



September 26, 2023

Dear friends,

I think I was around 5 years old when my parents bought their first house. A nice brick house with a circular driveway on an acre and a half of land out in the Mississippi countryside. Mom was overjoyed at finally having a house for her family. For a housewarming present, my grandmother gave us a small magnolia tree. It was, maybe, three feet tall. Mom planted this tree in the middle of what we called, “the circle.” A grass area made by the circle of the driveway. At first, this small tree looked out of place in that large circle, but that would change over time.

You can say I grew up with that magnolia tree. Over the years as I grew up, so did this tree. It’s trunk grew thicker over the years. It’s branches started to reach for the sky and out across the circle. Where it once looked out of place, over the years it took over the circle. In 2012 when my sister and I sold the house, after my parents passed, the magnolia tree was so large that, from the road in front of the house, you could not see the house behind this tree. Throughout the years, it blessed us with an abundance of big beautiful white flowers. With it’s abundance of large, strong limbs covered in big green leaves it provided shade for our house from the hot western afternoon summer sun and a place for me, as a kid, to climb and play. Most importantly, it provided an abundance of memories of my grandmother. My mom loved that tree, and it became a defining element of that little spot out in the Mississippi country that was home for me and my family. The roots of that magnolia tree not only grew deep into the ground, but also deep within me. That magnolia was rooted in the abundance of love and family.

The theme of our annual pledge campaign this year is *Rooted in Abundance*, and we are reminded of how we are rooted in the abundance of God. We are reminded of how God surrounds us with the gifts of beauty in this world, with comforts in this world for us to relax and escape from the heat of the afternoon sun, and places for us to play, climb, and enjoy life. Most importantly, we are surrounded by the abundance of memories of those whom we care for and love.

This is All Saints’! A place of beauty where we are offered a place to worship, a place to relax, a place to be with each other, and a place for our children to grow, learn, and play in the name of God. A place where we form memories for the future and share stories of the past about those whom we love. For some reason this week, I’ve heard several stories, from many people, about David Sparks. I wish I had had the chance to know him. However, his and the memories many others live on in this place. Like my grandmother’s gift of a magnolia tree to my parents, our gifts to All Saints’ not only benefit this parish today, but for years to come. As you hear the messages and stories of abundance this year, take note of how generosity spreads and widens our root structures of faith, action, and love.

Christ’s Peace,  
Phillip+

The Rev. Phillip Parker, Rector    The Rev. Becca Walton, Curate  
The Rev. Dr. Billy Walton, Deacon

608 Jefferson Street • Tupelo, Mississippi 38804 • Phone: 662-842-4386 • Fax: 662-842-0204  
Website: [www.allsaintstupelo.org](http://www.allsaintstupelo.org) • Email: [welcome@allsaintstupelo.org](mailto:welcome@allsaintstupelo.org)