

CURATE

The Rev. Becca Walton

As we approach my last Sunday on February 11, I want to thank you for the love and support you have shown me. All Saints' has been an incredible blessing to me, and such a wonderful place to begin my priestly 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. I have continued our offering of *lectio divina* at 12:15 p.m. each Thursday. Once monthly, I preach and preside at a Eucharist service for our members living at the Traceway Retirement Community. I started this service in September 2023, and it has become a wonderful ecumenical gathering, with our members bringing friends. In addition to our All Saints' parishioners, we have Methodists, Baptists, and Catholics.

This December, we had our second Longest Night service, which provided a contemplative space for people experiencing loss during the holiday season. It was a powerful and moving service that allowed us to move from darkness to light, sadness to hope.

Outside of our church, I have been honored to serve sacramentally at the funerals and memorial services of All Saints' parishioners' family members in different settings in North Mississippi, and officiated two weddings, one for a MUTEH (Mississippi United to End Homelessness) staff member, and another as supply clergy at St. John's Aberdeen, which currently does not have a priest. I have done two house blessings for parishioners, and one service of vow renewal and blessing. In late summer, I blessed backpacks collected by the women of our parish and the Oren Dunn Museum.

In March 2023, I served as a Spiritual Director at Happening 94 in Hattiesburg. Happening is a Christian experience presented by teenagers, for teenagers with the help of clergy and lay adult leadership. In October, I served as the keynote speaker for the statewide Episcopal Church Women conference. In the broader church, I attended ordinations in the Dioceses of Mississippi, Alabama, and East Tennessee.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is the heart of my priestly ministry. I continue to be in awe of the work of the All Saints' Pastoral Care Team, led by Margaret Anne Robbins and Joellen Murphree. I work with Billy and Phillip to ensure that we're providing presence and the sacraments during hospitalizations, rehab, hospice, and throughout the grieving process for the bereaved.

Teaching

In 2023 I led a Sunday morning Lenten Book Study on *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding Church* by Rachel Held Evans. In the spring, I led a Sunday morning book study on Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. In May, I worked with Master Gardeners Mary Jane Meadows and Dinetia Newman to present a potluck Rogation Day presentation on the Anglican tradition of marking planting and harvest times. In June at VBS, I led a session for adults on the Spirituality of Pruning and Weeding, which included hands-on work around the church grounds, again with the help of Dinetia and Mary Jane. I led Youth Confirmation for a second year in the fall of 2023, and ended the year with an Advent book study on Paula Gooder's *The Meaning is in the Waiting: The Spirit of Advent*. During the summer, I worked with Tommie Moore on researching a new Sunday School curriculum for kids, and we began using *Weaving God's Promises* in the fall. I substitute taught

the Lectionary Class on three occasions. In August, I led an "instructed" service of Evening Prayer before a potluck.

Parish Life

In early 2023, I met with several women interested in re-starting the monthly Lunch Bunch gathering, and it started in March. We reimagined Shrove Tuesday in 2023, adding a parade and pancake games. I organized the parade, which included kazoos, a trombone player playing "When the Saints Go Marching In," and costumes. The Property Committee, led by Wayne Averett, Tony Alford, and Stephen King, hosted two 2023 Martha Days on March 25 and November 4.

Outreach and Service

All Saints' continues to be a resource and destination for people in need. Secretary Nancy Sweat is the frontline in handling these requests, and I work with her to provide assistance and referrals. I am deeply 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. I have also worked with social workers at SAFE (Shelter for Assistance in Family Emergencies) and the Salvation Army to assist people in obtaining birth certificates and state IDs, with the fees paid through my Discretionary Fund.

Many Wednesdays I visit with the Saints' Brew team and guests. In August, I organized a drive for items needed by MUTEH for their recently re-housed clients. I accompanied MUTEH staff on outreach visits to encampments several times, including participating in the yearly Point-in-Time Count on January 23. I participated as a member of the Tupelo Homeless Task Force with the leaders of social service agencies, law enforcement, city planners, and other faith leaders. I continued service on the board of SAFE, Tupelo's domestic violence and sexual assault shelter, as well as serving as chaplain to shelter clients and the SAFE staff.