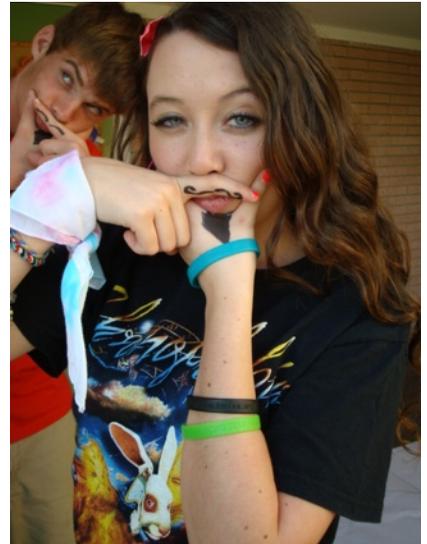


# **RALLY DAY at ST CHRISTOPHER'S**

**Barbecue Lunch \* Ministry Open House \* Lemonade \* Fellowship**

**September 11. Open House all morning.  
Lunch at 11:45 a.m. FREE and open to all!**



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## **Reclaiming the Mystery**

by Father Jonathan

“Stay loose, learn to watch snails, plant impossible gardens, make friends with freedom and uncertainty, look forward to dreams.”

*Motivational sign on a children’s classroom wall.*

I have the highest admiration for teachers. Teachers talk a lot about summer breaks and how much they look forward to times of escape from the classroom, but the twinkle in their eyes this time of year betrays how much they also look forward to children and stories and class pets and the lessons that together they’ll learn with their students over these next nine or so months. It’s that twinkle in their eyes this time of year that I admire.

To commit oneself to another’s understanding, to display the kind of patience that leaves a student believing she is loved, these are remarkable qualities. I often wonder what it is that inspires certain individuals to offer themselves in this way.

Recently, I read a reflection from a career educator who was grouching about standardized testing and the government jargon that comes with it: language like “meta-concepts” and “the implementation of outcome-based instruction,” for example. The teacher observed that, in all of the official standardized instructions he had read, “I never come on words such as ‘delight’ or ‘joy’ or ‘curiosity’ or, for that matter, ‘kindness,’ ‘empathy’, ‘compassion for another child.’ Nothing, in short, that would probably come first for almost any teacher working with young children.”

What inspires some people to become teachers? Not government jargon. No, the words that make teachers are the words of children.

I believe that the same dynamic is true in the Church. That is, necessary words like “church growth” and “building committee” and “capital campaign” sometimes jostle over and against the childlike words of faith you knew when God first found you. I still marvel at the clarity and wonder with which Annie simply says, “mercy.” I wonder: what are the words that you knew when God first found you?

Here are mine: Christ. Light. Beauty. Love. Mystery.

I want to encourage anybody with a desire to rediscover your first words of faith with the news that your leadership at St. Christopher's is committed to that journey.

This fall, no fewer than four new discipleship groups are gathering at church and in homes to share meals, stories, and life with one other along the pilgrim walk of faith. Others are working on your behalf to feed the poor, tutor children, lead our worship. A vibrant core of leaders is committed to opening and sharing the opportunity to grow closer to Jesus and become more like him.

As your Rector, and working alongside these leaders, it is my strong conviction that the present opportunity before our parish **is Jesus** and the unending life that he brings, and that if we take hold of this opportunity with both hands, the rest of what matters will come.

So Rally Day is around the corner – September 11! – and I really hope you'll come, but here's a fair-warning disclaimer: the call that you'll find there is not cutting-edge. The gimmicks have all been shelved. The call is ancient; the faith is as true as the words of children; and it is the Savior who calls you to reclaim the words that first met you on that slightly strange day you first looked up and all at once knew that God loved you.

Wonderful mystery: he's calling you still.

Faithfully yours in Christ,  
Father Jonathan+

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## Listening for Holy Words

by guest columnist The Rt. Rev. David Reed

On Tuesday mornings, the staff of the Diocese of West Texas starts the day with Holy Eucharist, followed by Bible study. This precedes our weekly staff meeting. A good portion of our Bible studies follow a modified form of Lectio Divina, an ancient pattern of “divine readings” with roots going back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century and the early monasteries.

Lectio Divina is a way of praying Holy Scripture, and as such is less about learning context, background and “what it means” than it is about listening deeply for the living Word in and through Scripture.

There are four steps in this spiritual practice:

1. Lectio – Reading the selected passage slowly several times, trying simply to hear it as presented, noting words or phrases that cause you to linger.
2. Meditatio – Meditating on the text, considering connections with your own life. The biblical images of eating and digesting God’s Word come to mind. “Ruminating” is what cows are doing when they chew their cud. Meditatio is chewing slowly and unanxiously on the Scripture.
3. Oratio – Praying. We bring our reading and our meditating to God in conversation.
4. Contemplatio – Contemplation means being still and listening. Many of my visits with God turn into my monologue. This step reminds me to just be quiet, listen, and enjoy sitting with God.

In a group setting, a fifth step would be conversation about what you heard during the reading and prayer.

Lectio divina takes some time to do. Before beginning the four steps, you need to take time to relax, settle down and settle in. If you’ve got ten minutes for engaging the Scriptures, this isn’t the practice for you.

What's helpful about this practice in a group setting (such as the diocesan staff) is the encouragement and accountability of the group.

What's difficult in a group setting (and in the context of our Tuesday morning) is the need to keep time. And also, sometimes there's no escaping the "distractions" and busyness of the day.

If this is a spiritual practice you'd like to try, I'd suggest talking a friend or two into trying it with you (for mutual support), and begin with a familiar parable. Give yourself time, and engage the practice several times – like all good habits, it takes some time to take root.

Faithfully,  
Bishop David Reed

PS - Lots of books are available on Lectio Divina. The one I've found most helpful is The Word is Very Near to You: A Guide to Praying with Scripture by Martin Smith (1989, Cowboy Publications)

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### Group Scripture Studies at St Christopher's

- **Living in Authentic Community, Sundays**, 7 p.m., at the Meltons  
*Contact Rebekah Melton for details.*
- **Honeycutt Bible Study**, Sunday mornings, 9:30 a.m.  
*Contact Baxter Honeycutt for details.*
- **Ballantine Home Group**, time and location TBA  
*Contact Jon or Pat Ballantine for details.*
- **Lectio Divina Small Group**, time and location TBA  
*Contact Deb Gardiner for details.*

### Other Weekly Formation Groups

- **ALPHA, Wednesdays at 7p.m.** *Contact Jon Heffley.*
- **HUB (How U Believe on a Monday – and other less holy days)**,  
*Sunday morning group led by Father Jonathan*
- **Cursillo Group Reunion, Thursdays at 1 p.m.** *Contact Barbara Atwood.*

*If your directory isn't handy, phone numbers for all contacts can be had through the church office (361) 643-3514.*

## **Praying the Scriptures, by Deborah Gardiner**

*A devotion in conversation with Matthew 18:21-35.*

*Lectio Divina* - “divine Reading”: the practice of praying the scriptures and listening to the text with the “ear of the heart” as if in conversation with God, God is suggesting the topics for discussion.

I practice praying the scriptures. It is particularly meaningful when practiced with others in a group. Hearing voices other than mine read the scriptures out loud allows me to listen with the “ear of the heart” more readily than when I read them aloud myself. Sometimes Jimmy and I pray the scriptures together. Recently, Jimmy read the above scripture out loud as we both paid attention to the word or phrase that jumped out at us. I read the reading out loud a second time as we continued to focus on the word or phrases that jumped out. After that, we took 1-2 minutes of silence focusing on the word or phrase. For Jimmy, what jumped out for him was verses 32-33. For me, the word that jumped out was *forgive*. Again I read the scripture aloud. After 2-3 minutes of silent reflection on “Where does the reading touch my life today?”, Jimmy heard that he needs to forgive as he has been forgiven. I saw that I need mercy and forgiveness. Jimmy then read the scripture aloud for the last time. Both of us listened to what Christ the Word invited us to do. After 2-3 minutes of silent reflection on “What does God want me to do today/this week?” Jimmy believed that God wants him to remember that he is forgiven and be more forgiving. I believe that God wants me to be merciful and forgiving. We then closed with prayer for each other. Jimmy prayed for God to help me be merciful and forgiving and I prayed for God to help Jimmy remember that he is forgiven and to be more forgiving of himself and others.

A small group of us here at St Christopher’s By the Sea are hoping to start a *Lectio Divina* group that meets once a week. We are hoping to include those at St Christopher’s who would like to be a part of the group as well as others in the community (regardless of religious denomination). If you are interested in being a part of this group please email me at [stillwatersrestoremysoul@gmail.com](mailto:stillwatersrestoremysoul@gmail.com) to express your interest and for more information.

For His Sake,  
Deb Gardiner

## **OCTOBER FELLOWSHIP: Coming Together in Christ**

Your stewardship co-chairs Debi LaFour and Deb Gardiner invite you a three-week series in October. The series will center around this year's stewardship theme:

### **Growing Generous Hearts**

“One gives freely, yet grows all the richer...” Proverbs 11:24

#### **Guest Speakers include**

- **The Rt. Rev. David Reed, Bishop Suffragan of West Texas**
- **Mrs. Catherine Lillibridge**

#### **What is it, exactly?**

Midweek dinner and fellowship as we share stories and practices of Christ-centered stewardship and Christian generosity.

#### **When?**

Thursday evenings  
October 13, 20, and 27  
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  
Light dinners provided.

#### **Who?**

We pray that everyone will come together in Christ for these three transformative evenings.

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## **YOUTH UPDATE!**

**Sr High will resume Wednesday night gatherings at 6:30 p.m. in September.**

**Jr High and Sr High are invited to apprentice a Sunday School teacher this year. Additionally, Jr High will join Sr High from time to time for join activities.**

**Children's Sunday School (ages 5 through 6th grade) meets every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.**

## **Cause 'N Effect: St C's Music Ministry**

St C's praise band is looking for a few old rockers and a few wannabes!

The fledgling band "Cause 'n Effect" is looking for a guitarist in particular, and any other musicians who would like to jam to Christian rock music. The band practices Thursdays from 6:15 - 8:00 p.m. in the St C Sanctuary. For more information, call Jo Burton at (361) 230-0101.

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## **Finance Corner: Apple Tree Update**

As reported by the Vestry, the following steps have been put in place as we negotiate a projected \$30,000 deficit this year:

- 1) \$20,000 has been transferred from the Rectory Housing Fund and applied to this year's budgeted Rector's Housing Allowance.
- 2) The Vestry is prepared to move an addition \$5,000 from emergency reserves, if necessary.
- 3) The Vestry has presented the Congregation with an Apple Tree representing a 2-part financial goal for the congregation.

Update: Since the Apple Tree was introduced eight weeks ago, \$1,265 has been raised toward our step one goal of \$5,000. Great job! Let's keep up the good work.

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“One gives freely, yet grows all the richer...” Proverbs 11:24

**birthdays and anniversaries appear in the print version of the newsletter.**

**Also, please note that schedules will be received directly from ministry leaders.**

# Saint Christopher's Chronicles



‘Sharing the love of God using our gifts  
from  
the Holy Spirit in service to our Lord.’

**Read this newsletter. Enjoy it. Then share  
it.**

A publication of St.  
Christopher by-the-Sea  
Episcopal Church, at the  
corner of Wildcat and 7th

**Join us for worship:**

Sunday mornings

8:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Contact us:**

361-643-3514

[stc@stchrisport.com](mailto:stc@stchrisport.com)

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