again by joining the youth in supporting the movement. “When you give a present to someone, it’s something they lose interest in and it fades away, but if you choose to help someone else in the name of that person, then the gift will be there forever,” says Hayley Schultz, a member of EYC and a seventh-grader at Holy Spirit Episcopal School.

“We participate in the Advent Conspiracy because we are a people that worships a God incarnate,” says Youth Missioner Sarah Taylor. “God gave the gift



*William and Allison Fowler participate in last year’s Advent wreath-making event at Holy Spirit.*

of his presence through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. We believe that when we give our presence to others, we are following Jesus in preparing the way for his coming kingdom.”

In addition to offerings (make out checks to “Advent Conspiracy”), Sarah encourages other meaningful acts during the season:

- **Worship fully.** Examine what you truly worship during the Advent and Christmas season. “Does the way we spend our time, money and energy testify that we worship God incarnate?”<sup>1</sup>

- **Give more.** Reject the idea that spending money is the best way to express love. Doing so opens you up to experience giving that is ultimately more memorable. “Our kids will learn what it means to give gifts that are personal and meaningful. Our neighbors and coworkers and friends will watch us celebrate Christmas differently, and they’ll hear the good news loud and clear through the seasonal static.”<sup>1</sup>
- **Spend less.** Opt out of our culture of excess, and give creative, personal gifts to those you love. Spending less doesn’t mean you have to spend nothing. Evaluate what you truly need and support worthy products, people and causes.
- **Love all.** Jesus loved the poor, the forgotten, the overlooked and the sick. We have the opportunity to join Him in helping those most in need in our community by volunteering with family and friends.

For more information on the Advent Conspiracy, visit [www.adventconspiracy.org](http://www.adventconspiracy.org).

<sup>1</sup> *The Advent Conspiracy: Can Christmas Still Change the World?* by Rick McKinley, Chris Seay and Greg Holder. Zondervan. September 15, 2009.

## Fun with Episcopal Vernacular

### Q: What is the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols?

A: Back in 1918, young upstart Eric Milner-White, the new dean of King’s College Chapel, wanted to mix things up in the Church of England. The Church, happy that “mixing things up” did not involve beheading multiple wives, welcomed Milner-White’s innovative approach to weaving together scripture and song.

Milner-White designed a worship service based on nine short scripture lessons—from the fall of humanity to the promise of the Messiah to the birth of Christ Jesus—interspersing carols between the lessons. The service was first

broadcast in 1928 and has been broadcast every year since (except in 1930), even during World War II, when the ancient glass (and also all the heat) had been removed from the chapel. Today, millions of people enjoy the service, which is broadcast live by the BBC on Christmas Eve.

Make plans to join our own Father David Puckett, as he leads the congregation in Holy Spirit’s annual Lessons and Carols on December 17 at 8:25 a.m. in the Nave.

*If you have an Episcopal-related term or practice you’d like demystified, just e-mail us at [dovetales@hsechurch.org](mailto:dovetales@hsechurch.org).*



# Getting to Know the Real Jesus

By Father Patrick Hall

## Christmas is about the God of Israel becoming a human.

Sometimes we get distracted by all the other things Christmas is about, but really this is the event we celebrate. Christmas is “The Feast of the Nativity.” Creator enters creation. Playwright steps into the action to act out a pivotal role in his own play. Composer becomes the sheet music. God becomes human.

One of the earliest heresies which the Church had to combat was docetism—the belief that Jesus was not really human at all. The folks who were promoting this way of understanding Jesus saw themselves as defenders of God’s holiness. God was too good to become matter. God was too spiritual to be human. While docetism was dead by the third century, it seems to me that many of us in orthodox Christian communities tend to think this way about Jesus unintentionally. We are so focused on reminding people of Jesus’ divinity that we have perhaps lost sight of our Lord’s humanity.

Because we think of Jesus as “sinless,” we wonder whether he was truly too spiritual to understand the very human concerns we face every day. Does he truly understand what it means to be like us? Staring at the idealized images of Jesus which the Church reveres, one would be forgiven for thinking that he does not understand what it is to be like us. What could a hallowed six-foot-tall, blonde-haired, blue-eyed Swedish-looking man inexplicably walking around Palestine possibly know about my life in 21<sup>st</sup>-century America?

## Jesus was a human being.

He was born around 3 or 4 AD, possibly in Bethlehem. He grew up in Nazareth, a town in the culturally diverse region known as Gallilee. Nazareth was a few miles from the more cosmopolitan city of Sepphoris. The reason you’ve never heard of Sepphoris is that Jesus didn’t do anything in Sepphoris that we know of. He avoided



the big city and spent most of his time instead in the small villages around Galilee. There were several hundred of these villages, with names familiar to anyone who knows the New Testament—Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, Nazareth. He grew membership in his renewal movement from these towns.

## Renewal was Jesus’ primary aim.

Like anyone with eyes to see, he could tell that the patriotic ambitions of Palestinian Jews would be their undoing. Ultimately, their rebellion would result in the destruction of everything they held dear, including the Temple in Jerusalem, by the Romans. Jesus travelled around Galilee, Samaria and ultimately Judea itself, doing the work of a prophet. He announced a word from Israel’s God, a promise that unless the people of Israel repented of their designs for armed resistance and followed Jesus in his new way of being Israel, destruction would be in store.

Jesus was saying and doing things that sent the message that being part of his movement gave people what they were used to getting from the Temple—healing and wholeness, forgiveness of sins, renewed membership in the people of Israel, the near presence of Israel’s God. This campaign against the Temple reached

its climax when Jesus entered the Temple himself and caused a major disruption. Most historians believe that this action precipitated his arrest.

Jesus saw his own ministry as the inauguration of God’s kingdom—the moment when God was acting definitively in the history of Israel to vindicate his people, and to renew humanity as a whole, in a paradoxical, subversive, unexpected way. Rather than raising an army, God was planting seed.

## Jesus of Nazareth is the world’s first resurrected human person.

Jesus—a 2,000-year-old Jewish prophet and messiah who is with us still, inaugurating God’s kingdom in our midst through the Holy Spirit, and calling the Church to live into the vision he outlined for the new people of God. We continue to await his very human return. When we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity on Christmas, we remember the last arrival of this very human Lord, and we turn our eyes toward his future return.

## You Did It!

Thanks to everyone who made our 2011 stewardship campaign a success. The vestry is now preparing the budget based on our campaign results. Check out the Stewardship page of the website ([www.hsechurch.org](http://www.hsechurch.org)) for the latest.

***Make your pledge online or pick up a form in the office.***

If you haven’t made a pledge yet, good news—there’s still time! Pledge online or pick up a pledge form in the narthex or Parish Hall. Remember that your pledge helps keep Holy Spirit running and provides funding for many of the ministries that continue to touch lives in our church and within our community.



# Children's Choir at Holy Spirit

If you've ever stepped into Children's Chapel during Sunday worship services, you've probably seen some toe tapping, hand clapping and even a little grooving to the beat. Music is an integral part of worship for all of us at Holy Spirit, including our children. Now the church is giving children the opportunity to share their love of music with the entire congregation.

Holy Spirit's music gurus, Stephen Morris, director of music ministries, and Juli Browning, director of contemporary worship, recently developed the Holy Spirit Children's Choir. Students, ages five through 11, are invited to be part of the choir, which sings once a month in either the traditional or contemporary service during the peace offering.

"Children become part of the liturgy—they offer up what they learn as a form of worship," Stephen says.

Juli explains that the choir exposes children to a wide array of liturgical music. "Kids learn about the history and tradition of music in the church and have the opportunity to sing different styles of music."

The choir also teaches kids how to sing well as a group. "We teach children to *sing*, not *shout* and help them learn useful breathing techniques. Together, we listen, watch and work together to sing as a group, rather than as individuals," Stephen offers.

Children meet each Sunday from noon to 12:45 p.m. and enjoy a healthy snack during rehearsal. "We wanted to make rehearsals as convenient as possible for parents," Juli says.



*Music forms an integral part of worship at Holy Spirit. Now, children have the opportunity to share their love of music with the entire congregation through the Children's Choir.*

The Children's Choir is an outgrowth of Holy Spirit's successful summer children's programs, including Vacation Bible School (VBS), Summer Strummers and the Summer Choir Camp. With VBS and Summer Strummers, children had the opportunity to share their learnings with the congregation in the contemporary worship service. "These were some of our most well-attended Sundays during the summer. The programs attracted children from within and outside of Holy Spirit," Juli says.

Participants in the Choir Camp not only shared their music during the traditional worship service, but sang for residents of Hope Village, a home for developmentally disabled adults. "The children offered up a song for the adults, taught them a new song and then stayed for lunch in the tea room," Stephen relates.

"Children are capable of extraordinary learning. The Children's Choir gives kids the opportunity to experience the fun of singing side by side with their peers and learn the important role music plays in our liturgy," Juli concludes.

To join the Children's Choir—or serve as an adult volunteer—contact Stephen at [sjmorris@yahoo.com](mailto:sjmorris@yahoo.com) or Juli at [juli-browning@sbcglobal.net](mailto:juli-browning@sbcglobal.net).

## Podcasting Extends Holy Spirit's Reach

We at Holy Spirit have not only joined the digital revolution, we're sailing down that information highway with the wind in our hair and computer cables trailing behind. While our website has been live for years, the church added podcasting to the mix in 2009. For those not familiar with the term, podcasts are digital audio recordings that can be downloaded to a portable electronic device like an mp3 player or iPod.

Each week, we upload our Sunday sermons to the website at [www.hsechurch.org](http://www.hsechurch.org), to iTunes (search for us at the iTunes Store with the key words "holy spirit episcopal church") and at <http://hsechurchhouston.libsyn.com>. People can click and listen

directly on the website, or download the podcast from iTunes or [libsyn.com](http://libsyn.com) to carry with them as they go about their week. "I enjoy listening to the sonorous oratorical stylings of the clergy as I chop vegetables for dinner or while pushing along my cart at the grocery store," relates Susan Diemont-Conwell.

And clearly, Susan is not the only one who is listening. In August of 2009, there were 250 downloads of the podcast. Just one year later? More than 2,000 downloads each month. "We have made a concerted effort to increase our digital presence. Podcasting is helping us extend our reach and share with others the Good News about Jesus," says Father Patrick Hall.



The Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit  
12535 Perthshire Road  
Houston, Texas 77024

PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE PAID  
HOUSTON  
USPS PERMIT  
NO. 542810

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**Contact us at:**

713/468-7796

secretary@hsechurch.org

www.hsechurch.org

**Submit article ideas to:**

dovetales@hsechurch.org

# Hands-On Learning in New Lab

Fourth-grade students at Holy Spirit Episcopal School (HSES) test the effects of pollution on aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Third-grade students work to identify unknown powders based on reactions to vinegar, iodine and red cabbage juice. First-grade students investigate

***Hands-on activities are improving knowledge retention and deepening the children's learning experience.***

water's effect on erosion. And even children as young as four years old are getting in on the act as they explore the world of ants in HSES's new science lab for lower school students.

"Benjamin Franklin once said, 'Tell

me and I forget. *Teach* me and I remember. *Involve* me and I learn.' The hands-on activities the kids are exposed to in the science lab are improving knowledge retention and deepening the children's learning experience," says Laurie Gearhart, science facilitator for the lower school at HSES.

Funded through a grant from the Looper Foundation and by additional individual gifts, the lab provides an age-appropriate, inquiry-based curriculum for students from four years old through fourth grade. As the year progresses, students will work with electrical circuitry, study motion by building machines, explore the world of Texas dinosaurs, plants and much more. "When asked if they would rather use textbooks for science or hands-on activities, the children always vote to go hands-on," Mrs. Gearhart says. "To them inquiry-based study is an adult word for having fun, and to see how much they're learning is very exciting."



*Fourth-grader Stephanie examines a slide of a butterfly wing in Holy Spirit School's new Lower School Science Lab.*