

The Rev. Calhoun Walpole's Sermon for the opening Eucharist at Forma 2018

The Venerable Calhoun Walpole's Bio

The Venerable Calhoun Walpole was appointed by Bishop vonRosenberg to serve as the Archdeacon of the diocese, on a half-time basis, effective March 1, 2013.

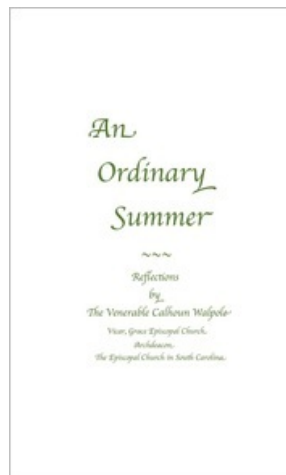
Callie's responsibilities as Archdeacon include service as Convention Secretary and as clergy transition officer and resource person for other programs in The Episcopal Church in South Carolina. Callie continues as Vicar of Grace Episcopal Church in Charleston, and has her office at Grace Church, Charleston, SC.

A native of John's Island, Callie was a member of St. John's Episcopal Church from her baptism until she entered seminary, and served there on the vestry and in other capacities. She also served the Diocese as Missioner for Hispanic Ministry and as lay vicar for the congregation of San Juan on John's Island. She has coordinated the diocesan companion relationship between South Carolina and the Dominican Republic.

Callie graduated from The University of the South with a Master of Divinity degree in 2005. She has taught Spanish at Burke High School and at Bishop England. She served as assistant rector of Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church on Pawley's Island from 2005-2008. In 2009 she was named Vicar of Grace Episcopal Church in Charleston, where she continues to serve on a half-time basis.

From February 2012 through February 2013, Callie also served as Priest in Charge at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston on a half-time basis, bringing leadership to that historic congregation while it was without a rector.

'An Ordinary Summer'



A collection of reflections is now available in a booklet written by the Archdeacon of the Diocese, the Venerable Calhoun Walpole. Callie writes about images drawn from the Lowcountry and throughout South Carolina – ordinary images such as sweetgrass, a juggling board, tidal pools, bricks, walls, and buzzards – that enable us to reflect on the goodness of God and the theme of growth through struggle. Copies of the booklet are free and can be [read online as a PDF file here](#).

Sermon Text shared by permission of Ven. Calhoun Walpole

FORMA.5:30 Eucharist
Feast of Bishop Guerry.transferred
Acts 7:54-60; Luke 12:2-8
Grace Church Cathedral
Charleston
January 24th, 2018
Calhoun Walpole

Welcome to the Holy City! We are so glad you are here. *Thank you* for being here among us.

Thank you, too, so much—for all the good work that you do to help form and support the formation of followers of our Lord. It is no mean task. It is a high and holy calling. And we open our doors to you, as we open our hearts to you, fellow pilgrims on the journey.

We are so grateful for your commitment to *“engaging through a process of reconciliation through reflection and action that leads to an ongoing transformation of hearts and minds while working to manifest peace and justice...”*

Because you have chosen Charleston to be the site for your conference this year, we especially thank you, for wanting to engage *us* on a level deeper than that of perhaps some everyday tourists in search of not much more than, say, a carriage tour—or shrimp and grits—although I do recommend both! Thank you for being among us and—pilgrims that you are—for wanting to learn about deeper aspects of our culture here.

Our patron saint is a martyr who was our Bishop. William Alexander Guerry was shot and killed in his office in 1928 by one of his own priests who was eaten up with racial hatred. Bishop Guerry believed strongly in unity, in the catholicity of the Church, and that

African Americans should be *part of* the Church—*not* separated *from* the Church. Before he died, following the example of our Lord, he extended words of forgiveness towards the priest who shot him.

Much like the survivors and families of the martyrs of Mother Emanuel AME Church would do eighty-seven years later, in the year 2015, when they issued words of forgiveness to another man—this time a young man—also eaten up with racial hatred.

(In the aftermath of that massacre I noticed some writers across the country criticized those statements of forgiveness—saying that such expressions reveal but one more symptom of oppression—or weakness. Well, that’s because such critics don’t realize that forgiveness is about *freedom*—a concept deeply wired into the AME tradition. Or, to say it this way: *Nobody but nobody is going to take away my joy.*)

The Church’s first martyr, Stephen, before he was stoned to death, cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Forgiveness is hardwired into the very tradition of the Church. It is its very lifeblood—our Lord’s very lifeblood, poured out for—and into—us.

The Emanuel Massacre is changing us. It has forced us here in Charleston and in the state to begin to confront in more courageous ways our own past—and present—in rich and deep conversations and relationships and endeavors.

Hundreds of thousands of Africans captured and placed on slave ships in Africa arrived first on our shores—just a few blocks away. The majority of enslaved persons arrived in America by way of Charleston. Some of us are only beginning to understand a

little of what Archbishop Tutu talked about—that true reconciliation requires a proper confrontation. And that confrontation first needs to begin with ourselves.

“What has been covered up is being uncovered. What was hidden is becoming known.”

We deal with our past and our present in order to make way for the future and a deeper consecration to the work to which we have been called. It is a work that will continue long after we who walk this earth are gone. It is work that will span generations.

What I am talking about of course is the work of reconciliation—your own aim and vision as members of FORMA and as those engaged in the work of Christian formation. Paul writes to his beloved Church at Corinth:

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself...”

So you find yourselves in South Carolina for a few days—where not only are we being forced to confront in a new way matters surrounding the issue of race with regard to human relationships—but you are also in a place that has seen a rupture in the family of Christ in The Episcopal Church in this part of the world.

Yet we *know* our call is to *unity*. The desire for ultimate restoration of unity—a *new* unity—is so great for some of us that we can *taste* it. We know that the road has been and will continue to be long and arduous. But Bishop Guerry himself once said:

“A divided church cannot represent Christ, for Christ is *one*, and his life is *one*, and his church must be *one* in order to fully represent him, and convey to others his gospel of salvation.”

He goes on to say: “The unity of Christ’s family, the Church, and of the individual soul with Christ and through his Church is the central doctrine of the New Testament.”

If you are truly committed to the work of reconciliation, as you all are, then, as you well know, you are not in it to be or feel important. It is not some passing fad. It is not something with which to build your C.V. It is not something simply to permit you to add your name to one more important committee. It is not pretty speech or some stylized jargon that causes you to feel perhaps especially enlightened or even superior to others. What is needed in our day and time and in every day and time is not so much a vocabulary—but a conversion!

An encounter—with the one who is ‘other.’ An encounter with self. An encounter with the Risen Lord.

There is no place for pride in the life of a pilgrim. And real reconcilers are always pilgrims. The pilgrim’s path is a pathway to sight—vision—by way of humility. It is a willingness to encounter the ‘other’ as a fellow traveller along the road.

At a service the other evening at the Roman Catholic Cathedral in town, in observance of the week of Christian Unity, our own Dean of Grace Church Cathedral Michael Wright preached these words:

“Our pride can get the better of us and our words are often where that pride reveals itself. But *action*—Christ-like action never fails to unite us and to bring us closer.”

But make no mistake about it: Such an undertaking—such lifelong work—as you know, is crucifying. It is work that leads you straight to the Cross of Christ—again and again—where you are asked to die—over and over again—precisely *while* you continue to live and serve.

And then even in the next life get ready—because you'll still be working! For you'll be present at Eucharist after Eucharist with God's people who will be walking as yet by faith and not by sight—together with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven—praying and upholding those earthly pilgrims who are so feebly struggling to answer the call of our Lord to oneness, to unity, to communion, to love.

But that will be then. And this is now. For those of us who are still in our earthly pilgrimage, such work of reconciliation is also to make peace with patience. On the church calendar today is the Feast Day of Florence Li Tim-Oi, the first woman to be ordained a priest in the Anglican Communion. The Collect for her day speaks to her patience.

Sometimes when people outside of South Carolina ask me about our ministry here, I find myself saying: Well, just think about an ole' mule plowing a field. That's what we're doing here. We're plowing fields. Field after field after field.

Remember this past Sunday's Gospel. What were James and John doing when Jesus called them? They were in the boat with their father, and they were mending their nets, for they were fishermen.

That is our work. Mending nets and plowing fields.

Glamorous? Not so much. Who cares?!

Yet it's the sweetest work you'll ever do.

Building and rebuilding the Church. The work of the Church is always to build and rebuild. Plowing fields and mending nets.

And yes!—it is worth it.

For while we go to the Cross with Christ we also know this:

“...things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are brought to their perfection—their fulfillment—by him and through whom all things were made.”

We're not even to Lent but yes!—Resurrection is *real*. *New life* is real. You can count on it.

Amen.