

# CURATE

## The Rev. Becca Walton

The welcome I've received as the All Saints' Curate has been incredibly gracious and kind. From the beautiful service and celebration on Pentecost to the time I write this, the congregation has been so loving and patient as I begin my priestly ministry and get to know Tupelo. I could not have asked for a more loving church, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve this community. My sincere thanks to Father Phillip, Deacon Billy, the staff, and vestry for their support of my ministry.

### Liturgy and Sacraments

In addition to preaching and presiding on alternating Sundays and Wednesdays, I officiate Morning Prayer at 8:30 a.m. Monday through Thursday. Morning Prayer has been an important part of my spiritual formation, so I wanted to share that experience with others. We have several faithful attendees, and more are always welcome! Additionally, I've introduced an offering of *lectio divina*. Each Thursday at 12:15 p.m. a small group of us gather to listen to and pray with the Gospel passage for the upcoming Sunday. Both Morning Prayer and *lectio* are also opportunities to enjoy the beautiful and sacred space of the Chapel.

With the assistance of Chaplain Terri Armstrong at Traceway Retirement Community, I've started a once-monthly Eucharist the first Tuesday of each month for All Saints' parishioners who live there. We started in September, and the service, which draws around ten people, has been a highlight of each month for me. Another new worship offering was our Longest Night service in December, which provided a contemplative space for people experiencing loss during the holiday season.

I am currently working with Albert White and the vergers team in recruiting and training new lectors, chalice bearers, acolytes, vergers, and thurifers. We are planning an information session and training for Sunday, February 5 after the 10:45am service.

### Pastoral Care

I see pastoral care as the heart of my priestly ministry. I have been so pleasantly surprised by the extensive efforts of the Lay Pastoral Care Team here, which rivals that of many much larger churches. They are a true gift to All Saints'. Working with Care Team chairs Margaret Anne Robbins and Joellen Murphree, I've helped create a way of tracking pastoral care needs and visits, so we can follow people through times of need, and provide consistent visits for those who cannot attend church. I work with Deacon Billy and Father Phillip to ensure that we're providing presence and the sacraments during hospitalizations, rehab, hospice, and throughout the grieving process for the bereaved. In the New Year, I plan to work with the clergy and Care Team on reviving our Lay Eucharistic Visitor ministry.

So far, I've focused on visits to homebound people, but I know there are many I've yet to see. This January, I began going through the directory and marking the names of those people I have not yet met. With the help of Tommie Moore, Nancy Sweat, Margaret Ann Robbins, and Joellen Murphree, I am identifying those I will contact in the coming months. If you have a need, or know of a situation I may have overlooked, please call or text me at 843.814.0411, email me at [becca@allsaintstupelo.org](mailto:becca@allsaintstupelo.org), or even better, come by and see me if you're able!

### **Teaching**

I taught our Youth Confirmation class this fall, and presented my spiritual autobiography at a potluck. In 2023, I plan to create a Lenten book study and other offerings on contemplative prayer.

### **Parish Life**

Soon after I started, I preached a sermon in which I defended the unjustly-maligned and hard-working Martha in the story of Mary and Martha. On that day, I discovered many kindred Marthas here at All Saints'. One of the most joyful days of my ministry here so far was the Property Committee's Martha Day in September, when 40 parishioners of all ages did manual labor to the glory of God. I am grateful to Wayne Averett, Tony Alford, and Junior Warden Stephen King for organizing the day.

Another joyful occasion for me this fall was our Open House. It was so wonderful to be together as a parish family. I'm grateful to all who blessed my home by coming, and Henry was grateful for all the appetizers you fed him and the scratches received!

Thank you to all who participated in our survey about the creation of small groups this fall. This hasn't been forgotten, I promise! We received many great suggestions, from supper clubs to pickleball teams, walking groups to coffee shop friends, as well as a great deal of interest in book clubs. In the new year the staff will begin working on how to get these started. We will need a good bit of lay leader help to get these off the ground, so please let me know how you're interested in helping in a particular area.

### **Outreach and Service**

At All Saints' we try each day to do the work Jesus has given us to do: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and welcome the stranger. This work is always incomplete, but I've loved being a part of the Tupelo branch of the body of Christ, seeking to make whole what is broken. The All Saints' office receives numerous requests for assistance each day, and each one is unique, calling for varied solutions. Secretary Nancy Sweat is our frontline in handling these requests, and I've learned a great deal from her and from the staffs of MUTEH (Mississippi United to End Homelessness) and SAFE (Shelter for Assistance in Family Emergencies). Tupelo has many resources available to help, and knowing how to refer people is essential to providing more sustainable solutions for those in need. I am very grateful to all who have generously contributed to the Curate's Discretionary Fund, which so far has bought numerous bus tickets home, assisted with prescriptions and medical care, bought shoes for people beginning new jobs, and provided assistance with rent and utilities. We are working with social workers at SAFE to assist people in obtaining birth certificates and state IDs, and the fees are paid through my Discretionary Fund.

In terms of community life, I am honored to have been asked to serve on the board of SAFE, Tupelo's domestic violence and sexual assault shelter. As part of my service there, I provide spiritual support for the staff and survivors, with a biweekly Bible study at the shelter and "office hours" for the staff. At the request of Executive Director Takiva Bell, I created and led a liturgy of blessing for the buildings that make up the shelter in October. I'm grateful to the All Saints' family for providing generous donations of towels and pillows to SAFE this fall. In December, I went with MUTEH staff members as part of their outreach to people who are in need of housing, spending time at the Salvation Army and walking encampments around the city. I hope to continue to learn from these organizations, which shine light into the darkest places.