



THE ALL SAINTS' READER

*"I am with you and
will watch over you
wherever you go."
Genesis 28:15*



A Message from The. Rev Rick Dunham

While serving as your supply priest during Father Jonathan's sabbatical, I not only work with the worship teams to plan and celebrate our worship services, I am also available for your pastoral care needs, primarily through phone visits while we are still under Covid-19 precautions.

If you find yourself needing prayers or assistance during difficult times, I invite you to email Janine Canady at janine@allsaints-cc.org. If you have questions about planning a baptism, wedding, or funeral, I can be a resource for that as well.

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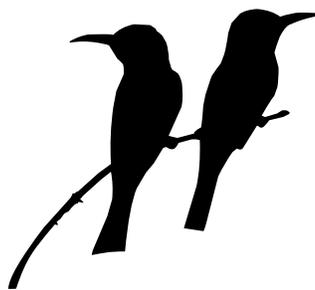
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All Saints' Reads

A BOOK BLOG CURATED BY ALICE BERECKA



Editor's Note: All Saints' Reads is a book blog that highlights key moments readers from our Adult Formation classes have had while reading. The blog acts as a space for personal reflection, with the hope that the wisdom gained by the writer reveals a universal truth for the reader. What follows is Alice Berecka's introduction to the blog. To contribute to All Saints' Reads, email Alice Berecka at alice.berecka@gmail.com.

In her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Anne Lamott says, "For some of us, books are as important as almost anything else on earth. What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid squares of paper unfolds world after world after world, worlds that sing to you, comfort and quiet or excite you. Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die."



Lamott's words help me remember how I discovered the joy that "flat, rigid squares of paper" can bring when my mother took us on weekly trips to the Casa Linda Library in Dallas, Texas.

I was in 3rd grade when our nuclear family (mom, dad, and two younger sisters) moved away from our home in Kansas City, Missouri, leaving behind grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and my best friend. That year, reading became an escape from the terrors of a new school and a new neighborhood. I would hide away in my bedroom (or in the closet after bedtime with the flashlight I had hidden away) and devour Nancy Drew and Trixie Belden mysteries. "Just one more chapter" I would beg my mother when she asked me to empty the dishwasher or set the table.

Once, when I was supposed to be minding my father's lunch on the stove but instead had my nose stuck in a book, a small kitchen fire ensued. My father rushed in to put out the flames, saving his lunch and the kitchen. This event has become family lore, one of those stories that gets repeated at every family gathering, much to the delight of my own children.

"This event has become family lore, one of those stories that gets repeated at every family gathering, much to the delight of my own children."

DAILY OFFICE SCHEDULE

Mondays

6:30 AM - Morning Prayer

9:00 PM - Night Prayer

Tuesdays

6:30 AM - Morning Prayer

9:00 PM - Night Prayer

Wednesdays

6:30 AM - Morning Prayer

9:00 PM - Night Prayer

Thursdays

6:30 AM - Morning Prayer

9:00 PM - Night Prayer

Fridays

6:30 AM - Morning Prayer

9:00 PM - Night Prayer

Via Facebook Live:

https://www.facebook.com/all_saintscctx

At 22 I started teaching English— a career I enjoyed for the next 40 years. I told my students that the curriculum was simple: we were going to read great authors, talk about wonderful books, and write about what we were reading. My favorite days were library days; I loved taking a book off the shelf, putting it in the hands of a student, and saying, “You are going to love this book.” Reading with students taught me the joy and value of diving into a book together— of reading as a communal and social activity, not just a solitary one.

Towards the end of my career, I looked forward to retirement as a time when I would finally have the opportunity to get to the books at the bottom of my TBR (“to be read”) pile— the ones that had been languishing on my nightstand for years. The problem was: I feared losing that communal reading experience I enjoyed in the classroom. Then, it hit me. For several years prior to my retirement, I had longed to be part of the Wisdom class at All Saints; but, while teaching, I didn’t have the time.

Two weeks after my retirement in May, I joined the Wisdom Class at All Saints'.

The Wisdom Class led to more book groups at All Saints'. Here, I have found a different type of classroom— a place to explore new authors like Richard Rohr and Parker J. Palmer, among others, who address spiritual, philosophical, and social justice issues.



During this year of the pandemic, these book groups have fed my soul. Even though we can’t meet in person (and enjoy the tasty cookies and muffins Jan Hilton bakes for each member’s birthday), listening to so many voices and viewpoints and life experiences through our weekly Zoom sessions has helped me feel connected in a world where “social distancing” is the new catch phrase. As Jan said in last week’s class, “Connections between people are what sustain us.” What a joy — that even at times like these — we can be connected as a community between the pages of a book and in the frames of a Zoom call!

Lamott reminds us that books teach us about community and friendship; they “show us how to live and die.”

Now, I find myself here with a "book blog." I want All Saints' Reads to be a place to ponder take-aways from our discussions in EFM, Deep Shift, Wisdom Class, and other book groups at All Saints'. This is a place where many voices and experiences will be heard— not just mine. So, I am asking you, Dear Reader, to share with me something that, as Lamott might say, brings you "comfort or quiet or excite[s] you." ♦

On 2020's Pledge Statements

BY JUAN MARTINEZ, SR. WARDEN

As we begin the new year, we would like to thank the parish for their continued support of All Saints' Episcopal Church.

2020 was certainly a challenging year, and 2021 has it's own uncertainty. As we mail out the 2020 pledge statements, we are filled with gratitude for the generosity of our congregation, especially in this very strange past year.

Having said that, we did have three unexpected finance staff changes during 2020. Therefore, there is a possibility of error in your pledge statements. In the event that you do discover an error in your pledge statement, please email Janine at Janine@allsaints-cc.org so that we can correct any problem right away.

And, of course, it's never too late to send in your new 2021 pledge, either by mail or [online](#).

Adopt A Caseworker: Easter Basket

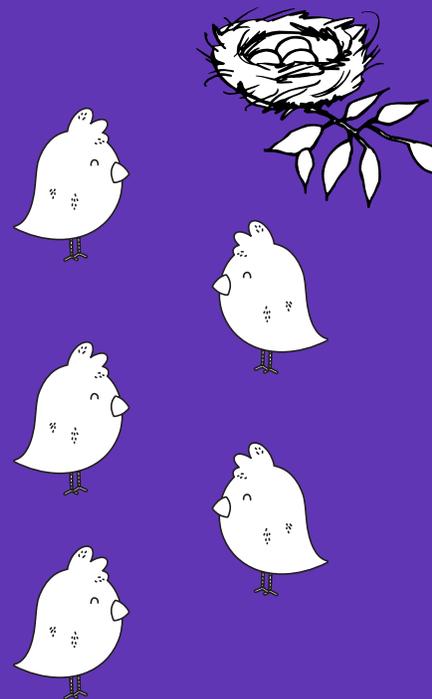
On behalf of All Saints', Jan Hilton invites you to "adopt a caseworker" this Easter.

Jan asks that the parish of All Saints' to contribute in her effort to give 30 easter baskets to kids in need by March 17th.

To Adopt A Caseworker and donate an Easter Basket, please [click here](#) to fill out a contact card or email Jan Hilton directly at jananehilton@gmail.com.

Typically, baskets are bought. But, last year, due to Covid-19, Jan Hilton bought the ingredients for the baskets and put them together herself.

This year, we ask parish members to contribute in any way they can. Whether you'd like to make a cash donation of \$35.00 to help purchase ingredients for a basket or purchase the Easter basket yourself, we know that, together, we can reach Jan's goal of 30 baskets.



You Feed Them

BY CHUCK ETHERIDGE



I've always been taught that if somebody is hungry you feed them. It's a basic act of human decency. Forget the politics. Forget trying to analyze the situation that made them hungry. Forget blame. If someone is hungry and you have the ability you help. It goes doubly if there are children in need.

This past weekend, my wife Diana and I went with a couple of people to do some relief work at one of the camps in Matamoros, Mexico where asylum seekers are waiting for the chance to enter the U.S. legally. Along with our priest Father Jonathan and a friend named Donna, we took a car full of gifts donated by our church— air mattresses, cook pots, and a couple hundred pounds of food. We were also armed with a generous cash donation from the parishioners to buy needed materials.

Our first stop after leaving Corpus was the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, about a 2 ½ hour drive. It was a big place — essentially a homeless shelter that could house hundreds of people. There were eight people staying there, all of whom were from African countries. Along with some other volunteers,

Diana and I cleaned and mopped the floors, and then we divided up the big bags of supplies we'd brought — rice and beans and salt and sugar — into smaller bags suitable for distribution to individual families. Father Jonathan and Donna went with Willie, a volunteer at the Respite Center, to buy more supplies at Sam's Club.

The volunteers were an interesting group. A truck driver from Nebraska, a lawyer from Chicago, a couple of retired school teachers from Western Massachusetts— there didn't seem to be a common denominator among any of them except that all had been drawn to the border because they heard people needed help and they wanted to do something about it. Some were down for a few days or a week, others were staying a month or more (these were the retirees).

One of them, named Willie, coordinates the trips into Matamoros to deliver supplies.

Before long, all the supplies, including at least 20 gallons of milk, were loaded into two vehicles— one of the retiree's vans and Father Jonathan's truck. We also loaded a bunch of wagons. Before we left, we were advised to buy tee shirts identifying us as volunteers with Catholic World Charities. "It'll make things easier," we were told. All of us did. I always did look good in teal, anyway.

We drove south for an hour to Brownsville and to the bridge over into Matamoros. Once we got there, it was in some ways reminiscent of my childhood on the Texas/Mexico border in El Paso. You could drive into Mexico or you could park and walk over. The city of Brownsville even provided Park and Pay lots if you wanted to walk (this was different from El Paso; we always left our car in the parking lot of a laundry whose owner we knew). It was different in other ways; when I was growing up, you simply walked into Mexico, did what you had to do, and came back. Sunday afternoon shopping was pretty common, and my father and his coworkers would often duck over to Juarez for a quick lunch at one of the restaurants they liked.

But now, getting into and getting out of Mexico is more complicated; Diana and I both had to show our passports, something I never had to do when I was young.

Once parked, we loaded the supplies into wagons and started walking toward the bridge. Willie led the way. Here's where the tee shirts paid off; the *Federales* (Federal Police from Mexico) guarding the border clearly recognized the shirts, and they held the turnstile gate open so we could pass. They were pleasant and greeted us. Then, we began the long trudge over the bridge. I don't know how much was loaded into each cart, but each probably weighed a hundred pounds if not more (the ones with the milk weighed more), and the bridge was steep. Once into what was officially Mexican territory, we had to stop and have our carts inspected. The guards were quick, efficient, and courteous. They verified that we were transporting what we said we were — mostly food, with some other supplies — and sent us on our way.

We saw the camp as soon as we cross the bridge. It's pressed into a triangle of land between the bridge and the Rio Grande. From the outside, it looked foreboding— rusted fence, some razor wire, and water that's been dumped. There were police along the fence. As I got closer, I realized that the people in the camp weren't prisoners— there were openings in the fence and people could come and go. The police seemed to be like most beat cops you see around the world— keeping an eye on things in general.

As we entered, I realized that many if not most of the people in the camp stay in tents, like the kind families camp in. They were packed in close to one

another, but were in ordered rows with lanes so that foot traffic can get through. There were also rows of Port a Potties, a central place for people to wash clothes, and big tanks full of drinkable water. It was clear that someone on the Mexico side, whether it is the government or a charity or companies, were putting some effort into making sure these people had sanitary bathroom facilities (there were a couple of dozen Port a Potties, and it didn't smell).

This elementary school aged girl from Honduras wasn't afraid to tell a lawyer from Chicago that he was doing it wrong.

Willie led us to a “tent neighborhood” that had once been a covered concrete court. Catholic Charities has two tents on the end that are full of tables and chairs; Willie and a woman who worked for a charity on the Mexico side directed us to begin setting up tables. A little girl, about ten, began parking the carts and helping us set up tables. People began to line up. Diana, a woman from the Mexican charity, and some of the other folk began passing out glasses of fresh milk to the children.

Father Jonathan, Donna, and I joined the other volunteers, making bags to give up each family— a can of beans, two pounds dry beans, another two pounds of rice, a pound of sugar, and a zip lock baggie full of salt for each family. The little girl who'd helped us

set up the tables joined in. I chatted with her a bit. She told me her name was Dahlia [I've changed her name], that she is ten years old, and that she's from Honduras. She's been in the camp in Matamoros for seven months. Dahlia has the makings of management; one of the volunteers got sloppy and was not paying attention as he made up a bag, and she said, “*¡No! Solo un poco de sal, no dos*” (No, only one salt, not two). This elementary school aged girl from Honduras wasn't afraid to tell a lawyer from Chicago that he was doing it wrong.

I noticed other things as we worked: People lined up, but waited; they didn't crowd, they didn't push; the adults made sure all the kids present got milk. I also notice that the children were clean, their hair was brushed, and their clothes were neat. Parents were clearly making an effort to make sure their children were taken care of. The children also played— they would chase each other or play TAG. If one had a toy they would play with it. This might not seem odd, but I've been in places like this camp around the world, and often, children whose parents have faced difficult situations don't play— they are silent, sullen, and scared. The fact that these children, most of whom were Honduran, still were playing was proof positive that their parents efforts to give them a sense of normalcy were succeeding.

Moms corrected misbehaving children. Dads kept an eye on things. Families still functioned.

Once the kids were given milk, we began to pass out bags of food. Nearly every person who got one thanked us. Not a perfunctory “Thanks,” but a look-you-in-the-eye, make-a-connection-with-you-as-a-person *Gracias* or *Muchas Gracias*. And when we ran out because, sadly, there is never enough, the people who didn’t get a bag didn’t express anger — although, I’m sure they must have been disappointed — and thanked us for coming.

I talked to as many people as I could. Dahlia said that someone came once a week for two hours on Sunday and taught them writing. She said she’d like to learn more, but that she loved writing (something sure to warm an English teacher’s heart). Another woman, who’d been there longer, said she had a sister in Chicago and hoped to get a chance to join her. Another said that U.S. officials came weekly but only were able to interview 15 people (or families) a week. There are at least 5,000 people in that camp.

These people continue to live in hope. They left Honduras because of political suppression, violent crime, or poverty so grinding they could not support their families. They came north hoping for a chance at a better life. They are “trying to do things right,” meaning: they are trying to go through the procedures to enter the U.S. legally. They do this— they keep up hope, try to raise their children well, and they do this while living in tents with an unsure supply of food.

Dahlia held Diana’s hand as we walked to the exit of the camp. She kept asking when we are coming back.

¿Mañana? No, we weren’t coming back the next day. *¿La próxima semana?* No, we’re not coming back next week. All we could say was that we would come back, although we didn’t know when. It didn’t seem like enough, but we owed this girl the truth.

When we walked back across the bridge, again the teal tee shirts did their magic. U.S. authorities seemed to



recognize us as relief workers; they were courteous, holding gates for us as we rolled the wagons through. We were checked, as we were when we entered Mexico, and once it was clear we were who we said we were, we were cleared quickly to go on our way.

As we left, I was aware of how little we were able to do in the face of the overwhelming need we met. We didn’t make a dent in the hunger— we weren’t even able to feed all of the people in the little Honduran enclave we’d stopped in. However, as a result of the generosity of our church and the efforts of the people from the Humanitarian Relief Center, some people were fed who wouldn’t have been otherwise.

Again, let me emphasize that I’m not interested in the politics or cause of the situation, or who is or is not to blame. People are hungry. People are in need. You show up to help them.

I have included some pictures. I deliberately am not showing pictures of the people; I’m not interested in “Poverty Porn,” or in exploiting the problems of others. I do think it’s important to see where and how people are living. If you are interested in helping, there are many organizations that are trying to help feed and shelter those who need help. If you need a specific one, the Humanitarian Respite Center is a good place to start. ♦

Arlene's Corner

BY ARLENE LONG

Editor's Note: Arlene's Corner is a space for All Saints' Music Director Arlene Long to ponder music, discuss themes, and explore the significance of the music chosen for Sunday Worship at All Saints'.

How do I listen to music in church? There's the beat, perhaps. A melody, maybe. Some harmonic structure and form. Words, sometimes. All those elements can happen. But if I go deeper, I may notice an internal shift in mood, focus, feeling, and energy flow.

When I choose music, it's that "deeper" thing I'm going for. Much of the time I feel like a juggler, balancing liturgical season and all that implies; Lessons, starting with the Gospel; text of the music; energy and the mood of the music itself. The experience of listening may take us into a variety of responses: contemplation, grief, expansiveness, empathy, curiosity. We then focus on our response, perhaps letting the music become the backdrop to our own inner world, and time suspended.

I invite you to notice what happens as you listen to music in church. I welcome your comments and, quoting Julia Cameron, welcome you to listen, because "[l]istening, really listening, casts us into the present moment."

"Sixteen Words"

The last Sunday morning that Mother Cynthia was at All Saints', she walked around the nave speaking to the five or six of us that make up the "production team" for online worship. As we prepare for the service, there is usually some banter mixed with mic checks, etc. But, on this day, I kept hearing her say: "Let Truth be told. Let Love be lived; Let Hope be real. Let peace be lasting." Eventually, I took it as a mantra of sorts and scribbled it on top of my music page.

Later, driving home from church, it occurred to me to set these words to music; they might come in handy sometime if we wanted a simple little tune. So was born "Sixteen Words" carrying simple, profound thoughts, each starting with "Let." I took this verb to let me know I was not being asked to "do" something profound, but simply to allow it to happen.





All are welcome.