



# St. Paul's Church

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## Dynamic Faith

*One of the strange things in the whole history of Christianity has been the way in which many souls have seemed not merely to miss but to prefer to miss its great simplicity...Theories have risen like mists out of dim fields, often very beautiful, as beautiful as they were thin and unsubstantial; while all the time the great solid truths...of our divine lineage and God's much-manifested love and Christ's redemption of the soul by sacrifice have lain, not denied, but unopened, unsounded for the depths of unfound riches that is in them.*

### Phillips Brooks (Sermon on the Resurrection)

On a recent trip to Boston to bury my mother, I walked past Trinity Church, where Phillips Brooks was rector before he became Bishop of Massachusetts. Beside the church there is a bronze statue of Brooks holding forth from the pulpit as a hooded Christ stands behind him. Many days, I can only envy his determined, single-minded assurance that belief is an uncomplicated matter. The reason I was in Boston, after all, made the whole matter quite complicated for me and my family. But this was a man who had seen the battlefield at Gettysburg first-hand, had witnessed the cost of real violence. And he had done so in a time when there was

no CNN, no minute-by-minute updates from news feeds. That he could emerge with such unshakable faith is all the more amazing, even unbelievable.

For several years, I was on the staff at the Church of the Holy Trinity on Rittenhouse Square, the church that Brooks occupied until he was called to Boston. It was there to which he returned from Gettysburg to write the words to "O Little Town of Bethlehem," for which people there loved him or hated him, depending upon their view of that act of inspiration. You see, the chancel is a large mural of the nativity scene, which is fine until we get to Lent/Easter/ Pentecost, where you can feel it undermining whatever you have to say about the cross. But the dissonance I felt as I read the passion stories in front of the Holy Family gathered together, along with several animals and wise men, may have proved his point. If you choose to make it so, faith is a very uncomplicated matter, as straightforward as Christ's own passion predictions. Bethlehem is, after all, about five miles from Golgotha and the circularity of the Christian year (never mind that we see God's time in a very different way) makes it easy to see the Christ-event as a singular, salvific gift to humankind.

Brooks never lived into the twentieth century, He did not witness either World War or their aftermaths, did not know about the killing fields of Cambodia, of Vietnam or what we are seeing in Ukraine. A civil rights struggle would have been hard for him to imagine. In line with the tradition of his day, he saw the faith as a matter of assenting to specific beliefs even amid certain tumultuous events. What we experience in Easter, if you are like me, is far more a process than saying yes to events that have been pivotal events in human history for so long that no one dared question them. Our faith, like the events of our lives, is much more about the faith that God has in us than the current state of our belief while we are white-knuckling through some of the most violent and disorienting years in our history. In that sense, faith (or the weaker "belief") is a dynamic thing, and it gives us the power to say that God has the last word. Our job is to understand that the people suffering across the globe or, with far less fanfare, on our streets are indeed our neighbors, our fellow disciples. We need to spread the word of this risen God as stand-up people, knowing that we have to seek out the corners of our lives where the forgotten and marginalized will always be the "great solid truths" of our lives.

## Deacon's Corner

As my time in Deacon school moved along, I felt more and more a deeper call to align my “9-5” life with the spiritual call to ordained ministry. My former work as a landscape designer brought with it too many environmental injustices in use of pesticides, herbicides and the like, and the way in which the undocumented workers were treated, many of whom could not read and who were asked to apply these chemicals as part of their work. Nothing I said on either front was bigger than the bottom line needs of the corporation.

Yet, I didn't know what the next workplace might be, where things good be in alignment on all fronts. I also didn't expect that a long span in recovery from COVID-19 would give me the time to pray and reflect on this, a time to listen more carefully to the spirit voice and her direction. I was most grateful to arrive to a position with Habitat for Humanity, where I work to support affordable and

workforce housing, neighborhood revitalization, aging in place, critical home repair for veterans, seniors, and those who have any form of disability—some of the most fragile among us. Missions that are truly diaconal. Building community.

In this work, I have been alongside our Development Director who offered to coach me with some grant writing so I could prepare for us an application for the Episcopal Community Service grant for this season. While we wait to hear the outcome of this grant, it is still a wonderful reminder of the possibilities that are born of faith and the connections that come when we are open to the voice of the spirit coursing through our lives.

With love,

Rev. Jeannie

## April Birthdays

April 9: Clare Gutwein

April 10: Jervin Hancock

April 13: Eldeiean Morgan

April 16: Betty Fletcher

## Congratulations!

Amir Michael Stokes and

Zeke Kosisochi Onu as the newest baptized Christians at St. Paul's!

## Books

*Reconciliation, Healing and Hope: Sermons from Washington National Cathedral, ed. Jon Meacham*

If you are a fan of reading sermons (it's an occupational hazard for me), this is the time for a book like this. There are many diverse voices in these homilies, including Kelly Brown Douglas (Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary), Jon Meacham and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry on loss and the Pandemic the challenge of being a Christian in divisive times and what our attitudes say about the priority of racial equity. It is a book that repays reading in its multitude of voices and perspectives on reconciliation. In difficult times.

--Fr. Mark

# Spring Anti-Racism Training

The Anti-Racism Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey invites you to enroll in its 20-hour online Anti-Racism Training. The training consists of five consecutive Friday evening two-hour Zoom sessions, a self-study program in between the Friday meetings, and a follow-up session four weeks later. The session costs \$100 per



person. In 2022, the training will be held on these dates:

**Spring Session April 29, May 6, 13, 20, and 27, and June 24**

**[Click here to register for the Spring Session of the Anti-Racism Training.](#)**

**Summer Session** July 29, August 5, 12, 19, 26, and September 23.

**[Click here to register for the Summer Session of the Anti-Racism Training.](#)**

The training course is led by members of the Anti-Racism Training Team. Each week leading up to the Friday Zoom session, participants will complete online self-study lessons that take roughly two hours per day to complete at times that fit your schedule. The material consists of recorded lectures, videos, and articles that provide you with a historical overview of systemic racism in America to help you understand its impact on society and on individual lives. Participants must attend all sessions to earn a Certificate of Completion.

The Anti-Racism Commission is a group of dedicated anti-racists who are working to help dismantle systemic racism, inequality, and injustice in our church and in our society. In addition to the 20-hour Anti-Racism Training, ARC also makes presentation at convocation meetings, Vestry retreats, and other group meetings; and holds conferences and other events to build a knowledgeable and empowered group of anti-racists. If you're interested in learning more, please contact [Rev. Ted Moore](#), co-chair of the Anti-Racism Commission.

--Fr. Mark



April 16, 2022

# Thank you!!

Many and deep thanks to Mitchell Morgan, Elaine Horneff, Rev. Jeannie and all others responsible for making the sanctuary so beautiful for our Easter celebrations! We all are grateful for your time and effort (and your keen eye) for making our church look so beautiful.

