



The

September 2023

# Spirit



# From the Rector

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THE REV. ROB HARRIS

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Contentment can be elusive, as we all navigate this fickle human condition. With God, Gratitude, Good friends and Good deeds, we can get close to finding it.

## 1. God First

As human beings, we tend to pursue bigger, better, faster and stronger. These are good goals, if kept in perspective. We might want a bigger number of customers to keep our business flush. We might strive to run our business better –more efficiently. Accomplishing jobs faster means we have more time for our spouses and families. Being stronger means we can recover from illnesses and injuries sooner, or live longer for our loved ones.

But when we think of these four superlative adjectives, bigger, better, faster, stronger, in regard to ourselves NOT being enough, then we cannot be content.

Time with **God first thing** in the morning reminds us that we do enough, we have enough, we are enough. His love is unconditional! Goals are good, but so is loving ourselves *right where we are*.

## 2. Gratitude

Studies have shown that whenever we get upset about something or in a general funk, speaking out loud a **gratitude list**, or writing one down, immediately lifts our mood.

We can begin with the non-leaky roof over our heads, a working vehicle in the garage (Yay! we have a garage)! – plenty of food to eat daily, despite how ridiculously expensive that has become, our healthy children, our spouse, our own health. All of a sudden, some petty thing loses its power over our outlook.

I was at sixes and sevens the other day – discontent with certain things in my life which have not panned out the way I'd hoped, and then I had a conversation with a dear friend who told me that when she was younger, she had *30 surgeries in 5 years*. Whoa. My internal, negative flotsam and jetsam shut up immediately. The extent of my surgeries in 59 years is one, measly C-section. I admire this lady so much for her faith and her **“patience in affliction”**.

## 3. Good Friends

We've all had the kind of “friends” who are jealous, competitive, and untrustworthy with confidence. The kind of friends we need to do life with are those safe, encouraging, funny ones who have our best interests at heart. These blessed beings can whip us out of our brooding with one funny quip. They can help us with good opinions which are not crammed down our throats in a patronizing way but dispensed with humility and respect. They are in the trenches with us, always. When we find our tribe, we feel as content as possible, despite all the vagaries this human life dishes out!

“A true friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one has a treasure.” **Sirach**

## 4. Good Deeds

When we have an important life purpose, we get more contentment. This can be raising our precious children, tithing to worthy causes around the world, serving meals at the soup kitchen or listening to someone going through a rough time. Any time we are giving our time, talent and treasure, we feel more contentment. We know we are doing all we can on this Earth, and acting as God's hands and feet. When we are sharing our resources with others, our problems shrink.

I love Apostle Paul's words: “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry,

whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.” Phil. 4:11-13

**Tony Dungy, Incredible Football Coach and Believer**

Tony Dungy has an acronym that he instills in his players: S. O. U. L.

Selflessness, Ownership, Unity and Larger Purpose. I believe these four values breed contentment. We want to respect others in our lives, as we hope they respect us, for group harmony. We want to own our mistakes and humbly apologize for them. We want to practice God’s unity, not Satan’s division. We all desperately need a larger purpose.

When we realize we are a part of something so much greater than ourselves, we are suffused with contentment. We are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are aching fallible, but we have tools, when things go awry, which help us reunite with each other.

Through the practice of the Four Gs, and Tony Dungy’s S. O. U. L., every single one of us can become more content! +



## Weekly at St. Christopher’s

### Sundays

- 8:30 a.m. Rite One Worship
- 9:30 a.m. Christian Education  
(Cranmer’s Church)
- 10:30 a.m. Rite Two Worship

### Tuesdays

- 9:00 a.m. Men’s Bible Study

### Thursdays

- 8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer
- 11:00 a.m. Women’s Study  
(The Way of Love)
- 5:00 p.m. Middle School Youth
- 6:30 p.m. High School Youth

*“Let all that  
you do be  
done in love.”*

-1 Corinthians 16:14

## FALL KICK-OFF & POTLUCK

One Service at 10:00 a.m.

followed by a potluck lunch and ministry fair.



# Server Schedules

8:30 a.m.

Date	Lector	Chalice
3	Bill Davidson	
10	Terry Patrick	Terry Patrick
17	Bill Davidson	
24	Terry Patrick	Terry Patrick

10:30 a.m.

Date	Lector	Chalice
3	Denise Collyer	David Collyer
10	Sandra Haldeman	Sandra Haldeman
17	Mary Beth Wright	Don Wright
24	Crol Lee	Tom Lee

**Upcoming Events**

September 10: Fall Kick-Off & Potluck

October 8: Blessing of the Animals

October 29: All Souls' Remembrance



## Cottage Shop Donations

We are in need of winter clothing and Christmas items. Donations need to be at the church by November 1, 2023, please.

For more information contact Denise Collyer at 830-688-6987



# Around the Diocese of West Texas

## Daughters of the King®

### 2023 Fall Assembly : September 15 -16

Join the diocesan Order of the Daughters of the King® for their Fall Assembly, September 15 - 16 at St. Alban's, Harlingen. The program is entitled, "Perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this." Current Daughters and those interested in becoming Daughters are invited. Registration deadline is September 5.

### Small Church Regional Gathering: "Outreach to Reaching Out:" September 16

The second Small Church Regional Gathering, "Outreach to Reaching Out" will take place at All Saints', San Benito on Saturday, September 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Beginning with coffee and time to get acquainted, presenters will share best practices that work for hosting online services and stewardship. Small group discussion and question time will be included throughout the day; lunch will be provided. Everyone interested in learning more about Small Church ministry is invited to this encouraging and informative gathering!

## Camp Capers Fall Service Work Weekend: September 29 - October 1

Families, couples and individuals are invited to a new service-oriented weekend designed to help Camp Capers with various work projects and offer an enjoyable weekend at your home on the Guadalupe River, Camp Capers.

### 52nd Annual Diocesan Silent Retreat: November 9 - 12

The 52nd Annual Diocesan Silent Retreat will take place at Mustang Island Conference Center, November 9 - 12, with the Rev. Nancy Springer, Associate Rector of St. Francis, Canyon Lake, serving as Retreat Conductor. The weekend is anchored in praying the Daily Offices together, personal reflection, and enriched by the conductor's meditations. Abundant free time will be afforded to encourage solitary reflection, deep rest and renewal.

Registration is open online for the Fishin' for Mission Tournament, taking place September 22 - 23 and benefiting World Missions.

Registration is open online for the 18th Annual Bishop's Golf Classic, taking place Friday, November 3 and benefiting Camps & Conferences.

**Diocesan Immigration & Refugee Ministries** has issued an urgent request for baby clothing, bottles, infant formula, other supplies, and volunteers for the Plaza de Paz Respite Center in response to increasing numbers of families with toddlers and babies at the center. New and gently used infant and toddler clothing (sizes Premie to 4T) can be delivered to the Bishop Jones Center; items may be purchased through their Amazon List and Walmart List.

**Laity and clergy are invited to a diocesan Ministry Summit featuring Mary Foster Parmer, founder of *Invite Welcome Connect*, on Saturday, September 16 at Christ Church, San Antonio.**

*Invite Welcome Connect* equips and empowers individuals and congregations to practice evangelism, hospitality, and connectedness, guided by the gospel imperative to "Go and make disciples of all nations."

## Invite

Proclaiming by word and example the good news of God in Christ is an excellent definition of evangelism, and Episcopalians answer this question in the Baptismal Covenant with a resounding, "I will, with God's help!" So why then do we find it so difficult to say the word evangelism, much less talk about our faith or invite someone to church?

There's something primal about our desire to be welcomed; our need to be accepted and wanted is met; at least in part, when other people welcome us. Whether in a church or a family, unless we feel authentically welcomed, we remain outsiders, no matter how long we participate in the institution.

We are aware of these deeply human needs to be connected and welcomed. But for some reason, we don't give enough attention to our every-bit-as-real-need to be invited and to invite. I think part of the reason is that our desire to be invited and the yearning to invite others, while still primal, is higher up on sociologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs that our needs for connection and welcome. Perhaps that's part of the reason that Jesus, who always wants to move us from a limited, survival mentality to an expansive mentality of abundance, spends so much time inviting others and accepting invitation.

In the Gospel of Matthew, is "follow me, and I will make you fish for people" a command? Or is it an invitation to leave the supposed safety and security of what those fishermen know and discover what Jesus promises?

## Women's Fall Study Kicks Off

On Thursday, September 7, at 11:00 a.m. there will be a study in the Parish Hall for Women. Our initial study will follow Presiding Bishop Curry's "The Way of Love" curriculum. The study will be a combination of video presentations, Scriptural study, and conversation. Please join us and bring a lunch if you like.



## Labor Day: The Lost Christian Holiday?

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BRAD THIBIDEAUX

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It's not a Christian holiday like the others – it didn't come from the Church. However, the theme and spirit of the holiday is in line with Christianity. When we look back at American Christianity in the 19th and early 20th centuries, we see a large portion of the religious supporting

worker's rights. **The Social Gospel** was working through the congregations of the Northeast. **Walter Rauschenbusch** was a New York preacher known for his work with the Social Gospel.

**While the Social Gospel fell out of favor for many reasons**, there has always been a uniting thread in America. Martin Luther King picked up the Social Gospel and used the teachings of Jesus to propel the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, much of the Social Gospel was always a part of the Black Church in America. We see the parts of the Social Gospel in action today when churches work towards ending poverty, violence, and injustice on our soil.

But what happened to the Church's backing of the Labor Movement?

### **Labor and Unions**

The history of Labor Day starts at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. When work moved from the farm and trades to factories, there was an imbalance in power between the new owners and workers. Before, there was a person or family who was in charge of their own production. With the increase in factories, the boss was now in charge of the production, forcing the workers to work at *their* pace.

This led to extreme and dangerous working conditions with no protection for the worker. Unsafe machinery would maim or kill workers – men, women, and children. In order to protest these conditions and try to make changes, workers would unite and strike, or stop working until conditions were met. The first recorded strike was in 1768 with the New York tailors. They were protesting wage reductions.

More and more labor unions rose up to defend their workers. The National Labor Union was created in 1866 to set standards for the workday. The 5-day, 40-hour work week was a major victory brought by the unions. They also championed safer working conditions and eliminating child

labor in the early 20th century. The success of unions throughout history shows that collective action can help the marginalized.

I've written a lot about Christianity and different social changes. [THIS ARTICLE](#) is a great primer on my opinions on how labor, capital, and Christianity cohabit our society. Rather than review, let's talk about what the Bible says about wealth and humanity. While it's not a fair comparison – and I try to be balanced – I do think we can use the Bible to inform our lives today.

### **Economics According to Luke**

Jesus talks a lot about wealth and poverty. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses several parables to get across the need for the wealthy to do something with their abundance. The account starts with Mary's announcement (the Magnificat) of the change in power coming with the birth of Jesus. The rich will be "sent away empty" while the low will be raised and the hungry will be filled (Luke 1:52-53). This is good news according to Mary.

Luke 12 continues to talk about the hoarding of wealth. In this parable, the rich man has such a surplus that he needs bigger barns. This seems like the most logical thing to do, but it is foolish to God. "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" (Luke 12:20).

*"Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it. For wherever your treasure is, that is where your heart will be too."*

– Luke 12:33-34

Finally, in Luke 18, Jesus is met by a righteous man who has kept all of the laws since birth. He asks what is left to receive life, Jesus responds with a difficult commandment. "There is still one thing you lack. Sell everything you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'

But when he heard this he was overcome with sadness, for he was very rich.” (Luke 18:22–23). We get the infamous line here – “Yes, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:25)

### **What Now?**

It seems that unions and Christianity have plenty in common. While unions are not perfect, they strive to create a more equitable life for the working class. Labor Day is a holiday to remember the struggle of the American worker. Jesus’ concern was with the marginalized and forgotten of his day. Today, the forgotten class of people in America are the working class. This Labor Day, let’s take time to remember the working class and fight alongside them for the betterment of the country.

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## **St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church**

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### **The Diocese of West Texas**

The Right Reverend David M. Reed,

Bishop Diocesan

The Right Reverend David L. Reed,

Bishop Coadjutor

### **Staff**

The Reverend Rob Harris, Rector

Mrs. Amanda Johnson, Parish Administrator

Mrs. Deborah Jonas, Office Manager

Mr. Bill Davidson, Music Director/Organist

### **Vestry**

Mrs. Ann Hevenor, Sr. Warden; Mr. Milam Boyle, Jr. Warden; Mrs. Mary Beth Wright, Clerk

Dr. Charels Rowett, Mr. Mike Mulherin, Mrs. Julie Allen, Mr. Jimmy Jordan