



PATHFINDERS CIRCLE GROUP

Reflection of the Month

As part of the Genesis initiative for parish re-visioning and renewal, Holy Comforter parishioners were invited to reflect on one topic each month beginning in September, and to share their responses with the Genesis team.

Here are the four topics:

Sep: **At this point in your life, why are you here at Holy Comforter?**

Oct: **What glimpses of God's kingdom have you seen here at Holy Comforter?**

Nov: **What parts of Holy Comforter's legacy, stories, or traditions are you most thankful for?**

Dec: **In this season of Incarnation, what new ways of being church should we be open to?**

Keep reading to see parishioners' responses to these Reflection topics.



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GENESIS II
Re-Vision and Renew

September Reflections

At this point in your life, why are you here at Holy Comforter?

To be closer to God.

To share in worship, to learn, to be with others, to pray.

To walk with my neighbors as we find what God calls us to do.

I believe that the church, city, world need the Way of Love Jesus taught. I believe in Holy Comforter's distinct call at this time in our history. We are CALLED.

Ten years ago this month, my husband and I came to Holy Comforter for the first time – the day before we even met with a realtor to start looking for a house in Charlotte. We walked out of HoCo knowing that we had a church home – We're here because we're supposed to be.



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GENESIS II
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October Reflections

What glimpses of God's kingdom have you seen here at Holy Comforter?

Loaves & Fishes

Hearing & singing the hymns

Patrick's marvelous music ministry

The children & diversity of Community Dinner

Every time the preschool kids gather, it looks like Jesus

Mason Gash's funeral was like the heavens parting to embrace him

Room in the Inn: the joy and gratitude of the guests at dinner was contagious!

In the time and talents people are willing to sacrifice to play their role in the creation of God's

Kingdom in both the church and the community... time that they really don't "have".

The Concert for the Human Family, expressing Beloved Community in original music, lifting souls.

Thin Places

by Wil Bosbyshell

What is the line between this world and others? What is the line between imagination and reality? When does magic become real? When does God show himself to mortals? Do people today and our long-gone ancestors ever meet, if even for a moment?

Maybe all realities past and present, the current reality and imagination come together in certain places. Maybe there are places or times when the lines or boundaries between this world and the next become thin.

The three-year-old boy stood in the first pew, next to his father and mother, one row in front of me. He was familiar with the make-believe worlds of TV and movies. In movies people wore uniforms and capes and participated in big events accompanied by grand music.

He was staring with complete focus at the Episcopal church service unfolding in front of him. His nose and eyes barely peeked over the pew. There, in the real world, were a lot of people in very fancy uniforms, some even with capes. The people were of all ages from teenagers to grandparents. The man in the cape spoke and directed the action. The boy recognized one of his babysitters dressed in a uniform, tall and pretty, carrying a large, shiny cross.

At times music swelled loudly from many, many large pipes sticking out of the wall. A line of people dressed in bright colors burst into song at times. Everyone knew their part, and everything went according to what seemed to be a complex plan. If a thing like this happens every week in church with costumes, music, lights, smoke, teens, adults, and choreographed motion then the shows he saw on TV must be real too. For the boy, imagination and reality joined.

“Papa, I can see the music notes coming out of those pipes and floating around and going into my ears,” the child said in a stage whisper back to his father.

Leaning forward the father put his mouth next to the boy’s ear whispering, “I see the music notes in the air too. The man over at that machine is playing them with his hands and feet.” The boy’s head moved as he heard the word, ‘feet.’ That was a surprise, something new. The boy continued to watch intently.

In the back of the nave the vergers tended to the incense. The smoke was wispy, scattering and flitting around through the air.

The boy’s father recalled his own father leading the service and felt his presence. His mind moved back in time to when he was himself a boy in another pew, in another place, listening and watching Christmas Eve service with his father at the altar and his mother in the pew beside him. For the father, past became present.

Three-year-old children can see between worlds where reality and imagination merge because they don't know they're not supposed to be able to do that.

At the end of the service the family walked out past the caped rector, the boy held his father’s and mother’s hands, skipping, “Church is really great,” he announced.



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GENESIS II
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November Reflections

What parts of Holy Comforter's legacy, stories, or traditions are you most thankful for?

Advent & Christmas services - candlelight Christmas Eve

Boy Scouting at Holy Comforter since 1913, first Troop in Mecklenburg County

Parish retreats, Loaves & Fishes, Pentecost Picnic & Oyster Roast, Darrow-Owens book event

The Tiffany window above the altar, in memory of Mary Lamb Smith, commissioned by her husband

Holy Comforter as a place where love grows ... and where we are doing our best to live into the vision of making Christ's transformative love known and shared.

The people of Holy Comforter who share their love of God with me in worship, formation, ministry, and fellowship, and in so doing, enrich my life and deepen my faith.

Holy Comforter's innovative spirit, open to new ways of responding to God's call to us as a parish and as a result, often being leaders in Charlotte and our diocese.

Our "via media" Anglican legacy that makes room for, welcomes, and celebrates diversity both in theological views and in how we each live in the world. This shows up at Holy Comforter's ministries, both our history and our present.

Inclusivity: of people with mental retardation such as Susan Powell serving as usher and soloist, of people on the Autism spectrum/neurodiverse, of different races and even religions (for many years, Jewish spouses of members), of different countries of origin, and more.

The saints among us:

- ◆ Virginia Sampson, who founded Loaves & Fishes here at Holy Comforter.
- ◆ Deacon Carter Lofton, who took us out of the building: to the Men's Shelter, Salvation Army Women's Shelter, the Emergency Winter Shelter, into the first year of Room in the Inn, and more. He took us on mission trips to Costa Rica, coordinated Habitat Builds (with his son, Chip), and generally pointed Holy Comforter toward our neighbors.
- ◆ Lib Holmberg, who nurtured preschool children at Holy Comforter for more than 50 years, much of that time with her friend Jean, while Lib's husband was typically at home with their disabled son.
- ◆ Carolyn Sherrill was Holy Comforter's first female senior warden. Not only was she female, but she was also divorced. She was a force for Holy Comforter.
- ◆ Polly Redd was shaped by growing up in Alabama and was a powerful anti-racism force. Nearly 40 years ago, she ensured that our women's retreat included women from St. Michael and All Angels, an historically Black Episcopal church.
- ◆ Rev. Phil Culp's protest against attending a racially segregated diocesan clergy meeting in the mid 1940s resulted in clergy meetings being integrated.
- ◆ Elaine Jordan and Elinor Caddell, our oldest two members, both with remarkable stories. Elaine was injured in an industrial accident and not expected to live, much less to walk again. She has done both, with amazing impact. Elinor was instrumental in starting UNC Charlotte's school of nursing, and lived for decades on Charlotte Drive near the church. She has some great stories.
- ◆ Gail and Tom Fennimore, each has done heroic service to the church and beyond. They have taken the "path less chosen" at many points in their lives, from enrolling their sons at West Charlotte to desegregate public schools to leading social justice at Holy Comforter.
- ◆ Beth Hardin, whose passion for God's people and Way of Love is tireless and shows up in many ministries of Holy Comforter, including those she initiated such as the HoCo Book Club, Facebook Live comments hosting, & Young Adult Tuesday Dinners.
- ◆ ... and many more saints too numerous to list here!



PATHFINDERS CIRCLE GROUP

December Reflections

In this season of Incarnation, what new ways of being church should we be open to?

Use nametags

Singing at Merrywood!

Community outreach music

Update the Book of Common Prayer

Visiting new arrivals in the neighborhood

We should have game night in Henry Hall

Joint worship services with other churches

Outdoor church at Freedom Park bandshell

Combine red/green hymnals, & use both red & green hymnals

Hit the road: take key services into the community, e.g., Ashes to Go/Ash Wednesday in a park

Ways to make our worship more accessible (understandable) to those not brought up in the Episcopal liturgical tradition