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# PARISH POST

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## An Outlet For Spiritual And Creative Expression Choirs Give Members A Place To Learn And Grow In Community

An old adage says, "One who sings, prays twice." It's a quote with particular meaning for choir member Libby Haile.

Libby, who sings alto in both the Gloria Deo and Celebration choirs, has a long history in the music ministry at Holy Trinity.

"I joined the (then) Junior Choir at Holy Trinity when I was 6 years old and the (again, then) Senior Choir at 14," she says. "After college, I lived in Los Angeles for 12 years, but I've been back in Greensboro and back in the choir since 1979."

The reasons that drew Libby back to the choir and have kept her there for three decades are the same ones that draw many of her colleagues: the opportunity to work with highly talented musicians and to worship God through the beauty of song.

"In the midst of such a talented group of musicians, even I can sing gloriously (or at least enthusiastically)," says alto Jane Girardi, who has been a choir member for 25 years. "I am thankful every week for this marvelous opportunity."

For all its rewards, singing in Holy Trinity's choir is not a job for the faint of heart. It's a lot of work. The amount of preparation and rehearsals needed to get the choirs ready for



Associate Choirmaster Ben Brafford conducts the Celebration Choir during a worship service. The choirs can spend up to six to eight weeks to prepare for a Sunday service. Special events, such as Christmas and Easter, can take as many as six to nine months to prepare.

a Sunday worship service is similar to the amount needed to prepare a secular group, such as a college choir or orchestra, for a performance, says Choirmaster Richard Cox. Now retired, Richard spent many years as a professor in the UNCG School of Music.

Typically, service preparation begins six to eight weeks before a particular Sunday. The process to prepare for Christmas or Easter – from selecting music to hiring extra musicians to writing musical arrangements and rehearsing – can take up to six to nine months.

Associate Choirmaster Ben Brafford notes that there

are some differences between sacred and secular choirs. "Church choirs depend largely on volunteers," he says. "The personnel of a sacred choir can change from week to week.."

The changing faces is one reason Holy Trinity's choir employs a few key voices as paid section leaders. "The paid members provide leadership, both in terms of vocal strength and in terms of musical acumen," Richard says. "I think the volunteer members appreciate this leadership and are them-

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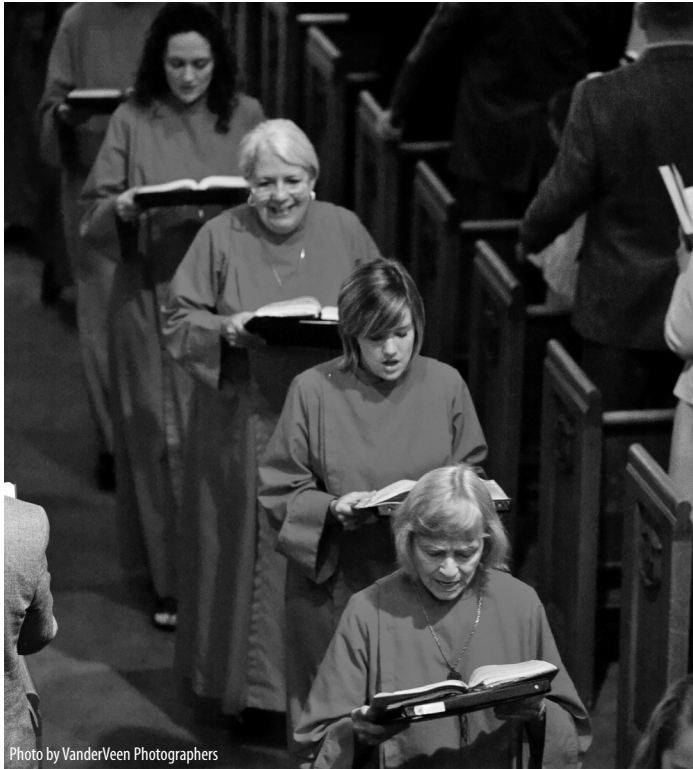


Photo by VanderVeen Photographers

Choir members (from front) Joan Decker, Caroline Tedder, Libby Haile and Sarah Chowning process out of the church at the end of a Sunday service. Libby, who has been a choir member for 30 years, says the best things about the choir are the opportunity to work with and learn from accomplished musicians and the chance to experience the old adage, "One who sings, prays twice."

selves better for it."

Other choir members echo this sentiment, saying that they have been challenged and have grown – spiritually and musically – through the choir.

"I do not pay tuition, but have always felt that I should!" jokes soprano Martha Hoekstra, who has been a member of the Gloria Deo Choir since 1972.

Sally Carmichael, herself a soprano section leader in the Gloria Deo Choir, says, "Singing [at Holy Trinity] is an educational and spiritual experience, enjoyed by and contributed to by all in the choir."

The choirs' strong talent allows them to select from a wide range of challenging liturgical music, something soprano Jean Taylor appreciates. "It's a joy in this age of 'church music lite' to be able to sing the great classical music of the church written through the ages, and thus to keep that music alive."

Several members of both choirs – including Donald Hartmann, Jolynda Bowers, Davetta Florance-Bristow, Sarah Chowning, Dave Dobbins, Amy Dobbins, Maggie Schwenker, Eve-Anne Eichhorn, John Cary, and Hayden Dawes – have advanced degrees in music. Others have various levels of musical training but have pursued careers in other fields. Sopranos Miriam Whaley and Marty Keeton are teachers, and bass section leader Jeff Chowning is Account Vice Presi-

dent at UBS. Bass Ron Current is retired after spending 50 years in the textile industry.

Many choir members say that its spirit of community, of blending these personalities and backgrounds in worship, is one of the choir's most important aspects. Soprano Kathy Crowe and her husband, second bass David, joined the choir shortly after joining Holy Trinity in 1995. "It made us feel very welcome. Joining the choir is one of the best things we've ever done!" she says.

"I enjoy singing in the Gloria Deo Choir because I find it musically challenging, spiritually uplifting, and, in terms of the friendships that Kathy and I have developed with various choir members, deeply enriching," David adds.

The choirs are always open to new singers with all levels of experience. To learn about the Celebration Choir (which sings most weeks at the 9 a.m. service), contact Ben Brafford, ben-htms@triad.rr.com. To learn about the Gloria Deo Choir (which sings most weeks at the 11:15 a.m. service), contact Richard Cox, marcox2@earthlink.net.

Giving parishioners the opportunity to develop and share their musical abilities is one of the most rewarding parts of his job, Ben says. For Richard, it's the chance to combine two of his passions – music and the church.

"I love the Episcopal Church, and am most grateful for the opportunity to enhance the worship experience of a very responsive group of parishioners," he says.

Jane Girardi agrees. "Singing in the choir brings the joy of spiritual and creative expression," she says. "It keeps me balanced and sane."

– Whitney Crowell

## Christmas At Holy Trinity 2009

Rejoice and celebrate the coming of the Light into our world! Holy Trinity will offer the following special worship services for Christmas 2009:

### Children's Christmas Pageant

Thursday, December 24, 10:30 a.m.

Note: There is no Holy Eucharist at this service.

### Christmas Eve Choral Eucharists

Thursday, December 24, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

These two services will be identical, with music led by Dr. Ben Brafford.

Preludes begin 30 minutes prior to the service start time.

### Christmas Eve Holy Eucharist

Thursday, December 24, 10:30 p.m.

Our traditional 10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service, with music led by Dr. Richard Cox. The prelude begins at 10 p.m.

### Christmas Day Holy Eucharist

Friday, December 25, 10 a.m.

### Service Of Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 27, 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

# Messengers Of Hope

## Parishioner Ellen Drake's Angels Bring Comfort To The Hurting

Ellen Drake's angels are all over the world.

The tiny clay figures, which Ellen makes at home, have brought much healing and joy. The first angel was made by Ellen's friend and Holy Trinity parishioner Ann Vaughn.

"I started taking pottery one fall," Ann remembers. "In December that year, I decided to make an angel, so I cut the clay and made two angels and put them in the kiln room at the pottery studio to be fired. When I went back to get them, I couldn't find them. But that was OK, because I didn't think they were very good, so I didn't worry about it.

"Then, Ellen's son William died in January," Ann says. "I went back to class, and there they were.

I put one on William's niche in the columbarium. Then, the grass was mowed and it got broken, but I glued it together and gave it to Ellen again. That spring I got Ellen to take a pottery class with me and she was hooked almost immediately."

"It was a good outlet during the grief process. It's very hands-on, of the earth," Ellen says.

Ellen's angels, which are usually about three inches tall and glazed in a variety of colors, have found homes everywhere.

"They've been taken by missionaries to China and Africa. They've been sent as gifts to Germany and other countries, as well," says Ellen. "I used to keep up with the numbers, but that made it more about me, and these angels aren't about me."

The angels are sold at the Sacred Garden Bookstore at Holy Trinity, and those proceeds go to the William Drake Youth Fund at the church. They're also sold at Tyler White gallery in Greensboro and from Ellen's home. She gives away just as many as she sells.

"If someone comes by, I just give one to them," Ellen says. "I try to keep it pure. I've thought about quitting my regular job to make and sell them, but that would take some of the soul out of it."



Parishioner Ellen Drake began making tiny clay angels after the death of her son, William. The angels have traveled all over the world and brought comfort to many people experiencing trauma or tragedy in their lives, much to her surprise. "People just light up when they receive one," says Rose Hood, Holy Trinity's pastoral care coordinator. "These angels are just remarkable symbols of God's loving presence with us."

She also supplies Holy Trinity's Pastoral Care Commission with angels.

"I often share Ellen's unique angels with someone," says Rose Hood, pastoral care coordinator. "They seem to be a visible reminder that God really does meet us where we are, no matter what the circumstances."

"They're simple little guys," Ellen says. "They're primitive." And each one is different. Ellen says the clay leads her, and the angels almost work themselves out of it.

Her signature on the bottom of each piece is four dots, which she makes with a nail she found in her house. The dots represent her husband Bill, herself, William, and daughter Jean Gray. Jean Gray, who is an artist, also uses the signature and even has a four-dot tattoo.

Ellen makes and fires the angels at home, at night after work. She estimates she can make

about three an hour, or about six an evening. She produces about 500 a year.

"There are a lot of them out there," she says. "I love it. I could make them all day long."

The angels bring many people comfort and joy.

"People just light up when they receive one, particularly folks who are not feeling well or who have experienced some kind of trauma or tragedy in their lives," Rose says. "These angels are just remarkable symbols of God's loving presence with us."

"It's astonishing to me that people like them so much. It's so humbling," Ellen says. "The clay grounded me. It has fed me. All I've gotten from the angels has been good."

—Harriette Knox

### Want To Buy An Angel?

Ellen's Angels are for sale at the Sacred Garden Bookstore, located at 215 W. Fisher Avenue, behind Holy Trinity. Proceeds benefit the William Drake Fund, which supports Holy Trinity's youth ministry programs. The bookstore is open Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–5:30 p.m. and Sunday, 10–11 a.m.

## Money Matters

### Our Treasurer's Report

As we approach the celebration of the birth of Christ, we are especially reminded of the gift of God to us and, as tradition leads us, we share gifts with others during the season. We have completed a period of discernment, followed by a period of commitment, in connection with the annual Every Member Canvass. We now must begin the process of determining the allocation of these commitments for the work of the church; we call that process budgeting. Prayerfully, clergy, staff and members of the Business and Finance Commission will make decisions (some of them difficult) on how we will spend the fruits of your stewardship.

Given the continued state of the economy, we again will be challenged to continue the programs at Holy Trinity, and to make our contribution toward the church at large and to our community. One of the sections of our budget provides funds to a number of organizations helping the less privileged people in the Greensboro area. We strive very hard to maintain that part of the budget, and at the end of the year, during our season of giving, Holy Trinity's Christian Social Ministries makes grants to these groups. This year we will provide approximately \$55,000 to the community through CSM grants.

I would like to offer a special thank you to all of you who have pledged to continue the work of Holy Trinity. Another way that you can make a contribution to this work is to remember Holy Trinity in your will; it is not difficult, and if you would like to know more about how you can add such a provision to your will, please contact me or Parish Administrator Tammy McElroy ([tammy@holy-trinity.com](mailto:tammy@holy-trinity.com)).

Finally, as I have said before, if you have questions about our church finances, please contact me. As your treasurer and a parishioner, I believe that the fiscal strength of our parish is important, and I am committed to making the finances of Holy Trinity transparent to all parishioners.

*"For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it."*

—1 Timothy 6:17-19



John Compton is a parishioner and serves as Holy Trinity's treasurer. He can be reached via e-mail at [jcompton1@triad.rr.com](mailto:jcompton1@triad.rr.com).



### Look Out For Falling Needles!

Youth group members (from left) Ellie Holleman, Salem Lowdermilk and Hannah Neale duck to avoid falling needles as they shake out a Christmas tree on December 29. Supervising the trio is youth leader Robert Payne.

The youth sold trees this year as a fundraiser to support Glory Ridge and other projects. The top-quality Fraser firs were provided by the Rosser Family Christmas Tree Farm of Elk Creek, Virginia, owned by Holy Trinity parishioners Marty and John Rosser. In addition to loaning the teens their tree shaking and baling equipment, the Rossers gave 10 percent of the tree costs back to the church.

The youth groups are making a tithe of their own. They will give 10 percent of their profit on the fundraiser to Holy Trinity's Every Member Canvass, a move EMC co-chairs Rick Vaughn and Scott Brewington wholeheartedly support.

"Speaking for Scott also, we think [the idea] is terrific," Rick says. It helps the youth know that their efforts are connected to the mission of the church, he adds, so "they can see a tangible result of their willingness to give."

With one successful sale behind them, the youth hope to make the Christmas tree fundraiser a Holy Trinity tradition. Look for pre-order forms for next year's sale in late October or early November.

# The Surpassing Light

## Michael Gore Captures Two Reflections On The Unexpected

One ordinary evening, the extraordinary disclosed itself through the words of a man named William.

He lived on a dementia care unit where I worked. Frail and debilitated by age, dementia and various respiratory ailments, he was dying. I provided medical assistance and comfort in the final hours of his failing life. Late one evening, just before time to leave for the night, I stopped by his room. I had come to tell him good-bye, doubtful that I would see him tomorrow.

Kneeling next to his bed, I asked if there was anything I could do for him. Opening his eyes, he smiled. The hum of the oxygen concentrator made his voice difficult to hear. He spoke, a soft, husky whisper, "I'd love some good, cold milk." I was tired; it had been a long, stressful night. For a moment I considered passing on his request, saying he needed to rest. But looking at him, looking into his spent dark eyes, I said, "Hang on a minute," and went for the milk, grabbing a spoon.

Sitting next to his bed, I fed him milk, one spoonful at a time. After taking five or six spoonfuls he grinned, "Aaahh, that was good." He looked penetratingly into my eyes. "You know," he rasped, "When I first saw you I had pretty grave doubts about you helping me. You didn't fit my idea of what a nurse should look like... you know, a babe. With that long hair you got – and why do you want that mess growin' over your face? – you look all like some kinda monkey. You should shave that mess off so you look manly."

He paused and then whispered, "But you turned out to be a pretty good friend."

And there it was. Out of the ordinary, out of the blue, Christ became present.

Through the waning hours of William's life, Christ bestowed His grace through the simplicity of caring actions and words. "I was thirsty and

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*The darkness will not be  
forever lasting...*

*Christmas approaches!*

*The Solstice has  
already gone by;*

*home is just*

*around the corner.*

*Light pulls one over*

*on the night*

*and surpasses it.*

---

you gave me something to drink," Jesus said. "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

There it was; and here, within my heart, it shall abide; a heart broken and purified through William's unaffected gesture of gratitude: "You turned out to be a pretty good friend."

It matters profoundly what we do; but what matters more is who or what we serve. Accepting the weight and knowledge of what we serve sustains us in the struggle through which we determine what to do. That such moments of disclosure occur in our lives is reason enough to spur us to thanksgiving.

Once – I was probably 12 or 13 years old – I woke up for a moment. The snowy frigidity and darkness of winter had settled over the small Iowa town where I grew up. Walking home across the campus of what had once been a small college but now the grade-school I had attended, night descended down upon the town. The air bristled frosty and frigid; my breath hung in icy clouds before my face as my feet crunched over several inches of brittle snow. I ached with cold.

Thanksgiving had passed; the thrill and excitement of my 12-year-old longing for Christmas filled me. An utter stillness enveloped the schoolyard, windless motionless calm enclosed me. And church bells pealed into the stillness with a beauty so arresting I froze in mid-stride. The vibration of their pure, guileless tones washed over me as a stainless unaltered resonance.

I felt loved.

In the fierce loneliness that was my childhood, I felt loved. The echoing chime of the bells woke within me a devotion and yearning hitherto hidden and obscure. The timbre of the bells intoned a shiver of certitude through my aching, wounded heart.

Attending to the light-flecked sky, the stars opened before the rushing song of the bells, carrying me into infinite darkness. Within that perfect darkness, the stars' luminosity petitioned me to turn. My body became as if the bell's shell and I rang with its utterance. Within the gloom of that 12-year-old's sorrow, darkness blossomed into hope. Reflecting upon that moment, these words come:

"For in the tender compassion of our God the dawn from heaven will break upon us, to shine on those who live in darkness, under the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78-79, REB)

This song has persisted across the span of my life. In that fugitive moment of waking, a course was cast that, in a haphazard fashion, I have scrambled to intersect ever since. The Word sang forth above the darkness of the bell's song, forging an anchorhold in my heart: The darkness will not be forever lasting. I kneel in thanksgiving; Christmas approaches! The Solstice has already gone by; home is just around the corner. Light pulls one over on the night and surpasses it.

–Michael Gore

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# The Power Of A Conversation

## Café Empowers Ordinary Citizens To Tackle Extraordinary Challenges

On Thursday evenings in October, a group of people who did not know each other sat in the Sacred Garden Bookstore and “just talked.”

The weekly meetings, sponsored by The Servant Leadership School of Greensboro, were part of a global movement called the World Café.

“The Café is built on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges,” explains Ruth Anderson, director of the school, who also participated in the project. “Given the appropriate context and focus, it is possible to access and use this deeper knowledge about what’s important.” Below, Ruth shares tidbits from a few of the group’s conversations.

### Your Worldview Changes Everything!

At our first meeting, we spend some time learning about the principles of the World Café and the ground rules. Then we read parts of a speech by Paul Hawkins, who said to new college graduates: “The world needs your gifts and is hiring.”

We are challenged by Hawkins’ speech and experience: Are we basically optimistic or pessimistic about the world? This worldview changes everything!

Having access to more communication globally makes us more aware of the challenges we face, one person notes.

We are encouraged as we think about past successes, such as the abolitionist movement. One movement influenced so many others because “strangers were helping those in need.” What can we learn from this?

Newer grassroots movements (like food and community gardens) are making headway too, someone points out. We can respond to those who say it can’t be done.

### Humane Workplaces And Finding A Balance In Life

Tonight we contemplate what would happen if we thought of all business as within the “family”? Would that make our interactions different –more humane?

Can we practice the golden rule and also have bottom line?

### Want To Learn More?

You can find out more about the global World Café movement at [www.theworld-cafe.com](http://www.theworld-cafe.com). To learn about the local group sponsored by The Servant Leadership School of Greensboro, contact Ruth Anderson, 275-0447 or [rdanderson@triad.rr.com](mailto:rdanderson@triad.rr.com).

someone asks. Or do we always need to “make a killing”? How much is enough profitability? Might we be more humane in our workplaces if they were owned locally?

Our group also discusses job creation around the issue of land use – tobacco farms being converted to herb farms and creative use of kudzu, for example. The mayor has a Community Sustainability Council, one member points out. Might

we ask the mayoral candidates what they think of this council?

Update: Out of this conversation, some specific actions were taken. One of the members of the group e-mailed an organizer for the candidate forums and asked that our question about the Mayor’s Sustainability Council be asked at the candidate forums. Another member had a lot of information on local farm use, and another knew of someone who was starting a nonprofit farm. Information was exchanged and shared with this person outside the group.

### Simplifying The Holidays

This evening’s conversation focuses on simplifying the upcoming holiday season. Talking about holidays with family can be tricky, but needs to happen. This as a gradual process, but we can start this year!

We talk about giving homemade and simple gifts. Traditions that help us be together and attending special worship services can be really special and bring meaning.

What about businesses? Instead of a holiday party, what if they spent money to give employees time off (with pay) to go and volunteer with local charities? A Web site could match businesses and nonprofits – might the Chamber of Commerce help get the businesses engaged?

“These World Café conversations remind us that when interested citizens come together and ‘just talk’ change happens in the people gathered and sometimes in our local communities,” Ruth says. That’s the power of a conversation.

–Ruth Anderson with Whitney Crowell