



FIRST THINGS

▲ WINTER 2014

upcoming EVENTS

December 2

Christmas Blessing

December 7

Directory picture day
Cooks' open house
Evening of Prayer & Praise

December 14

Directory picture day
Early Childhood Sing-a-long

December 18

Capernaum

December 24

Christmas Eve Services – 4 & 10 p.m.

December 28

Lessons & Carols service – one
service only at 11 a.m.

January 4

Evening of Prayer & Praise

January 11

Baptism Sunday

January 15

Capernaum

February 1

Evening of Prayer & Praise

February 6-7

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner

February 17

Shrove Tuesday pancake supper

February 18

Ash Wednesday services – 6:30 a.m.,
noon & 7 p.m.

Dear St. Andrew's Family,

At the end of October, I was in Tampa, Fla. for the Mission's annual clergy retreat. It was a time set aside for renewal, refreshment and worshipping together. The hotel where we stayed was on the beautiful Tampa Bay. I was looking forward to having a room with a view of the bay. I love a room with a view. When I got up to my room, I quickly realized that I didn't have a bay view, but my room faced west and I had a full view of planes taking off and landing at the airport.

The day we left, I was up early and, as I was sitting in my hotel room, I looked out the window and watched one of the most spectacular sunrises I have ever seen. As the sun began to slowly rise over the horizon, the darkness began to flee. As the sun rose higher and higher, its rays began to shoot out in all directions and the darkness fled until all you could see was the sun shining in its fullness in the blue sky. The darkness was gone. A new day had dawned and it was glorious. The Lord gave me a room with an amazing view.

I want you to know that a new day has dawned. The prophets of old spoke of the hope and assurance that a new day was coming. A new day when the oppressed would find refuge, when the tired and weary would be strengthened and refreshed, when the sick would be healed, when those who mourn would be comforted, a day when the burdens that we carry would be lifted off of us.

They longed for a day when the sun would rise and the darkness would be scattered.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of this in Isaiah 9:2, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of

deep darkness, on them has light shone."

The great light that he prophesied about was the Savior, the Son of God, who was coming into the world.

Do you find yourself longing for a day such as this? The people of Israel lived in the great anticipation of this day, we now live in the reality of it. Friends, a new day has dawned, the Savior of the world has come. The light of the world has come to push back the darkness in our lives.

In the gospel of John we read "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth ... For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:9,14,16)

What magnificent words – that from Christ we have received grace upon grace!

The light of Christ himself exposes the darkness in our lives and opens our eyes to his glorious grace. The grace upon grace that John writes about is the forgiveness of our sins, the mercy that we did not earn and the freedom from bondage. It is the blessings and joy that God lavishes on us as his beloved children every day.

Welcome his light coming into those dark places of your life. Don't run from it.

Where in your life are you experiencing the light of Christ pushing back the darkness?

Where in your life do you long for his light to shine?

Rev. Robert Cook, Rector



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The glorious news of the gospel is that when he exposes the darkness in our lives, we experience greater and greater degrees of his grace upon grace.

I want to encourage you to slow down, take time to prepare your heart for the season of Advent that we are about to

enter into. It is a time where we celebrate the coming of our Savior. It is a reminder of how much we need a Savior. And it is a time where we look forward to his second coming.

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon

you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

In His Love,

Robert+

COMMUNITY AS WORSHIP

One of the issues I have dealt with as a Christ follower is the need to redefine. I have felt deeply called to redefine what community means in my life. I have to get past the idea that community is just “an area in which people exist together” (like a neighborhood). To God, community means much more. God desires for us to “commune,” or to communicate, in a very personal and spiritual way, not just with him, but also with one another. A great picture is when we take Communion together. We do it as a sacrament to our Lord, in remembrance of him, as a way of communing with him. And we do it together.

Yes, I know quite a few people in my physical community. But, am I really *living* in a spiritual community together with these people as my brothers and sisters? With some, the answer is yes. However, I feel as if I should make it more of a priority in my life. If I see true Christ-centered community as my spiritual act of worship, if I see it as a necessity in my life, I'm sure to find that my walk with Jesus will enrich me in such a way that my understanding of the Gospel will broaden, my capacity to love will grow, my desire to reach out to God's people will intensify and my relationship with my Creator will consume my very being! If that is true with each and every one of us, then everyone that encounters us will know, without a doubt, that we all have been with the Savior. Who wouldn't want to join

up, jump in and be a part of something so amazing? I can't think of a better way to grow a church.

So, how do we do this? A great friend, and mentor, of mine taught me to “look with your Jesus glasses on.” Meaning that, if we want to find out what (or who) God is leading us to, we must be actively looking for it. Let's ask ourselves, “How do I add to the community of God?” Let's not just consider the community at St. Andrew's, but, God's community as a whole. How do we add value to everyone we encounter in our community? How does this become an every day practice? How do we see people as made in the image of God and not as employees of restaurants, garbage men, lawyers, nurses, politicians, clergy, homeless, LGBT or Muslim? The list goes on and on. If I am going to try to redefine community, I'm going to have to let God redefine how I see people too. As I start to get a clearer picture of how God sees people, how can I help but initiate with them? Whether it's trying

to meet someone new on Sunday morning or having the new couple at church over for dinner, I will want to love as Christ loved and invite them to be a part of an encouraging, exciting, grace-filled community of God. A community that is not merely a group of folks going to church together, but a community of being truly known. Who wouldn't want to be connected to something like that? If we continue that community and invite people to be a part, imagine the impact it would have! What if visitors came to St. Andrew's and were met with a culture that unabashedly desired to know each other through Christ? What a community that would be! What if the lost saw this type of community demonstrated? How would this affect our children? Our city? Our country? The world? It has to start somewhere. Why not here? Why not?

AJ Green, Director of Family Ministry/Youth



Kathy Stephenson, *Connection Ministry Leader*

FALL RETREAT WRAP UP

As God is at work in me, he continues to give me a desire to create opportunities within St. Andrew's for deep, relational connections and for the sharing of our lives. One such opportunity was the Fall Retreat. I share with you some words from and pictures of those who attended.



"It was meaningful just spending time and getting to know people on a non-Sunday morning environment."

"Having time to meet new people was so good for us."

"The joy of the body of Christ being together was meaningful. I loved hearing the stories of God's faithfulness and my faith was strengthened."

"I was surprised at the diversity of people that came – and loved that! Young, old, single, married, new to SAC and others who have been there long term."

"I was also surprised to see a new side of Robert – playing volleyball and riding the zipline!!! FUN! (Love him!)"



BLESSED BY CHRISTMAS BLESSING

Compiled from an Interview with Marcela Juarez

In January 2011, my husband, Danny, died. Suddenly I was a single mother with three small boys to care for. My grief and loneliness led to addictive and destructive habits, which I realized had to be addressed if my boys were to have a good parent. In September 2011, I started rehab at Arkansas Cares. St. Andrew's van would pick residents up to attend GIG on Wednesday nights; I began to join them.

While living at Arkansas Cares, my two older sons attended Wilson Elementary. In December of 2011, we were invited to attend Christmas Blessing at the church. Because I was familiar with the church, we went. I didn't know what to expect, but I was surprised by the crowd of both school families and volunteers. During the service, the pastor invited anyone that needed prayer to come

to the altar. I needed prayer – I was grieving and felt alone. By coming forward, I received prayer, but I also received much more. I didn't expect any more than prayer, but instead people sought me out afterwards and genuinely cared about how I was doing. (My son, Danny, says the best thing about Christmas Blessing is the cookies!)

A relationship with the people of St. Andrew's began. We began attending St. Andrews regularly, both on Sundays and Wednesdays. We were welcomed. The message of St. Andrew's is caring for people, not judging. People often turn away when they learn I have been an addict or they see my many tattoos. St.



Andrew's is not like that. We were welcomed and not judged. I want to come back time after time. So do my boys.

Now I am a part of St. Andrew's ministry to Wilson families. I have volunteered twice at the Back-to-School Festival. It is nice to give back when so much has been given to me.

LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE *Promise*

Join us each Sunday this Advent season as we learn how to live a life that knows and experiences the promise of Christ?

November 30 The Promise of Christ's Return
Mark 13:24-37

December 7 The Promise of Christ's Forgiveness
Mark 1:1-14

December 14 The Promise of Christ In Me
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 21 The Promise of the Incarnation
Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve The Promise Has Arrived
Luke 2:7-20

WELCOME OUR NEWCOMERS

On Sunday, October 26, we completed the fall Newcomers' Class. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to those who attended the class.

Pictured: Chris & Jennifer Pledger, Laura & Brad Cruse, James & Sharon Rutherford, Lige & Lauren Bolin, Bryan (not pictured) & Debra Richardson and Cara Tobey

Not pictured: Carlee Wellons, Carol Spencer-Morris, Nathan & Jessie Smith, Matt Snyder and Jessica Tebeau

We hope that you will take the opportunity to introduce yourselves to them.



WHY ANGLICANISM IS MY SPIRITUAL HOME

There are a variety of ways to answer that question – as I'm sure there are for you. One thing I know is that I did not choose the Anglican tradition because I woke up one morning and said to Caralisa, "Hey, I think we should become Anglican." Our journey into Anglicanism in general, and St. Andrew's in specific, was a process of listening and responding to God's work in our life as it unfolded week-by-week, month-by-month.

Better put, I am on a lifetime journey of daily following Jesus in order to become more like him, and God has opened the door of Anglicanism as a spiritual home base for that journey. When I survey the terrain of my soul, examining how God has formed me over the years, what I see is characteristically Anglican.

In other words, for me, the expression of Christian worship represented in the Anglican tradition, beginning in the British Isles as early as the 4th century AD – coming into sharper focus during the Reformation in England, are particularly ripe for discipleship.

Here are three characteristically Anglican signposts that have been particularly significant for my discipleship journey:

Signpost One: Scripture

The heartbeat of the Anglican tradition is a commitment to Scripture. Everything is oriented around God's revelation of himself in Christ. Rather than being blown to and fro by ever-shifting cultural winds, the Anglican tradition seeks to align all faith and practice with God's Word. We don't get to make up this stuff.

Reading Scripture as a disciple of Jesus means seeking not just to master the text, but to be mastered by it. We read in order to grow in Christ-likeness. Anglicans have, historically, sought to read Scripture just this way: not simply to know more information about God, but rather to become better lovers of God, and thus more like Jesus.

Moreover, Anglicans read Scripture intentionally and holistically. The foundational component of Anglican Daily Prayer is the lectionary, which is a collection of Scripture readings appointed for Sundays and daily reading. The lectionary helps me read Scripture intentionally by offering a simple list of readings that align with the seasons of the church calendar, and it helps me read holistically because the readings cover the entire breadth of Scripture – keeping me situated within all of God's Redemptive Story.

Seth Richardson, *Pastor of Discipleship*



Reading Scripture in this way is a reminder that even my devotional life is not up to me. Obedience to God by digesting his Word is also an act of surrender. I don't have to conjure up feelings or randomly select a passage in isolation from the rest of the church. I simply come and offer myself with a heart ready to receive whatever God has for me that day – reading the same texts read by Christians all across the world.

Signpost Two: Liturgy and Sacrament

A great gift of the Anglican tradition is the emphasis that God offers his grace to us in the ordinary things of life – ordinary things like bread and wine. Life is not split into the spiritual stuff on the one hand and ordinary stuff on the other. Rather, all of life, when offered unto Christ for sanctification, can become an opportunity to grow in God's grace. Seeing the world this way is called sacramental.

In the same way, the Anglican tradition offers patterns for corporate worship and daily living that align our hearts with the rhythm of God's grace in Christ. This rhythm of God's grace, called liturgy,

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characterizes both our habits on Sunday morning and our habits throughout the week.

Liturgy is, for me, crucial to following Jesus because, whether I realize it or not, I am following someone or some vision of the good life. The habits and practices that characterize my life look like who/what I follow. This means, whether I realize it or not, I am always getting a formation – either a deformation or spiritual transformation. Liturgy, therefore, helps align the life I actually live with the rhythms of God's grace.

I need reminding that God offers me his grace concretely – not just in abstract – because I'm often better at talking about grace than I am at receiving grace as my

daily sustenance. The Sacraments, and sacramental living, draw my attention to the tangible avenues through which God offers grace in Christ – exposing the unhealthy fixations I have on things that do not truly bring life.

Signpost Three: Spirit

While prioritizing the place of Scripture and Liturgy, the Anglican tradition equally prioritizes and leaves room for the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, including the manifestation and exercise of the spiritual gifts.

Becoming more like Jesus does not happen by trying harder; it happens in submission to the transformative work of the Spirit. Sensitivity to and dependence on the Spirit, therefore, is crucial to discipleship.

Because my life is often so crowded and calculated, I am unable to listen to God's voice. This is why I need to make room for the Spirit to interrupt my status quo. I cannot accomplish on my own or in my own power the work God wants to do. Bringing God's salvation-work to completion is the Spirit's job. Scripture, Liturgy and Sacrament all form Christ in me because the Spirit is present.

Even the way I exercise gifts for ministry must come in submission to and dependence on the Spirit. The gifts are, after all, the gifts given by the Spirit, which means that I cannot lead, preach or counsel apart from the Spirit's power.

What draws you to the Anglican tradition? I'd love to hear from you.



GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?

Whether you are new to the church or have been attending for quite some time, we offer you the opportunity to get to know a few fellow St. Andrew's-goers in a more intimate environment. You'll gather on either Friday, February 6, or Saturday, February 7, at someone's home in a group of about eight people. You'll visit, eat dinner, laugh and enjoy community. Hosts provide their homes and coordinate who brings what for dinner; guests bring the food. Sign up by Friday, January 23 to participate as a host or guest. For more information, contact Kathy Stephenson (kathys@saclr.org; 614.6061).

Rev. Robert Cook, Rector



ANGLICAN MISSION UPDATE

The Anglican Mission is a missionary society that seeks to reach the 140 million+ un-churched and under-churched Americans through church planting and other apostolic works. We are a missionary society that focuses on reaching the lost and lonely, tired and troubled, determined yet disheartened of North America with the transforming love of Jesus. Under the leadership of Apostolic Vicar, The Rt. Rev. Philip Jones, the Mission has streamlined its initiatives to better position itself to come along side churches to support them in this effort, as well as raise up and equip leaders and funds to plant three-stream, Anglican churches.

Several weeks ago, Dustin+, Seth+, Jamie+ and I traveled to Tampa, Fla. for the Anglican Mission's annual clergy retreat. It was a rich time of gathering with clergy from around the country.

During our retreat, I was reminded again how each one of us plays a vital part in this calling and what it looks like to live our lives on mission. Since Jesus came to seek and

save the lost, we are commissioned to join him in that work.

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This is at the heart of what the Anglican



Mission is all about.

The word's power and authority became the theme of the retreat. You and I have been given power and authority to go out to our families, our neighborhoods, our places of work to be the hands, feet, voice and light of Christ.

"These two words [power and authority] express what God poured out over the last few days at our annual clergy retreat. Authority gives us the right to move

in the Holy Spirit. Power gives us the ability.

This is God's gift to all believers, not just some, and this characterizes a

Spirit-filled church movement, connected to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." - +Philip Jones

We engage in the mission that God has called us to with power and authority from the Holy Spirit. I pray that the Lord would show each of us what it looks like to engage those around us in a greater way. This is not just a calling for pastors or the leadership of the church; it is a call for each one of us at St. Andrew's.

We are called to love those with whom we work, find common ground with our neighbors, and build bridges with those who live a different lifestyle. As we do this, the Lord realigns our lives as a missionary people. I pray that we can all live into this call that God has given us by his grace. Through this work, the Lord will draw the hurting and lost to himself.

JOIN US AT A CHRISTMAS

Open House

Sunday, December 7, from 3-5 p.m.
 Rev. Robert and Kimberly Cook's home
 7 Broadview Dr.; 72207

BLESSED ASSURANCE

By Amy Livers

I grew up in a tiny, country church in a farming community in Louisiana. Every Sunday we sang old hymns, accompanied by an upright piano and organ. One of my favorites was, and still is, *Blessed Assurance*. “This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.” This is my story.

I grew up watching the ladies of this church host showers and wedding receptions and potlucks, admiring the way they always made each lovely and special. I felt so loved as they filled the fellowship hall with beautiful and delicious food for my own wedding. And I aspired to extend the same love and hospitality to others.

My husband also shares my gift and love of welcoming others into our home, so this quickly became a hallmark of our life together. From dinners with our friends and neighbors in our tiny Fayetteville apartment, to a Mardi Gras party for 20 in our first house in Jonesboro, we invited those we knew and loved well, and those we wanted to know and love better, to come and share a meal with us.

Jonesboro is home to a university, and therefore, our church had a vibrant college ministry, through which we adopted Vini, an exchange student from Albania. Vini’s parents came from Albania to Arkansas for his graduation. Of course, we invited them to dinner. It was the most memorable dinner party I’ve ever hosted. His parents spoke very little English, but, with Vini translating, they told us their stories. His dad told us how they met and were married. They told us how they became Christians. Vini’s mom took off her shoes, put on my flip-flops (which she found in a basket by the door and assumed were house shoes) and immediately joined me in the kitchen to help prepare dinner-- no translator needed! We shared a lovely evening, which ended with Vini’s dad inviting us to stay with them if we ever visited Albania. (They have since emigrated

to Hawaii, and the invitation still stands.)

I’ve thought a lot about that dinner with Vini’s family as I’ve talked with Tongva and others about opportunities to minister to a group of international women here in Little Rock. I was so afraid that we wouldn’t be able to communicate ... that we accidentally would offend them somehow ... that somehow I would mess it up. Instead, God showed me that true hospitality isn’t dependent upon my skills as a hostess. True hospitality is simply giving God space to draw people together and to himself.

St. Andrew’s is a hospitable place and people. Nick and I were drawn by the warmth and welcoming spirit here from our first visit. We noticed it in the way the liturgy was spoken and Communion was served. We heard it in the anniversary prayer, that homes will be “haven[s] of blessing and peace.” We saw it in the way our children were invited to participate in worship, how those around us smiled when they got fidgety or took a fussy baby from this tired mama. From those small acts toward us, to the elaborate undertaking of Christmas Blessing for the Wilson School families, St. Andrew’s lives out hospitality as a way to draw us into deeper relationship with one another and with Christ.

Every Sunday morning, we as a congregation pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” And we watch for glimpses of the kingdom, for places where God breaks into our everyday and shows himself. We look for opportunities to extend his reign by serving others in his name. Over the past several months, some of the women of St. Andrew’s have been showing Christ’s love to a group of international women who have been meeting for English classes at another local church. As relationships have developed between these women, they sensed God calling them to do more. The



international women expressed a need for additional times to converse in English, both for practice and company. So, Tongva and Jessie graciously invited these women to tea.

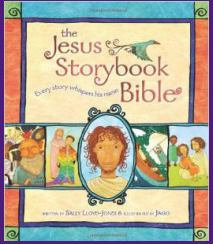
A few weeks ago, two international women and nine American women gathered around a table in the Andrew Room. While our children played together down the hall, we drank tea and told stories and learned about and from one another. We talked about things that all women talk about – our families, food, funny things our kids do and say. Tea, laughter and conversation freely flowed.

Someone brought candy that a friend had brought her from Jordan. It was white and soft, with chopped nuts. The international women translated its name, “of the sky.” They explained that the homemade version is softer and less fluffy. It sounded an awful lot like the candy my mom used to make at Christmas. Y’all, they make divinity in the Middle East! It was such a sweet time of fellowship. I keep thinking of *Blessed Assurance*, and the line, “Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!” The more we shared, the more we realized that our lives share so much in common.

Scripture urges us to be hospitable. “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2) St. Andrew’s does this so well. We would love for you to join us in showing hospitality to these women. We hope that these times for tea and conversation will become a regular meeting time and pray that God will continue to guide us and grow us in relationship with one another and with him. How sweet that we can share our stories! “This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.”

Tongva Williams, *Early Childhood Leader*

ADVENT WITH THE JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE



Central to our preschool curriculum at St. Andrew's is the *Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. The way every story points to Jesus is just the way we want our children to learn. And live.

Everything we do points to Jesus and his grace.

One way of experiencing Advent with your child is to journey through the story sequence leading up to the birth of Jesus using the *Jesus Storybook Bible*. In reading stories from the entirety of the Bible, your family will see together that the coming of Jesus doesn't begin with Mary and Joseph, but in Genesis 3.

Reading Plan

- Nov. 30 – The Story and The Song
- Dec. 1 – The Beginning: A Perfect Home
- Dec. 2 – The Terrible Lie
- Dec. 3 – A New Beginning
- Dec. 4 – A Giant Staircase to Heaven
- Dec. 5 – Son of Laughter
- Dec. 6 – The Present
- Dec. 7 – The Girl No One Wanted
- Dec. 8 – The Forgiving Prince
- Dec. 9 – God to the Rescue
- Dec. 10 – God Makes A Way
- Dec. 11 – Ten Ways to Be Perfect
- Dec. 12 – The Warrior Leader
- Dec. 13 – The Teeny, Weeny ... True King
- Dec. 14 – The Young Hero and the Horrible Giant
- Dec. 15 – The Good Shepherd
- Dec. 16 – A Little Servant Girl and a Proud General
- Dec. 17 – Operation "No More Tears!"
- Dec. 18 – Daniel and the Scary Sleepover
- Dec. 19 – God's Messenger
- Dec. 20 – Get Ready!
- Dec. 21 – He's Here
- Dec. 22 – The Light of the Whole Word
- Dec. 23 – The King of All Kings
- Dec. 24 – A Dream of Heaven

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PUMPKIN PATCH TRIP

In early October, the early childhood area sponsored a family trip to the pumpkin patch. Eighty-four people enjoyed a great time of connection with one another as they celebrated fall. A special thanks to Caroline Holt and Lisa Wagner for the great pictures!



Waiting for the
Messiah

Join us between services in the Commons every Sunday morning in Advent as we go deeper into the lectionary readings in a way that draws out the relevant "waiting" themes found in each passage and use this Advent season as a time for spiritual growth and discernment.

GOD IS AT WORK

Greetings to my brothers and sisters of St. Andrew's. I have a question for you. It's actually a question asked in the Gospel of Mark – "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, son of the Most High God?" (Mark 5:7)

Guess who is asking Jesus this question? The impulsive follower Peter? The faithful servant Paul? Any given confused disciple?

It's actually the enemy, an unclean spirit, "Legion is my name for I am many." (Mark 5:9)

This verse always speaks deeply to me because hardly anyone seemed to have a grasp for who Jesus really was and what his business was here on Earth. Yet, here comes the enemy and proclaims the Son's holiness and seeks his purpose.

This causes me to ask myself a question. Do I do that? Do I proclaim Jesus, the most high God? Am I seeking to know what business he has with me?

I should. We all should. For God is at work, and he invites us to do business with him.

God is at work in our Church.

I have the privilege of loving and leading the children at St. Andrew's, and God is making himself known to our young ones. Allow me to give you a front row view of what "business" he is about with our kindergarteners through sixth graders.

God has raised up a faithful team of volunteer Sunday school teachers and

Krew Cuts helpers for 2014-2015 school year. Allow me to give them a big shout out!! (Nancy LeMaster, Sylvia Brady, Nick Livers, Ken & Jan Sutterfield, Melissa McCray, Debbie Trickett, Kimberly Cook, James Edge, Chris Larsen, Patricia O'Neil, Mike Rush, Jackie Jung, Honor Canon, Cliff Stephenson, Steve Upson, Erin Lewis and several youth helpers.) Their faithfulness and love for our children is evident. Please join me in praying for them and



encouraging them as they love and build into our kids.

God is at work in our families.

Over the past few months several of these volunteers have remarked about how much our kids know about Christ, about God's Word, about his story and how each of us is a part. One volunteer said, "I think what I'm most impressed by is their sincere understanding of Christ. It's obvious to me that Jesus is a welcome part of these children's homes/lives, daily, and not something relegated to church

on Sunday morning. What a wonderful thing!"

So I'd like to say to families, "way to go, you're doing it and it shows!"

God is at work in our community.

Lastly, God is building community in our kids. As children come to Sunday school and Krew Cuts, they are learning that church is a place where they worship God and know the love of our Savior and the truths of his Word.

Kids share with each other and with volunteers how their teacher at school is kind of hard and that's stressful, how they miss their granddad who recently went to heaven and how they wish they had more friends at school.

Jesus is making himself known to the children of St. Andrew's through family and community. We pray together, play together and serve together. October 31, we took a group of kids over to the Manor, a senior residence across Kanis Road to help with their carnival and share the love of Jesus with others. I believe that is the Kingdom of God breaking through.

Come be about Christ's business in our kids. If you would like to know more about our children's ministry and how to be involved, we always have room for more volunteers. Call or email me!



LEARNING WHO GOD SAYS I AM IN WEAKNESS AND LOSS

By Pamela Hookstra

Since I was 17 years old, when I received the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in my heart, my testimony has revolved around the theme of identity. As a teenager, 2 Corinthians 5 grabbed my heart in an inexplicable way. The idea that new identity was available to me was highly appealing and infectious. I knew that I was a misfit bound for emptiness apart from an identity in Christ, and I longed for a seal on my life that transcended anything this world could offer me. I saw that I didn't have it even remotely "together." My need for a Rescuer, for a new identity, rang inside me – reverberating to a cellular level.

At such a young and adventurous age, I was ready for whatever I was called to – confident in the Spirit in me. Over the next several years, this led me to orphanages in Africa, a pursuit of a theology degree, homeless shelters in the inner-city, several different countries and cultures, work as a counselor at a treatment facility for hurting youth and an advocate for the cognitively challenged.

This identity in Christ informed my decisions and the way I approached my marriage and, ultimately, my mothering. However, time and routine gave way to a sense of security that was based more on

my strengths than my need for a Rescuer. I developed patterns of patting myself on the back for mastering tasks and for my accomplishments. I looked to my "doing" quite often to tell me who I was.

When I suffered my brain stem dissection and eventual stroke, everything I had used to establish my identity was called into question. Adventurer, doer, outdoor-lover, singer, cook, baby-holder, toddler-chaser – now all seemed out of reach due to disabilities post-stroke.

One day, as I lay in the hospital bed several weeks after my stroke, I cried out to God. I asked him, "If I can't pick up my children and I can't do chores or cook dinner for my family, if I can't travel or help my husband with the demands of home and I can't sing like I always have, then what good am I? Who am I?" For one of the only times in my life, I heard an audible voice speak to my spirit: "you are good because you are my daughter. You are enough because you are my child. That's all you need to be."

I am now facing the choice, every hour of every day, to embrace an identity not marked by doing, but by just being. Being *his* daughter. Being weak. Maybe, this is just a new level in my Christ-identity. He was, after all, the Man of Sorrows, made weak when he had all the strength in the world.

Richard Rohr says it this way: "Jesus' most common and almost exclusive self-name is 'Son of Humanity.' Jesus' reality, his cross, is to say a free "yes" to what humanity finally asks of him. It seems that we Christians have been worshipping Jesus' journey instead of doing his journey. The first feels very religious; the second just feels human, and not glorious at all."

Can we, as followers of The Way, rest in knowing that our identities are not



our ministries, our roles, our abilities, our jobs, but, rather, our adoption into the family of God? Can we encourage this in one another? Can we allow each other to be enough simply because our lungs carry breath and our hearts pump? Can we love Christ in ourselves and in one another without presumption or expectation? What if St. Andrew's was marked by an overwhelming kindness and gentleness to Christ in each other, and we saw weaknesses as an opportunity for supernatural empowerment?

It's one thing to talk about an upside-down-kingdom, where the last will be first and the weak will be strong. It's another thing to embrace it. It's another to trust it.

I vacillate between acceptance and culture shock in this new reality of weakness. However, I believe in the word proclaimed over me all those years ago: "therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come;" 'my power is made perfect in weakness;' 'do not lose heart. Though outwardly, we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.'

You, brothers and sisters – you are a son, a daughter. That is enough. You are enough.

Your weaknesses don't keep you out of the story – they are the story.



ESPERANZA: SPANISH FOR HOPE

By Santi Amoakohene

In 2012, I began volunteering at the Esperanza Hope Free Clinic in Southwest Little Rock. Through St. Andrew's weekly announcements, I learned that the clinic needed volunteers who could speak Spanish and English. I was quite excited to help with Spanish-speaking people because my travels throughout Latin America and my friendships with Latin Americans living in the states have been a source of great joy in my life. Learning the Spanish language and about Latin American cultures is one of the highlights of my life. I wanted to serve as a translator at Esperanza Clinic to give back a little of what the Latin American people have given me. As is usually the case, my experience volunteering has proven a continual blessing to me, even as I have sought to bless others. Working at the clinic has allowed me to experience the warmth and kindness of Latino culture, as if I were still overseas.

More importantly, I have been moved by the fact that by partnering with Esperanza, I get to be a part of showing mercy to foreigners living among us. Years ago, while I was a student at Wheaton College, political debates surrounding illegal immigration across

the country were fierce. I am thankful for the opportunity I had to grapple with the issues inside a community of faith and to consider Biblically-based, Christian responses. It was during this time that my eyes were opened to many historical factors that influenced the present-day economic situation in which so many immigrants find themselves; I came to understand to a greater degree the desperation that propels millions of people on an uncertain and dangerous journey in search of a better life in the U.S.

For all these reasons and more, my heart went out to the patients I helped at the clinic. Many shared with me that they were believers. We would pray together, and my heart would turn in my chest as I realized that these were my brothers and sisters in the faith struggling through such hard times. They missed their families back home, including their own children, whom they hadn't seen in years. They needed to send money back for their elderly parents to receive medical care. They didn't understand their children, who were growing up in America and wanted to speak only English and seemed to be ashamed of being Hispanic.

Working at Esperanza Clinic afforded me the blessing of being able to see those who came in for care as human beings made in the image of God, many of whom are even part of the Body of Christ. As I consider the Scriptures that make it clear that God cares about the vulnerable foreigner in the land, I can say that it has been an honor to be a part of spreading love and hope.



⁹ "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God. ... ³³ "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:9-10, 33-34

GIG CLOTHING STORE

Joann Robinette was one of the first kitchen workers for Growing in Grace (GiG). Each week, she and the other volunteers would receive requests for clothing from some of the people coming from the various rehab facilities or transitional houses. To meet some of those requests, she or Donna Blair would pick up second-hand clothes at yard sales or thrift stores. This became a hobby for Joann. She calls herself a "born junker" and loves the thrill searching yard sales and recycling used items to meet real needs. Over time, a few parishioners made it a habit to leave donations of clothing inside the kitchen back

door.

Eventually, clothing racks were purchased and Joann and Mary Lou Rodman, another regular volunteer, moved her impromptu clothing "store" out into the Narthex. Each week, Joann now arrives a few hours early on Wednesdays to set out the newest collection of donated clothing, towels and other toiletries for GiG participants.

The GiG "store" is a ministry that arose out of a need. Many GiG attendees come to the rehab programs with nothing but the clothing on their backs. For some, having a towel to call their own is a blessing in transitional housing. Their needs are met

out of our abundance. The response of the recipients is gratitude, surprised that they can receive clothing and towels for free. The shopping experience also provides a great icebreaker to someone who is new to GiG. Each Wednesday, you can usually find a group of chattering young women enjoying their shopping experience.

Joann encourages parishioners to continue to contribute to the closet because the need is never fully met. As winter approaches, jackets and jeans are key items needed. If you have some used, but clean, clothing to donate, please label them "GiG" and drop them off in the church office.

Jamie George, Church-Planting Pastor

A NEW ADVENTURE

One of the things you may not know about me is that I really enjoy a great story. While I don't read fiction books as much as I'd like, I do enjoy watching movies that try to take great stories and tell it through film. There's something about reading or watching a great story and seeing all the twists and turns that occur as the story unfolds that is so enjoyable. A great story will pull you in and allow you to experience, through your emotions, all that is taking place in the story. While a great story can make you feel like you went on a grand adventure, it never replaces taking a real life adventure. For example, when we read great stories told in the Bible, we too can get drawn in and feel like we just went on those adventures with Noah, Joshua, Esther, Paul, etc. What if by faith we chose to believe Jesus not only saves us, but has and is calling us to live into the greatest story ever — his story of redemption. In 2004, I placed my faith in Jesus and now by faith I live as one of God's children — not a perfect one mind you.

The past ten years have been filled with the ups and downs of life, and I won't try to share all of them here. But I would like to share a little about the adventure my family and I have been on this year — with unknown twists and turns that we had not anticipated. We went from living and serving a church in Colorado, to living in Kansas while trying to discern a call to plant churches, then to North Little Rock to partner with St Andrew's Church in planting churches. When we accepted the call to come here, we knew we would be joining a group of people that believed God was calling them to reach the lost and make disciples in their own backyard. Over the past few months, God has been weaving our stories together into his story and has been increasing our love for one another that only comes through being together. I am also very grateful for all of the support St. Andrew's has and is providing through

it's people, especially the staff and clergy who have welcomed me as a member of a loving and fun family. Some of you are partnering with us through prayer, while others are telling and encouraging friends and family members about this new church plant. No matter how you contribute, you join us in God's redemptive saga. And, as I mentioned earlier, there is no way better to enjoy the story than to enter into it.

Over the past few months I have been praying that God would lead and bring the people he wants to use to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples to join the St. Peter's Church-plant. During this time, my Church-planting coach, Alan Hughes, has been helping me think through and develop a plan for gathering a Launch Team and how we will serve together in fulfilling the Great Commission. As we devote ourselves to prayer, make plans and begin moving forward with them, I continue to ask our Lord to send the people he is calling to join us on the journey. It has been wonderful meeting new people and hearing how God is opening up their hearts and imagination to uniting their stories with ours.

As I continue living into this story, God opens my mind to things that might seem impossible to some. One example is that almost every time I drive by Verizon Arena, I like to image that God will use St. Peter's Church-plant to reach enough unbelievers to fill the arena with 18,000 new devoted followers of Jesus. I know we cannot do it

in and of ourselves, but I believe it is possible with God's help!

Part of what makes me believe this is possible is because the Holy Spirit has been affirming that what happened in the Book of Acts is still possible today. I have shared with the Launch Team that God has us in an Acts moment right now. We are devoting ourselves to prayer as we wait on the Holy Spirit to send us out and begin to prepare to take the Good News into our neighborhoods, work places, etc. by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When I became a follower of Jesus, I never imagined he would call me to plant churches in the heart of the Bible-belt, but that is exactly where he has lead my family and me. The journey hasn't been easy nor has it always been fun, but as I continue to follow Jesus, I learn more and more what it means that God is faithful and that his love for my family and me surpasses my understanding.

How are you living into God's redemptive story right now? My prayer is that he would fill you with a holy desire to live more fully into his will and purpose to proclaim the Good News anywhere and everywhere. And maybe, just maybe, it begins with you joining us in St. Andrew's first church plant in North Little Rock?



ST. PETER'S PRAYER WALK

The next St. Peter's prayer walk will be on Saturday, December 6, in the Lakewood area of North Little Rock. We will meet at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (5900 John F. Kennedy Blvd, North Little Rock) at 9:30 a.m. to get organized and have refreshments. The prayer walk will last about an hour. Afterward, we will regroup and discuss our experiences. If you plan to attend, please sign up by emailing Nelson Mayhew (ngldmayh@cebridge.net).

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10 p.m. – Traditional Candlelight Service

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