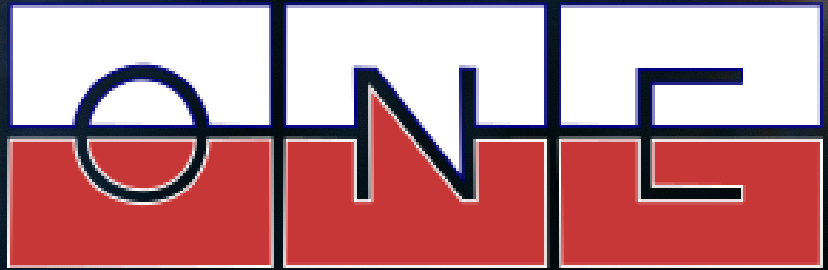
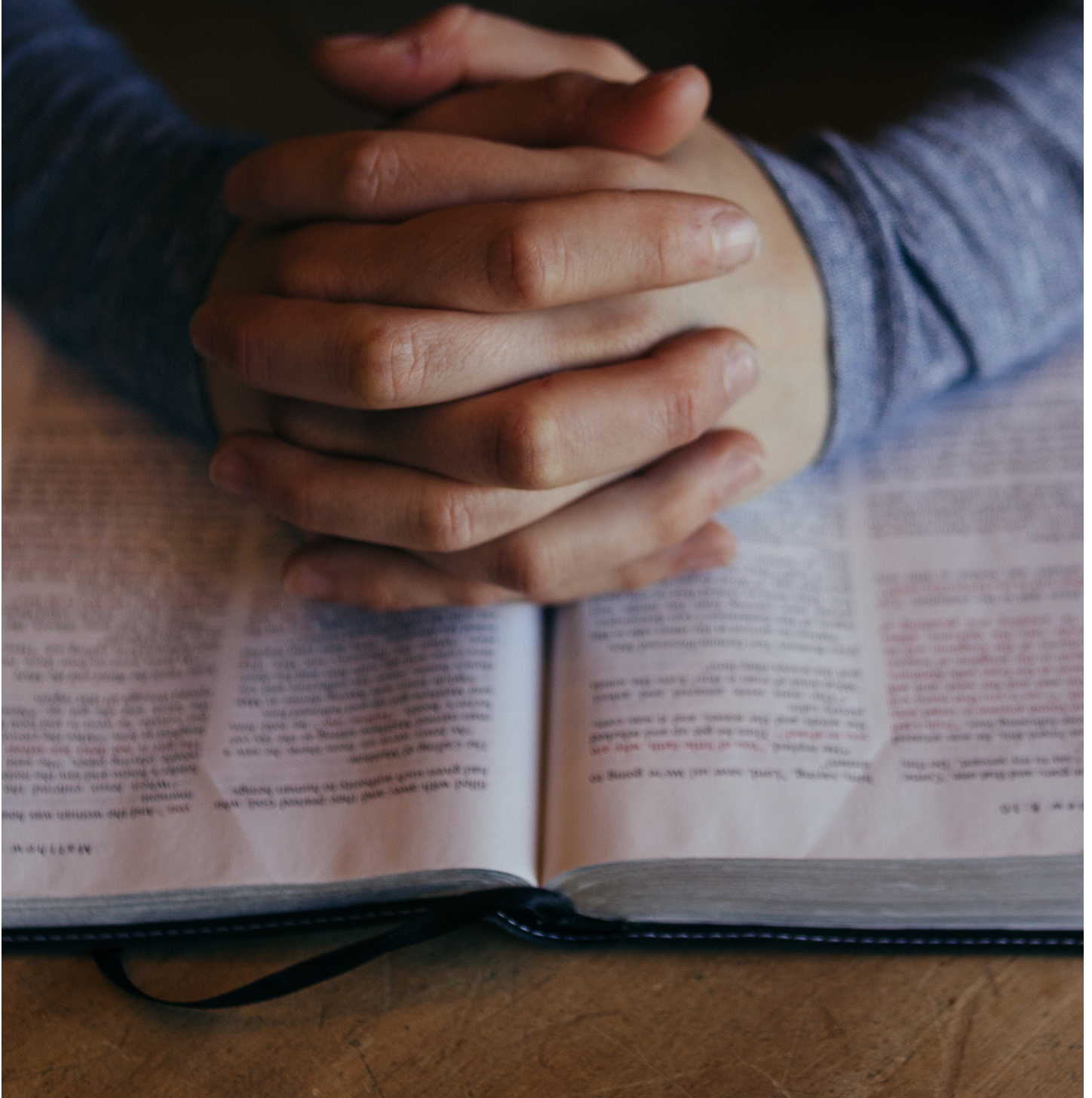


**INSIDE:**

**+ Living an intentional  
life of faith**



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ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

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The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

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## **Editor's Note:**

This month we asked our writers, "How do you live an intentional faith life, and not just one that goes through the motions?"

## ***Do It for the Right Reason***

**Written by:**

**Terri Braun**

In the mornings, I nestle in with God. Coffee in hand, I drift to my office. I settle into my glider, turn on my small lamp and dive into His Word. As I listen to my podcasts, I ponder what He is trying to teach me today. I simply talk with Him about my worries for the day, how life has been going, etc. He is a wonderful listener! Sometimes I don't have much to say, so I just sit in my quiet dimly lit room and be with Him. When I am finished, I somehow feel like I am more equipped to face each day. Sometimes I feel a peaceful presence,

sometimes joy and gratitude fill my heart, and sometimes I feel love. Whatever the outcome, beginning my day with Him is a necessity.

When I leave my time with Him and I don't feel any differently, then I know it is becoming routine and I am simply going through the motions. It is time to take inventory and ask myself these questions. Am I approaching God with an open heart? Am I being intentional and in the moment, or am I distracted? When with Him, am I looking through God-colored glasses or through the tainted eyes of the world? What am I feeding my soul? If I am

feeding my soul with the world then my hope and light wane, my soul becomes heavy and my heart fills with negativity. But when I feed my soul with Him and truly keep my heart open, it is just the opposite!

Then I ask myself, "Am I am praying for the right reasons?" "Have I entered my prayer time with the wrong intentions?" If it feels like a chore or something obligatory, then the answer is "yes." The true reason I should have a prayer life and spend time with God is because of the love I have for Him and that I want that relationship to grow. So, I should sit down with the

## ***Do It for the Right Reason (Continued)***

intention of getting to know Him and learning His character. One thing I have started to do during my prayer time is listen to the scripture for the day and then meditate on the character of God. Each day I write a few adjectives. My list now has over 150 words to describe Him.

Any relationship goes both ways. God has given us His Word, Jesus has given us His life, the only thing I have to give to Him is my heart. This only happens when I am vulnerable with Him and share my hopes, dreams, fears, worries and even secrets. No need to leave out the parts I am ashamed of or embarrassed about. I can't hide from Him. I have found that I can lie to myself, but it does no good to lie to God. He already knows. And He still loves me despite all my flaws and weaknesses!

Another way I have learned to get out of "just

going through the motions" is not just pursue His teachings, but actively be involved and help my community. When doing this, suddenly His Word becomes alive! Christianity is an action word. I can't just read the Bible; I also have to live out Jesus's mission on this earth.

I put away my pride, step outside of myself and my own vanities. I ignore what I see with my own eyes as they may be scattered with prejudices or biases. I try to be non-judgmental and see others through the eyes of God; see how others are beautiful with all their flaws. I serve with humility and humbly present myself to others as their servants just as Jesus. This reminds me of why I learn His Word in the first place.

It is hard, but step outside of your comfort zone and step inside of Jesus. Only then will you grow. You were created for good works. You were

created to have a relationship with your Creator. You were created for joy. So, even if it is only a minute (and it can be anywhere) start an honest conversation with God. Let Him get to know you and you get to know His character. Remember the intention of spending time with Him is your love for Him and desire for your relationship to grow. And don't just sit back and read and learn but serve your community in some way. We all are the hands and feet of Jesus. We have hands that can serve, arms that can comfort, feet to run to those that are in need, and a heart that can love. I know it is hard to make time to pray, but surely you have time to simply say, "Hello". It is a start.



*Terri Braun is the ministry coordinator for St. Nicholas of Myra Church.*

**"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." – Martin Luther King Jr.**

## Remembering God's Love for Us

**Written by:**

**Cheryl Glassman**

God's love has been shared with others for a long time, hasn't it? Some ways we know of God's love are truly profound as we hear about them through the lives of the saints. Some of the stories of the saints have taken a back seat to traditions - like St. Valentine. The Catholic church tells of his life.

St. Valentine was a physician and priest who lived in Rome. The emperor at the time was Claudius II, and was banning marriage. It seemed Claudius felt marriage distracted young soldiers from their duties. Valentine secretly married many individuals but was eventually caught and sentenced to death for his love of God and his beliefs. Valentine understood God's unconditional love and the importance of the sanctity of love. So then, St. Valentine saw the importance of looking past himself, and gave others the opportunity to share their love in a special way with God's blessing.

When we celebrate

Valentine's Day in today's world and receive a "valentine" or a gift, it is because someone is celebrating a feeling of love and/or affection for us! The person is taking time to see past themselves and offer us a moment to know they love and appreciate us. I think we all need to be better at giving God this "moment." When I reflect on the words from Titus 3:4-5 (NIV) it puts it in perspective: *"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."*

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on February 14th. Ash Wednesday, for the Catholic church and several Protestant churches, is the beginning of the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday is 46 days before Easter (Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the Spring Equinox). Catholics receive ashes on their foreheads. The ashes are remnants of burnt palms from the previous year's

Palm Sunday. The ashes are a symbol of death and repentance. They symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the ashes are placed on our foreheads, the person placing the ashes says, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," or "Repent and believe in the Gospel." We reflect upon Jesus' ministry on earth and the events leading up to his Passion, death, and resurrection.

In reality then, Ash Wednesday falling on February 14th, a day of love, is perfect! We can pray, fast, and think about the wondrous love of God, who gave his only son to save us from the death of sin. We can envision our Lord on his journey to the cross, giving his life and last breath for our salvation.

May our lives be changed this Lent, that we may turn our hearts toward Christ and open our minds to His call to love and serve in His name. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (NAB) and 2 Corinthians 6:2 (NAB), *"We are ambassadors for Christ, as if*

## ***Remembering God's Love for Us (Continued)***

*God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so*

*that we might become the righteousness of God in him...behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*



*Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.*

## ***Repetition and Formation***

***Written by:***

***Rev. Cana Moore***

A time loop is a classic trope in media of many kinds. This concept first appeared in a Russian novel in 1915 but has since become more popular in movies and television. The essential premise is this: a character experiences a period of time repeatedly, and in order to escape the loop, they must make certain changes. Usually, the primary character retains some knowledge of the time periods that they have lived, but other characters around them do not. This helps us see that they are the ones who need to act in order to break out of the cycle- they are the only ones who know it is happening.

Faith can feel like this sometimes. It can feel as if we are the ones stuck in a spiritual time loop, living life every day through the same

spiritual practices (or lack thereof) and unable to break the cycle. Other people around us might not notice, but we have the knowledge of our own stuck-ness. We worry that we should be doing something more and might even want to do something more to break out of old practices.

One way we avoid this is by being mindful of the Christian seasons. It is harder to feel fully stuck in our faith when we shift our mindsets and practice when different seasons come around, like Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas. By choosing to do different or specific practices during different seasons of the year, we can offer ourselves the chance to cycle through many different spiritual exercises throughout every 12 months.

We can construct many methods to keep ourselves

in a place of growth. However, I also think perhaps more valuable to us is a mindset shift. I do not wish to encourage us to practice only one specific spiritual discipline and neglect every other element of Christian life. But if we imagine this as a time of strengthening and formation, rather than a cycle we are stuck in till we get it right, we may find greater joy and purpose in it. When we consider this like strengthening a skillset, honing a craft, we may see the value of investing ourselves in a spiritual practice. This does mean we have to put in the work, and to be mindful of where it might be asking challenging things of us. But to give compassion to ourselves as we develop certain skills is not a shame, but a joy.

In a time when we are often overwhelmed with life, working hard and long

## ***Repetition and Formation (Continued)***

hours to keep ourselves from financial disaster, dealing with the challenges of maintaining or seeking health, supporting our families while addressing structural traumas, we can feel we do not have time to be intentional! And that can be very true. I do not think this is simply a question of "making time" for the things that matter. We are too worn out to even consider our internal and external

values most days. (Religious leadership can be the worst about this sometimes: in pushing for people to reevaluate their priorities, what we are actually saying is that we do not see or hear the struggle they are experiencing.) Instead, as we consider these things in ourselves, we can ask instead: why is this practice working for me? Why do I feel unable to add or change my practice? What

am I gaining from the spiritual practices I am able to do? By receiving ourselves without judgment, we can compassionately move forward and grow.



*The Rev. Cana Moore is the pastor of Hays Christian Church*

### ***Here Is the Purpose***

I know it is hard to make time for God in today's busy world. We have a million things to do and find that it is easy to just end up going through the motions. You might even ask yourself, "Why do it?" or "What's the point, it is just one more thing I have to do?" There are some small things in life that you do that can make a big difference. Prayer and spending time with God is one of them. As for the purpose and why you should do it: here is an excerpt from the book "Heavens' Whispers."

There is a passage by Gloria J. Stella Felder entitled "Of Dogwood and

Firs." She writes about a single solitary dogwood tree in bloom standing tall among a road lined of fir trees. That is what we as Christians are, those dogwoods among the firs, the few among the many.

She writes, "As born-again Christians, we are indeed to stand out, but as refreshing stimulants, as pick-me-ups for a world gone bad. Like the dogwood tree in the middle of the firs, we are to be who we are - children of God, shoulder square, standing straight and tall, unashamed and unapologetic, proud to represent our Father to a world looking on." "He has called us to share His love

with the dying world - to stand out so that others can see there's something pleasantly different about us. This difference should compel them to ask what causes us to glow in a dark world. They should see the Light that we reflect."

So, when your prayer life becomes stale and you ask yourself, "What's the purpose?" Remember you are to be that dogwood tree among the firs- a child of God. Make that time, however small, and continue to grow in God. A little faith goes a long way.

*This writer wishes to remain anonymous.*