
People are Coming to Church!

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*
October 22, 2023**

Have you been to church lately?

Yes! The chances are good that you have been to the Cathedral of St. Philip lately! I rejoice that so many people have been coming to church, and coming back to church, in all sorts of ways.

First of all, I mean on Sundays, of course. People are back. Our 7:45 Eucharist, in Mikell Chapel, has a steady and faithful congregation. We don't usually sing hymns, but we do usually say the words of some of the Sunday hymns. It's a practice we started during the pandemic, and it still works. Then, our 8:45 service is usually our largest congregation, if it is not summer time; families pray together, sometimes taking up the entire length of a pew. Children process out for special children's chapel right before the gospel reading. It is a glorious Eucharist, a service of thanksgiving. The sermons and music are strong. We share and celebrate our lively tradition of faith. Same with the 11:15 Eucharist in the Cathedral, and we add further music at this service. This 11:15 service might involve our most diverse congregation, even while another 11:15 service, in Spanish, is being prayed in Mikell Chapel. 4:00 on Sunday afternoon is reserved for Evensong, or some other offering enjoying glorious music. Every Evensong is followed by a short Eucharist.

By Sunday night, we have kept the feast, over and over again. But people are coming to church even if they do not actually enter the nave! Some of you attend education classes, children and youth and adult, even when you don't attend worship. I know a green apron volunteer who serves faithfully in the Education wing, but who never hears the sermon until she listens to the online service later in the week! In the evenings, it is also EYC time! Episcopal Youth Community! Youth show up!


The Cathedral is a sacred destination even during the week. Our Cathedral Preschool ministers every weekday, with children everywhere. We pray a daily Eucharist at 12:15 every day in St. Mary's Chapel, right above the Cathedral Bookstore, which is a daily destination, too! Throughout the week, classes and meetings of all sorts gather. We study the Bible from 7:00 a.m. some days, through 9:00 p.m. on other days. Neighborhood associations also use the Cathedral. Choirs are singing, organists are rehearsing, throughout the days. People are coming to church!

Throughout the week, too, we are making time for the occasional pastoral offices which make our church holy. I mean special prayer services and weddings and funerals. Weddings, of course, are usually planned long in advance; and we are conducting many more weddings at the Cathedral than we have in recent years. Funerals, obviously, are usually arranged quickly; and we pray funerals a lot. The Cathedral of St. Philip is a holy place because we pray here a lot, in both joyful and sad occasions.

And Saturday? It is the seventh day of the week in our calendar, the day of both rest and re-creation. We celebrate creation by devoting pretty much our entire campus to the Cathedral Farmers Market! People come to church! That market is one, huge, celebration of creation and community; I sometimes call it our grand coffee hour, when our neighborhood gathers in unhurried and happy time, supporting local farmers and vendors.

I have not even mentioned all the informal ways that people come to church. Some people just enjoy strolling through the campus, a quiet green space in an urgent city. Some people are seeking ministry in the Lanier House, and the Cathedral Counseling Center. Some people are entering the church just to be quiet, to sit or kneel in a sacred place where they can sense the transcendent again.

This, all this, is our church, the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip. We are a sacred destination; we are where people have known the Holy before, and where we are returning to experience the Holy again. Yes, I realize that we can know the Holy in all sorts of ways these days, even online. But I give thanks for knowing the Holy at church, in the flesh! The Cathedral of St. Philip is not one of those church buildings sitting forlorn and empty these days. We are full! We are full of people, all sorts of people; and we are full of spirit, Holy Spirit! Have you been to church lately? Yes, you have! And, I have been to church, too, in all sorts of ways; every one of those ways has brought me closer to the Holy. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip