



THE BULLETIN

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL
An Episcopal Community in the Heart of Houston, Texas

MAY 2021
CHRISTCHURCHCATHEDRAL.ORG

AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY CARE LINE | 713-826-5332



The sacred joy of in-person worship

Eighty-five-year-old Christ Church Cathedral member Jane Montgomery made the most of virtual worship after the Cathedral stopped having in-person services last March due to the pandemic.

New to Zoom, Montgomery attended the 11 a.m. service as well as the Dean's Book Club. She said her 80-year-old brother was impressed with her computer aptitude and liked to tell everyone she was on Zoom.

"It was wonderful to be with everybody [virtually]," she said. "I met a lot of new friends. I'm as active as I can be."

Still, she was anticipating being with people in person again.

"I missed being with everyone," she noted. "They were always so friendly. I missed the clergy. I love the whole feel of in-person worship."

So once Montgomery was vaccinated, she was ready to go back for Easter weekend services.

"I was so excited," she said. "It felt like you came back home."

Montgomery wasn't the only one. Member **SACRED JOY**, page 6

The 20s & 30s reflect and make summer plans

The 20s & 30s community has a mission of connecting young adults from the Cathedral as well as engaging with young adults across the Diocese. We offer fellowship and curate programming that our community wants. Our 20s & 30s Council works hard at these tasks. Soon, our 20s & 30s will receive a survey, which we encourage them to fill out so we can continue to create an engaging calendar.

20s & 30s SUMMER HANGOUT

Friday, May 28

Our calendar includes events for connecting with the community both weekly and monthly. One of our favorite events is the Spring Retreat. This Spring we were able to meet over Zoom with two amazing facilitators Aneya Elber **20s & 30s**, page 6



Hell and heaven

One of my top ten favorite books is C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*. The book is not a self-help book for married couples. Rather, the "divorce" to which it refers is between the ideas of heaven and hell. At the time of his writing, C.S. Lewis believed that mainstream Christianity had breezily maintained its hope for heaven while entirely divorcing from that hope the danger of hell.



THE VERY REV.
BARKLEY
THOMPSON

In response, Lewis offers a thoroughly contemporary vision of what hell looks like. Gone are the medieval murals of red-horned devils with red-hot pokers, cattle-prodding the doomed into a fiery, belching hell. Instead, Lewis' hell is marked by hazy dusk; an ambient, festering argumentativeness; mind-numbing monotony; and, for us most telling of all, physical distance from one another.

A little more than a year ago, just as Houston was shutting down under the spectre of COVID-19, Jill and I were supposed to attend a theatrical production of *The Great Divorce* at the George Theater. It was the first of innumerable events we missed over the course of a year that increasingly felt like C.S. Lewis' hell.

The Great Divorce was a compelling book from the time it was published, because it presented hell in a plausible way. Lewis' hell was like the worst of earthly life, *except worse*, and it was depicted not as a place to which God *consigned* us, but rather a place we *choose* to dwell. You see, in *The Great Divorce* a red London double-decker bus makes a constant loop from hell to the forecourt of heaven, and hell's inhabitants are perpetually invited to get on board. Most choose, however, to stay in the hell of their own making, which, as a priest, I can attest is true to life.

HEAVEN AND HELL, page 8

OUR CATHEDRAL FAMILY

We celebrate with

☞ **Maria Bautista Vargas** and **Fabian Berrios** who were married in the Cathedral on April 17th.

We extend heartfelt sympathy

☞ to the family of **Mikala Ann Stephens** who passed away on March 18, 2021. Mikala is mother to member **Shawn Stephens** and husband **Jim Jordan**, grandmother to **Shelby Jordan**, and aunt to member **Frankie Sims**.

☞ to the family of **Frances Reese** who passed away on March 19, 2021. Frances is mother to member **Ellen Kuo** and husband **Dick** and grandmother to **Kai, Sam, Ryan, and Aidan Kuo**.

☞ to the family of member **Don Allan Gard** who passed away on March 24, 2021. Don is husband to **Phillippa Ellen Gard** and father to **Gregory Gard, Jennifer Ellen White, and Pamela Ann Harvey-White**.

☞ We extend heartfelt sympathy to the family of member **Joy Kristine Stapp** who passed away on March 26, 2021.

☞ to the family of member **Donna Fong** who passed away on March 28, 2021.

☞ to the family of member **Alice (Sissy) Jenkins** who passed away on April 7, 2021. Sissy is mother to **John Jenkins** and daughter-in-law **Sarah**; daughter **Diana McLoud** and son-in-law **Don**, and grandmother to **Will**.

The flowers on the Cathedral Altar

☞ on April 18 were given to the glory of God in loving memory of **James Oliver Banks Jr.** by **James Oliver Banks III** and **Margaret Gray Sessions Banks**.

☞ on May 2 are given to the glory of God in loving memory of their nephew, **Tyler Bludau**, by **Shirley Bludau** and **Mike Grimes**.

☞ on May 9 are given to the glory of God in loving memory of **Mrs. James A. Haralson** by her daughter, **Mrs. Gary P. Pearson**, and her grandchildren, **Gary, Jim, and Mary Bain**.

☞ on May 16 are given to the glory of God in loving memory of their parents **Priscilla Rodman Wandel** and **John Philip Wandel** by **Gail Wandel Hendryx** and **Deborah Wandel Francis**.

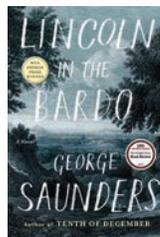
The Dean's Book Club Selections

The Dean's Book Club discusses a different book the first Wednesday of the month. Everyone is welcome to attend and join the discussion from 6:30-8 p.m. You may order books from the Cathedral Bookstore for a 10% discount. Contact Louise Langford at llangford@christchurchcathedral.org to learn how to participate.

There will be no Dean's Book Club in July or August

Wednesday, May 5

Lincoln in the Bardo, by George Saunders



February 1862. The Civil War is less than one year old. The fighting has begun in earnest, and the nation has begun to realize it is in for a long, bloody struggle. Meanwhile, President Lincoln's beloved eleven-year-old son, Willie, lies upstairs in the White House, gravely ill. In a matter of days, despite predictions of a recovery, Willie dies and is laid to rest in a Georgetown cemetery. "My poor boy, he was too good for this earth," the president says at the time. "God has called him home." Newspapers report that a grief-stricken Lincoln returns, alone, to the crypt several times to hold his boy's body.

From that seed of historical truth, George Saunders spins an unforgettable story of familial love and loss that breaks free of its realistic, historical framework into a supernatural realm both hilarious and terrifying. Willie Lincoln finds himself in a strange purgatory where ghosts mingle, gripe, commiserate, quarrel, and enact bizarre acts of penance. Within this transitional state — called, in the Tibetan tradition, the bardo — a monumental struggle erupts over young Willie's soul.

Wednesday, June 2

Hild, by Nicola Griffith

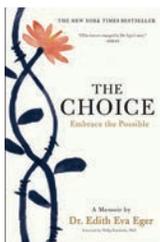


In seventh-century Britain, a new religion is coming ashore and small kingdoms are merging, frequently and violently. Hild is the king's youngest niece, with a glittering mind and a natural authority.

She is destined to become one of the pivotal figures of the Early Middle Ages: Saint Hilda of Whitby. But for now she has only the powerful curiosity of a bright child and the precarious advantage of a plotting uncle, Edwin of Northumbria, who will stop at nothing to become overking of Angles. Hild establishes a place for herself at his side as the king's seer, and she is indispensable—as long as she doesn't lead Edwin astray. The stakes are high—life and death—for Hild, for her family, and, increasingly, for those who seek the protection from this strange girl who seems to see the future. Drawing from the few records history has left us, Nicola Griffith has brought the young Saint Hilda's harsh, but beautiful, world to vivid, absorbing life.

Wednesday, September 1

The Choice: Embrace the Possible, by Edith Eva Eger



At the age of sixteen, Edith Eger was sent to Auschwitz. Hours after her parents were killed, Nazi officer Dr. Josef Mengele, forced Edie to dance for his amusement and her survival. Edie was pulled from a pile of corpses when the American troops liberated the camps in 1945. Edie spent decades struggling with flashbacks and survivor's guilt, determined to stay silent and hide from the past. Thirty-five years after the war ended, she returned to Auschwitz and was finally able to fully heal and forgive the one person she'd been unable to forgive — herself. Edie weaves her remarkable personal journey with the moving stories of those she has helped heal. She explores how we can be imprisoned in our own minds and shows us how to find the key to freedom. *The Choice* is a life-changing book that will provide hope and comfort to generations of readers.

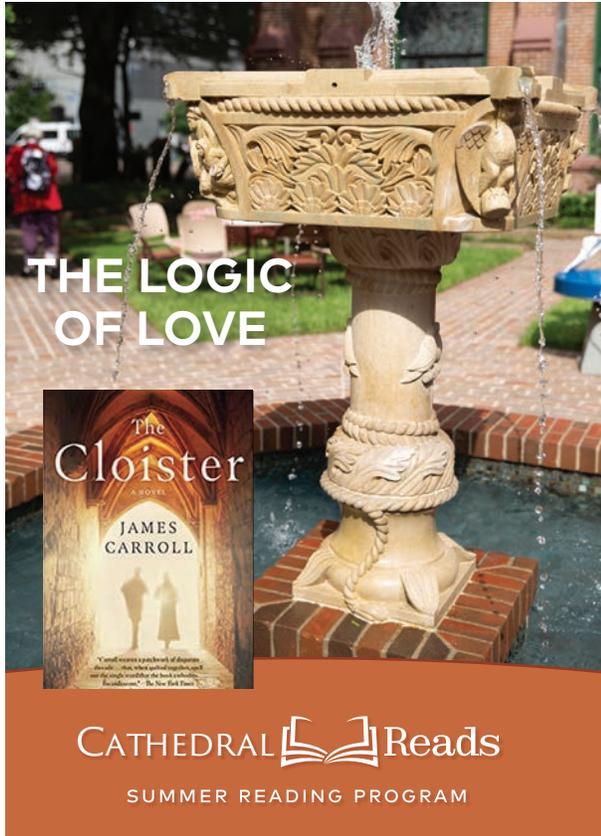
Cathedral Reads 2021: The Logic of Love

The Cloister, by James Carroll

What's your formula for a perfect summer read? If it combines endless love with deep scholarship, dueling medieval and modern churchmen, and truths that survive Nazi persecution, you're in luck. Join Cathedral friends this summer to explore the logic of love, as we discuss James Carroll's novel *The Cloister*.

Carroll — former priest, National Book Award winner, and author of over a dozen acclaimed fiction and non-fiction titles — brings the romance and rhetoric of the twelfth-century monk Peter Abelard and his brilliant pupil Héloïse to life in this well-researched historical fiction. Opening in post-war New York City, *The Cloister* weaves the narratives of the legendary lovers with those of a fictional French-Jewish medievalist, his scarred and private daughter, and an Irish-American priest. Through the lens of the Church, it illuminates concepts of love and tolerance — tolerance for knowledge, for difference, and for love that doesn't fit prescribed categories. Scholar, monk, daughter, lover, friend: each must struggle to determine if redemption lies within the boundaries of the cloister. While academia and the church may celebrate intellectual inquiry, Carroll suggests that those who press the circumscribed boundaries — for love or logic — do so at perilous personal risk.

What were the dichotomous views of the church held by Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard? Did the Church play a role in creating anti-Semitism? What role did women have in medieval scholarship? Can we overcome life-changing loss? *The Cloister* delves deeply into questions like these. It's a love story on all four levels — *storge*, *philia*, *eros*, and *agape* — as well as a mystery and an intellectual journey. Transcending traditional literary alchemy, its elements combine to create



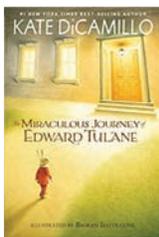
the perfect formula for a summer read: sizzling and serious.

Sign up to join a small group to discuss *The Cloister* as you read. Or read at your own pace and join the whole community for discussion during the Dean's Hour on September 5. Look for more information to come about Cathedral Reads 2021, James Carroll, and his fascinating historical characters. No matter how hot the summer gets, Cathedral Reads 2021 will provide you with some very cool ideas! Additional information on related events and registrations will be available soon.

Cathedral Reads 2021 for Children and Youth

The grownups don't get all the excitement at the Cathedral! Cathedral Families can join the literary love-fest this summer with Kate DiCamillo's *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. Edward, a fancy china rabbit given to ten-year-old Abilene in the 1930s, is a rather spoiled creature, until he finds himself on a misadventure on HMS Queen Mary. Edward's journey introduces him to life-altering experiences

2021 CATHEDRAL READS, page 7



Racial Reconciliation and the Baptismal Covenant May 14-15

Originally scheduled for February, freezing weather and regional power outages forced us to postpone our planned conference hosted by The Cathedral Justice & Peace Council: "Racial Reconciliation and the Baptismal Covenant: Striving for Justice and Peace Among All People."

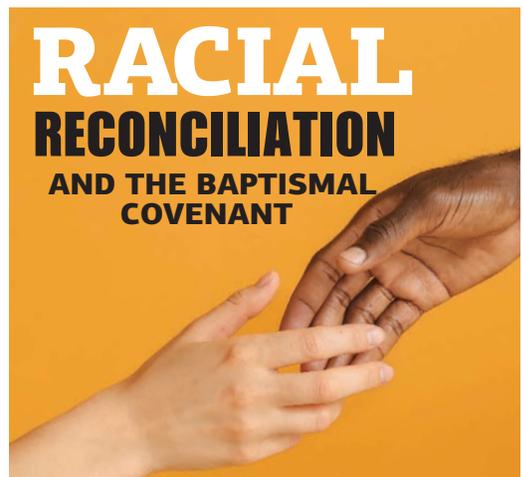
The rescheduled conference will begin Friday evening, May 14, at 7 p.m. with a discussion by Rice University professor and Pulitzer prize-winning author Dr. Caleb McDaniel who will be interviewed by parishioner and Wall Street Journal reporter Chris Matthews.

Saturday's morning session will be from 9 a.m. until noon. Panelists will include Sam Collins III, Kathy Culmer, and Sandra Guerra Thompson, who will speak on issues of racial inequity in incarceration and sentencing, as well as the history of race in the Episcopal Church.

Then, on Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m., the conference will feature a lecture by Dr. Catherine Meeks, the executive director of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. Dr. Meeks is a sought-after teacher and workshop leader with four decades of experience dismantling racism in Atlanta. Following her lecture, The Reverend Canon Becky Zartman will interview Dr. Meeks about her work.

In the Book of Common Prayer, our baptismal covenant includes the promise of all Christians to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being." Though in the United States we have made remarkable progress toward this promise in the past fifty years, events of the past several years have demonstrated that we have much work yet to do. Join us as we learn together to work toward that goal.

Special thanks to Justice & Peace Council members Madeleine Hussey and Chris Matthews for their leadership in organizing the conference. Learn more about the speakers and register to attend at christchurchcathedral.org/reconciliation.



Easter Sunday

IN PICTURES

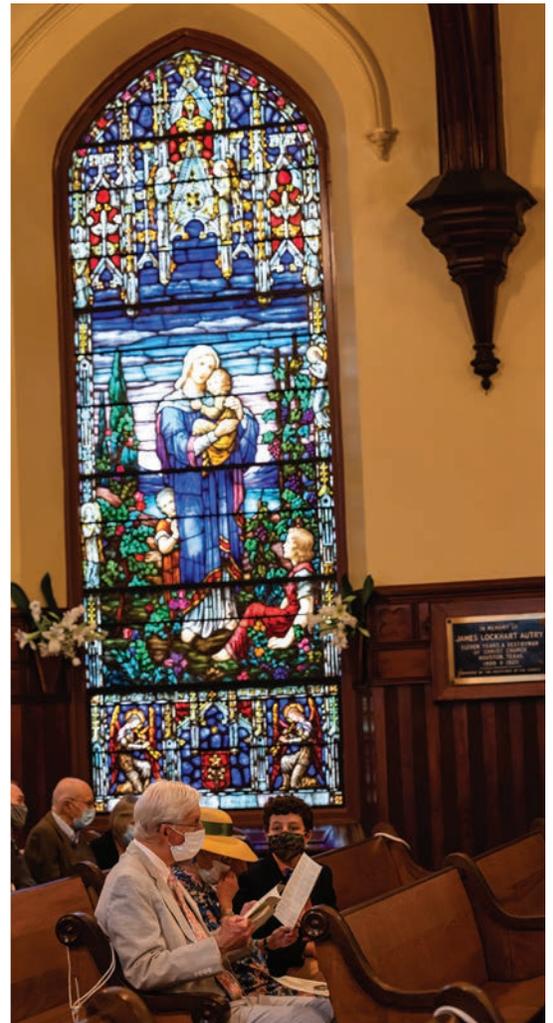




On Easter Sunday, the Cathedral was more active than it has been in a while as even more parishioners are beginning to return to church after becoming vaccinated. Congregants had a chance to socialize and take photos in the Bishop's Courtyard at the flowering of the cross and connect in-person while wearing masks and remaining socially distant.



Beginning with Easter Vigil, while following diocesan guidelines, the Cathedral was able to increase our worship attendance from 60 to 120 worshipers, which is still below 25% capacity in our worship space. While maintaining physical distancing and wearing masks we were able to re-introduce congregational singing of hymns and service music. The choir included a few more singers, and the brass ensemble joined in as well. We returned kneelers and prayer books to the pews, though the entire worship service continues to be printed in the service leaflets. The altar party has begun to process in and out of worship down the center aisle, and fully vaccinated parties are able to sit together in "pods" if they identify themselves and arrive together for worship.



SACRED JOY, from cover

Lindsey Overstreet also came back in person for Easter Sunday after getting her second vaccination at the end of March.

“I stopped attending in-person worship at the start of the pandemic, thinking it would just be a couple of weeks,” Overstreet said. “Who could have known it would be over a year?”

She expressed that she missed singing the most, as she is a member of the Cathedral Choir.

“I’ve stayed very involved, despite the distancing,” Overstreet continued. “I watch every Sunday virtually, and I have participated in the virtual book clubs, small groups, and 20s and 30s activities.”

For her, the best part of being back was seeing friends and taking communion.

“It was very meaningful to take communion on Easter Sunday after having not had it for over a year,” she said.

Fellow Cathedral Choir member John Catalani said he missed everything about in-person worship, and although he kept in touch virtually, he found the “virtual stuff” more difficult.

Getting back to the in-person Cathedral community after his vaccination was a joy.

“Even if I am six feet from the nearest person and not singing, I feel connected in person,” Catalani said.

Cad Willeford, who has been a Cathedral member since 1952, was vaccinated in January but wanted to wait until her husband was also

vaccinated to attend.

“I missed the voices and the people — and the choir,” Willeford said.

Willeford added that she thought the virtual services were done well, giving special praise to the Cathedral’s Canon for Music Bob Simpson. “It is an amazing job they were able to do.”

Still, she said there is no substitute for being able to kneel and get back to the sacred space of in-person worship. Willeford was also eager to resume her role as a lay server. “I was ready,” she added.

Barbara Hamilton and husband Will said that their first Sunday back at 9 a.m. on Easter Sunday was like “old home week.”

The couple was afraid that the parking garage would fill up, so they came early.

“There was no one there but the choir and the ushers,” Hamilton said. “We were led up to the front row and it was a treat to be so close to the choir. Then people that we knew started coming in and walking by us. Will’s sister who we hadn’t seen in many months was on altar guild that Sunday, and she came by and hugged us. It was even better than planned because the Dean said we could sing.”

Hamilton describes the day as very emotional. She said although they started watching the Sunday services at the beginning of

the stay-at-home period and found the experience “magical,” she began to feel somewhat disconnected over time.

“I worship primarily through music and I felt a great emptiness where my spiritual life was concerned,” Hamilton said. Being back in person made her feel that “everything is right again.”

Dean Barkley Thompson noted that the long pandemic has been a reminder of the biblical truth that “we are, as God intended,

embodied creatures,” created to be social and tactile.

“A smile, an embrace, the breaking of bread in a shared meal: all of these things are essential to our humanity,” he said. “We have sorely missed them, and I pray the silver lining behind the

pandemic is that we have rediscovered our appreciation for them. As we gather together again for worship, fellowship, and formation, I hope we never take for granted the gift of being together.”

Services at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 5 p.m. are open for socially-distanced, in-person worship. Fully-vaccinated people and those at otherwise low risk of COVID-19 are encouraged to come to church in-person. Livestreamed worship also continues to be available each Sunday at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Visit christchurchcathedral.org/worship for more details.

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20s & 30s, from cover

and the Rev. Rich Nelson.

Lindsey Overstreet shares, “I have now been to two 20s and 30s retreats, and they are one of my favorite activities that the cathedral offers. This year, we discussed spiritual resiliency, which I think was quite apropos, given the year we’ve had with the pandemic. The retreat is a great opportunity to deepen one’s faith by pondering and discussing thoughtful questions asked by the leaders in a safe and loving community.”

Natalie LaValley adds, “Aneya and Richard created a safe and welcoming environment for us to reflect and share stories at our own pace. The retreat set me on a journey of thinking about the deaths and resurrections I’ve experienced in my own life and how to share those stories. It was a great opportunity to get to know other young adults in the community, and I look forward to continuing those friendships.”

This Summer we offer opportunities to connect with the 20s & 30s community, when our Summer Hangouts return beginning May 7th. We will meet on the first and fourth Friday until August 27th. There will be opportunities to meet over Zoom and also in a safe in-person environment. Visit christchurchcathedral.org/young-adults and be sure to subscribe to our weekly enews. You can always connect with Christy Orman, Minister for Young Adults at corman@christchurchcathedral.org



Via Cathedral: Journey Through Easter

Our final Via Cathedral celebration will happen on Saturday, May 22. We’ll meet at Discovery Green at 9:30 a.m. to begin a prayer walk through downtown to the Cathedral. And if you’d like to meet at the Cathedral without walking, you can join us at the Cathedral at 10 a.m. for a brief prayer service and reception. The Easter season is all about celebration and we plan to do just that! See our current progress and learn more at: christchurchcathedral.org/viacathedral

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Visit christchurchcathedral.org/events or call **713-222-2593** to learn more about these and other events at the Cathedral.

● Registration recommended ▲ Registration required ✕ Registration closed ★ Childcare available (3 mo. to 12 yrs.) 🧑👤 Bring a friend!

MAY



MAY 2 May Fete ▲

10 a.m. to noon (in-person) in both indoor and outdoor spaces. (Note – an 11 a.m. service will still be aired online for those at home, and The Well will still take place at 5 p.m. in person and online.) May Fete activities will be scattered throughout the Cathedral grounds afterward.



MAY 4, MAY 11 Neighborhood Gatherings ▲

MAY 5 WED

Dean's Book Club ▲
6:30 p.m., Zoom. *Lincoln in the Bardo*, by George Saunders

MAY 7 FRI

Bridge Night ▲
6:30 p.m., Zoom.
20s & 30s Summer Hangout ▲ 🧑👤
7:30–8:30 p.m., Zoom.



MAY 8, MAY 22 Via Cathedral: Journey Through Easter ▲

There will be two in-person walking events called “Walkabouts” and a final get together on Saturday, May 22 to celebrate this journey together. Join us May 8 at Terry Hershey Park from 9:30–11:30 a.m. for a walk in a public park – see your favorite Cathedral folks, walk together (or separately) and finish off with a popsicle and a picture for social media! Learn more at christchurchcathedral.org/viacathedral

MAY 9 SUN

Youth Confirmation ▲
9 a.m.

MAY 11 TUE

Community of Hope – Circle of Care ▲
6–8 p.m., Zoom, Second Tuesday of the month.

MAY 13 THU

Alzheimer & Dementia Support Group ▲
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Zoom, second Thursday of the month.

Amazing Women of Faith ▲
6:30–7:30 p.m., Zoom.

MAY 15 SAT

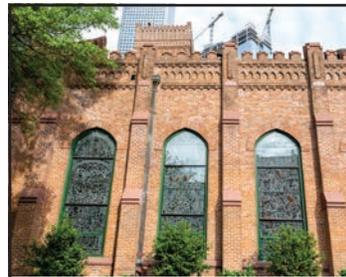
Threads of Comfort and Joy ▲
10–11 a.m., Zoom. A gathering for those who love to knit and crochet, third Saturday of the month.



MAY 14, MAY 15 Racial Reconciliation and the Baptismal Covenant: Striving for Justice and Peace Among All People ▲

MAY 16 SUN

Virtual Coffee Hour ▲
10 a.m., Zoom.
Senior Sunday ▲
9 a.m. to noon



MAY 16
Spring Newcomer Gathering ▲
3:30–5 p.m. The Spring Newcomer Gathering is an opportunity for those who feel new to the Cathedral to meet and greet one another. All are invited to attend May 16, from 3:30–5 p.m. Registration is required for this event. To register please reach out to Elizabeth Cuevas at ecuevas@christchurchcathedral.org. We hope to see you there!

MAY 28 FRI

20s & 30s Summer Hangout ▲ 🧑👤
7:30–8:30 p.m., TBD.

WEEKLY



SUNDAYS
Dean's Hour Matinee: C.S. Lewis' The Four Loves ▲
2–3 p.m., Zoom. We will explore C.S. Lewis' classic text *The Four Loves* in this four-session series, as we learn to differentiate all the ways love blesses our lives. (May 2, 9, 16, and 23).

TUESDAYS
Tuesday Early Morning Men & Women's Bible Study ▲
7–8 a.m., Zoom. Led by Canon Vicar Kathy Pfister.

WEBS: Women's Evening Bible Study ▲
6:30–7:30 p.m., Zoom. Led by Canon Becky Zartman.

Education for Ministry EFM ▲
6:30–9 p.m., Zoom.

WEDNESDAYS
Women's Morning Bible Study ▲
9:30–11 a.m., Zoom. Gather for sincere and truthful conversation on the appointed scripture reading for the following Sunday.

Buscando La Luz ▲
7 p.m., Zoom. Buscando la Luz/Seeking the Light is a program offered by the Latino Ministry of the Cathedral to our Spanish speaking language congregation (May 5, 12, 19).

THURSDAYS
Thursday Lunchtime Men & Women's Bible Study ▲
12–1 p.m., Zoom.

2021 CATHEDRAL READS, from page 3 and individuals, and it illustrates its own big truth: “If you have no intention of loving or being loved, then the whole journey is pointless.”

DiCamillo's tale of self-discovery, love, and compassion is a perfect read-aloud, beautifully written and transformative. Join other Cathedral families to read, or re-read, it together and discuss it over the summer. Growing in love is the ultimate adventure, and this summer's Cathedral Reads provides the books — for kids and grownups — to prove it.

What about the Youth? you ask. We've got a spell-binding adventure for them. Cornelia Funke's

Inkheart (the first book in the Inkworld trilogy) follows Meggie as good and evil come to life beyond the pages of the book. As she learns to harness the magic of reading, her adventure will remind readers — of all ages — that stories can change our lives forever.

Additional information on related events and registrations will be available soon. Learn more at christchurchcathedral.org/cathedralreads. You can purchase your copy of any or all of these titles at The Cathedral Bookstore: thecathedralbookstore.com





CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

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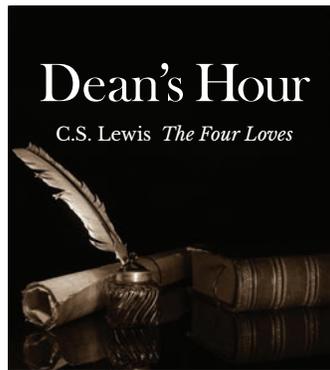
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C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves*

It is said that the Inuit people of Alaska have fifty words to describe snow. Snow is so ubiquitous in their lives that they recognize it is greatly varied, and they need numerous terms to account for its diversity. The English language has only one word for love, and yet love is at least as diverse as snow. We say, "I love my car," "I love sunsets," "I love my spouse," and "I love God." Surely, we mean different sentiments each time, but the paucity of our language restricts our description. C.S. Lewis' classic text *The Four Loves* utilizes four Greek terms for love — *storge*, *philia*, *eros*, and *agape* — to explore in depth the many ways human beings understand love. Participants will explore *The Four Loves* in this four-session series, as we learn to differentiate all the ways love blesses our lives. On the Sunday afternoons of May 2, May 9, May 16 and May 23, join the Dean's Hour at 2 p.m. for a one-hour Zoom meeting on *The Four Loves*.



- C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* I, May 2, 2 p.m.
- C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* II, May 9, 2 p.m.
- C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* III, May 16, 2 p.m.
- C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* IV, May 23, 2 p.m.

Register in advance to attend via Zoom.

Learn more at: christchurchcathedral.org/deanshour

HEAVEN AND HELL, from cover

This all sounds pretty dark, but *The Great Divorce* is, in the end, a hopeful book. You see, there are a few who shake off their hellish malaise, board the bus, and travel to a grassy plain that is the anteroom to heaven. For these, it takes time for their ghostly selves to regain substantiality. It is as if they must slowly remember what it means to be anywhere other than their confined hell, to recollect what it means to interact and be in community, and to share the joy of living. These then turn eastward and begin moving toward God's horizon, over which the rising sun is just beginning to emerge. That way is eternal life.

This past month I have been reminded of this scene from the book, as COVID levels decrease in our community and vaccination levels rise. Jill and I have now been vaccinated, and we took Eliza on a still cautious, still careful college visit trip a few weeks ago. While Eliza toured one school, Jill and I sat in a restaurant and had a drink together. We were almost giddy with the normalcy of the experience.

Collectively, we are at that point when the sun hasn't yet quite risen, but we can detect it peeking over the eastward horizon. This is an incredibly hopeful moment, one suited to the Easter season. After a too-long season of hazy dusk, festering argumentativeness, mind-numbing monotony, and physical distance, there is finally real reason for inklings of joy.

My hope is that we will cherish each small step toward a sunlit world in which all those things stripped from our experience return. How much richer life will be if we are fully present to such small occasions of grace rather than taking them for granted as we so breezily did until a year ago. And then, when the day comes that we can all see one another smile—unmasked!—we will know firsthand that hell is real, but that we are bound for heaven.