



Dove Tales

A publication of Holy Spirit Episcopal Church ❖ Fall 2010

Impacting the Community *Day of Service Volunteers Extend God's Kingdom*

As Ed Spaulding stood in front of a small home in West Houston, he readied himself to deliver a meal for the family within. He didn't know their story; he just knew Mission of Yahweh (MOY) was helping them through a difficult time by providing assistance like this meal he carried. As that door opened, Ed saw on the faces of the children how much that meal meant to them. "I saw another side of life that day—so close to us and yet so far removed from how we live."

Ed was one of over 100 volunteers who spent Maundy Thursday helping those in need during Holy Spirit's annual Day of Service. "As Christians, we are called to minister to the needs of others. The Maundy Thursday Day of Service is a time that we as a church community work together to help our neighbors and bring Jesus' teachings to life," says Father David Puckett.

Volunteers from the church and community provided assistance at Memorial Assistance Ministries (MAM), Vita-Living, West Houston Assistance Ministries, Westside Homeless Partnership and MOY. Afterwards, volunteers feasted on a "friendship stew," prepared by students from the school, and participated in the Maundy Thursday worship service, where clergy washed the feet of the congregation as Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.

Allison Fowler signed on to this year's Day of Service after hearing about last year's event. "I remember seeing the faces of volunteers who participated and thought they had experienced something



Holy Spirit's finance guru, Leona Baker, proves she can tackle more than the numbers. Here, she tames an unruly garden at Memorial Assistance Ministries.

special." Allison spent the day clipping thorny bushes, cleaning out sheds and working on the playground at MOY. "I was able to take my mind off my own problems—which seemed petty in comparison—and focus on those in need."

"Day of Service gives us the opportunity to pitch in and remind our neighbors that God's love for each of us is real," says Peter Cunnion, who co-chaired the event with his wife, Kelly.

Susan Diemont-Conwell, who worked with ESL students at MAM again this year, loved spending one-on-one time with people from the community. "It's important to see the faces of those you're helping. These people have families they're trying to support. They're trying to better their lives. We're all the same; some just need more help than others to get through tough times."

The organizations Holy Spirit helped were especially grateful for the many extra hands. "Volunteers are a driving force at MAM. Each volunteer is critical to our success no matter what task they have and allow MAM to reach more clients and positively impact their lives," says Sara Rice, volunteer coordinator at MAM.

David Leatham, executive director at Vita-Living, agrees. "The saying 'many hands make light work' definitely applies. We could not have done it without you!"

The day also provides a great opportunity for fellowship and to meet those you may not see at your regular worship service. "It's a lot of fun to get to know others and work side by side with church friends!" says Eleanor Sheldon.

Eleanor encourages those thinking about participating in next year's event to plan ahead and take advantage of the opportunity to give back. "At the end of the day, the experience is a gift to yourself," she says.

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Pick Up the Phone!



A Word from the Rector

Welcome to the newly designed DoveTales newsletter. We clergy and vestry realize that there are many people who make a tremendous impact on the life of this church and in our community. The purpose of this newsletter is to tell their stories. There are those who sit by the bedsides of the sick or home-bound. Some minister to those coping with loss. Others spend time enriching the spiritual lives of our children and youth. Still others dedicate themselves to creating a rich atmosphere of fellowship during our times of celebration. We are a diverse congregation with diverse interests, and everyone has gifts to share. We want this newsletter to be a celebration of our Lord Jesus Christ and the people of this congregation who have answered His call to serve. We hope you take the opportunity to learn about the life of this congregation and find ways you too can share your gifts.

Faithfully,

The Rev'd David F. K. Puckett
Rector

At Holy Spirit, members are often called to *lend a hand* to help out the church, to *lend a heart* to minister to those in need. Now some are even being called to *lend an ear*. Volunteers involved in Holy Spirit's new Care Callers ministry are ringing up church members for no other purpose than to check in and say hello.

"If you're not able to make it to church on Sunday because you're hospitalized, home-bound or just because life intervenes, you are still an integral member of the Holy Spirit family. We care about you and are here for you," says Father Patrick Hall.

The calls are an opportunity for church members to share prayer requests and pastoral concerns in a confidential setting. With approximately 300 families at Holy Spirit, Father



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Patrick invites church members who can lend an ear to join the ministry. "Our goal is to touch base with everyone on our church roster. If you can help, we'd love to have you!"

For more information on the Care Callers ministry, contact Ricardo Suarez at HS.CareCalls@yahoo.com or 281/347-8743.

How's Our Financial Health?

Our financial vitals are sound as we make our way into the second half of 2010. Pledges have tracked close to budget. Thanks to all who are so diligent in making regular pledge payments!

Though we've encountered a number of unanticipated costs associated with our buildings, equipment upgrades and a good rate with our energy provider is resulting in lower utility costs. Our financial audit of 2009 was a success with no material findings, and the Finance Committee just completed a 2010 budget update which moves us from a shortfall into a positive position for the year.

Our debt is now under \$1 million—a major milestone. If you haven't done so

already, please consider contributing to the Mortgage Reduction Campaign. We have another \$13,200 to raise to take advantage of a generous matching funds program.

If you haven't done so already, please consider contributing to the Mortgage Reduction Campaign.

Just mark your check "Mortgage Reduction Campaign" so Leona can properly designate the funds.



Children's Sunday School

Hands-On Learning Reinforces God's Message

It's a typical day in Children's Sunday School. The gym is filled with cheering, shouting and a whole lot of raucous noise. Some kids stand on the sidelines, cheering on their friends, while others are in play, using volleyballs to strike their opponents from the knees down. But when a child is hit with a ball in "ga-ga-ball," it's not a bad thing. Instead, children understand that being "out of the game" is an opportunity to cheer on and encourage others. "Being out of the game, in essence, puts you in play for Christ," says KariAnn Lessner, director of Children's and Family Ministries.

"By grouping children of different age levels together, we not only foster good relationships between the ages, but give older students the opportunity to articulate their faith."

KariAnn explains that the game is intended to reinforce Paul's message in Philippians 1:21. "Paul teaches about living a life differently than the rest of the world. For Paul, putting yourself 'out of the game' is like being called out to share your faith with the world," she explains.

The hands-on activity is just one way Sunday School teachers bring the Bible passage to life. For four weeks, children participate in a variety of dynamic activities, each focusing on the same Bible passage. "Kids not only love repetition, but they need it to develop a lasting memory and understanding of content. During one four-week rotation, children may engage in a gym activity, cook up some delicious treat in the kitchen, create arts and crafts, take part in a science experiment and re-enact the Bible passage during a drama work-

shop," KariAnn explains.

"Our children will often explain to us after church how a craft they are bringing home relates to the Bible. At other times, they'll make a connection to something they learned in Sunday School months ago," says Shari Watson. And being hands-on creates a lasting impression, according to KariAnn. "We don't always remember what people say, but we often remember what they do. Rather than just reading about Noah and the ark, we head outside and measure the cubits. We give kids hammers and nails and talk about how much work it must have been to build an ark."

During a recent lesson on the Good Samaritan, children were introduced to first aid. "The younger children were instructed on what to do if someone gets hurt, while the older children were trained in CPR by a volunteer from the American Red Cross," KariAnn offers.

"Our children know scripture; they know where to find books in the Bible," says Melissa Peter, who appreciates the one-on-one attention each child receives. "Teachers call our kids by name, pray for them and ask about what's going on in their lives. That personal connection means a great deal." Shari enjoys the mix of younger and older children. "I like hearing the conversations that go on between the different age groups. One Sunday, one of the fifth-grade boys explained to our then four-year-old daughter, Anna, something she didn't understand," she says.

"By grouping children of different age levels together, we not only foster good relationships between the ages, but give older students the opportunity to articulate their faith," KariAnn explains.

"Our children won't let us miss this important part of Sunday worship. The program is exciting, challenging, meaningful and fun. We are continually amazed at how Children's Sunday School brings the Gospel to life for our children," Melissa concludes.



Photo by Ron Vachon

Children are engaged in a variety of hands-on activities that reinforce the Bible lesson. Six-year-old Mattie flashes her pearly whites.

Cutting Costs, Going Green

Being green isn't just a catch phrase anymore. It's a way of life, and we as a church community are showing our green by reducing energy usage. In the last year, we conducted a review of all equipment and have replaced or upgraded aging heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment in the church office, child enrichment center, middle school, the Winter's Activity Center, parish hall and rectory. Additionally, lighting fixtures have either been replaced or are now fitted with energy-efficient light bulbs. All that effort is paying off too. So far, the church has seen a 30 percent reduction in kilowatt usage—translating into utility savings for the church.



Seeking God's Face in the Seasons

By Father Patrick Hall

My best falls were spent in Northern Virginia. There really is a fall up there, you see. It gets brisk. Not cold, per se, but cool enough to have a fire, don a tweed jacket and fuzzy sweater and eat hot oatmeal for breakfast. The colors change—the trees are resplendent in orange and yellow and brown and red. People always talk about the cherry blossoms that bloom around Washington in the spring, but I preferred the earthy explosion of color that happened in October and November.

*This fall, do not let the
breathless pace of your life
elbow out time for wonder,
and time for rest.*

Our yearly rhythms of life make fall a thick time—full of holidays and cooking and family and football and a legion of other activities. We develop a habit of breathlessness, flying from task to task with scarcely a moment left over for wonder, or rest. Nowhere was this tragedy more obvious to me than when I lived in Northern Virginia. Picking my way across



beautiful tree-lined streets exploding with color, I would dodge the boxy black hermetically sealed Mercedes sedans of the terminally important. So many of us have been breathless for so long we are blind to the glory of fall.

Fall comes differently here in Houston, if it can be said to come at all. Aesthetics seem not to have been a primary concern among the founders of our city. I often describe Houston as a procession of strip malls erected on one, infinitely large, never-ending concrete slab. But the thing that we Houstonians share in common

with Northern Virginians is the breathlessness: the tendency to be terminally important, to be blind to the wisdom of the seasons. In an oft-quoted passage from Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them."

The days get shorter, the leaves begin to change and Jesus invites us to take a breath. He invites us to quit our infinitely large, never-ending concrete slab in order to take a breath and remember that before the world depended on us, it depended on God. In truth, it still does. This fall, do not let the breathless pace of your life elbow out time for wonder, and time for rest. Go to bed earlier and wake up later. Enjoy hot oatmeal or a nice fire. When you hear the shrill voice of your conscience urging you to focus on uncompleted and urgent tasks, remember that you are not as important as you think you are. The life of the world continued before you were born and will continue along after you have died. Spend a few moments seeking the face of God in the glory of fall.

Fun with Episcopal Vernacular

If you're new to the church or just aren't a cradle Episcopalian, you may not know a tabernacle from a bread basket. Never fear! Each issue, we'll demystify Episcopal terminology and have you impressing the ultimate lover of all things Anglican, Father David himself. This issue's issue: the physical structure of a traditional Anglican church.

Narthex = The vestibule leading to the nave of the church. In 21st-century society, it's known as the lobby.

Nave = The main body of the church. It's where you stand, pray, kneel and sing your heart out during worship services.

Altar = A raised platform at the front of the church. This is where the action happens during worship services—where scriptures are read, where sermons are given and where Eucharist is offered.

Transept = If you take an aerial view of a traditional Anglican church, the layout looks like a cross. While the narthex and the altar form the body of the cross, the transept forms the cross beam.

Have an Episcopal-related term or practice you need demystified? E-mail us at dovetails@hsechurch.org, and we'll get it answered!



EYC Helps Its Neighbors

Who are our neighbors?

That was a question members of Holy Spirit's Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) recently explored during a summer mission trip to downtown Houston. "Certainly the word neighbor would describe the people who live on your street, in your school and even individuals in the community. But how about the 10,000 homeless who can be found on the streets of Houston on any given night? What about those who go hungry in our very own city? Are they too our neighbors?" challenged Sarah Taylor, youth and young adult missionary.

Students formed friendships not just with each other, but with people they met and served.

Ten EYC students, ages 11 to 15, answered the call to share Christ's love with the world by spending a week ministering to Houston's hungry and homeless. "To bring Christ's love into the world, we must know more about the world in which we live. And what better place to start than our own backyard?" Sarah explains.

Based at the Ballard Youth Center at Christ Church Cathedral, the group rose at dawn each day and after a quick breakfast, hopped aboard Houston's public transportation system to their work destination. "We sought to create a unique experience for the youth, giving them the opportunity to develop relationships with the clients they were ministering to. On Houston's light rail and bus systems, we often ran into folks we had served an hour or day before," Sarah offers.

Work sites included the Way Station, Beacon, Emergency Aid Coalition, the Houston Food Bank and Generation One. "These agencies minister to people



This year's cast of characters: from left, Houston Interfaith Worker Justice intern, Christy Orendorff, Emma Wertheimer, Anna DeSanctis, Haley Schultz, Patrick Cunnion, Ashli Mani, Jeremy Jjemba, Jacob Peter, Eric Riegel, Cameron Haney, Keith Woodruff, Carson Lyda, Brayden Burney and Sarah Taylor.

who are often invisible to us in our daily lives. Our decision to serve there was in response to scripture like Isaiah 58:6-7, which calls us to feed the hungry and house the homeless," she says.

During the day, kids served up food, bussed tables, folded laundry, cleaned up empty lots and mowed lawns. "The Holy Spirit was incredibly present the whole week. Students formed friendships not just with each other, but with people they

"To bring Christ's love into the world, we must know more about the world in which we live. And what better place to start than our own backyard?"

met and served. We had amazingly deep reflections during our Bible studies, and the students were definitely moved by their experiences," Sarah adds. "We look forward to deepening our relationships with each other and returning soon to the agencies where we served."

Reflections on the Week

EYC members share their impressions of this year's mission trip.

"I learned that you can't just talk God's words; you have to act God's words. We all pray to God to have peace on earth, but somebody has to act."

– Patrick Cunnion

"I saw Christ in everybody we worked with."

– Ashli Mani

"I learned that if you use teamwork and help with a group of people, you get a lot more done. The more you help people, the more God turns your heart into a servant's heart"

– Carson Lyda

"I learned to help the people that are out there, instead of avoiding them like I usually do."

– Eric Riegel

"I saw Christ this week in other people as they served and in the conversations we had after we had been everywhere through the day."

– Cameron Haney



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Another Year of Excellence

As the halls of Holy Spirit Episcopal School fill with the sights and sounds of enthusiastic young students, faculty and staff prepare for another great year. The school celebrates its 48th year of educational excellence and is launching several new programs that add to its dynamic learning curriculum. "We are committed to inspiring children not only intellectually, but spiritually, emotionally, morally and socially," says Robyn LaRocca, director of admission.

Among the school's new offerings are:

- A science lab for kindergarten through fourth-grade students, designed for hands-on science exploration in a traditional lab setting.
- A new academic enrichment center for all grades.
- Enhanced science curriculum for third-through eighth-grade students, specially designed by the school's science expert, Gene Liga.

- An extended middle school language arts program, math and science schedules and middle school vertical curriculum alignment.
- A developmental "bridge" class for children ages four and five years old.
- A seventh-grade marine lab experience in Key Largo, Florida, which complements existing ECO-link trips to Camp Allen, Sky Ranch and RedCloud.
- An eighth-grade urban environmental trip to Chicago.

Joining the staff this year are Abbey Newline, head of Early Childhood and Lower School, and Susan Walton, head of Middle School. Abbey holds a master's in education and throughout her career, has headed up early childhood and lower school programs, as well as serving in administrative leadership roles. With a master's in curriculum and instruction, Susan has served as acting head of middle school at Grace School and has taught middle school language arts and also



Head of School Ray Johnson welcomes Abbey Newline (left) and Susan Walton.

served in administrative leadership positions.

"Our strong and loyal faculty and staff are committed to keeping true to its mission of providing a unique and outstanding education, combining the best traditions of learning with relevant contemporary programs that promote excellence in scholarship, richness of soul, Godly character and physical well-being," Robyn concludes.

For more on the school's new staff and teachers, as well as a video message from Susan Walton, visit www.hses.org.