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## *The Day the Wind Died: Nathan Laube at the Cathedral*

Meeting Limitation with Presence and Grace

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell**

On June 11, the Cathedral of St. Philip hosted Nathan Laube for a recital as part of the Atlanta Summer Organ Festival. On the surface, it was a beautiful evening of music. But beneath the performance was something more subtle, more real—a quiet invitation to notice how we meet life when it doesn't go our way.

Nathan arrived late Monday, coming directly from a family funeral. He began practicing immediately. His program was both technically demanding and musically complex, requiring long overnight hours to register each piece on the Cathedral's organ. (For those unfamiliar, registration is the detailed process of selecting and balancing the organ's stops to suit the music. It's exacting and personal.)

After nearly 20 hours of preparation, and just hours before the recital, something broke. A valve failed in the Solo division of the organ—the section responsible for some of its most expressive voices. Wind couldn't reach most of the pipes. And the repair couldn't be made in time.

I can imagine how I might have reacted. I can hear the thoughts rising: This shouldn't be happening. This isn't fair. All that work for nothing. I can feel the impulse to distance myself from whatever has gone wrong—to explain it, resist it, or shift the blame. Anything but simply face what is.

But Nathan didn't resist. He didn't complain. He didn't look for someone to blame. Instead, he paused—and began again.

For four hours, he re-registered his entire program—hundreds of adjustments, reorganizing which keyboards to use, rebalancing stops, reshaping what the music could become now that the instrument had changed. We delayed the start of the recital by thirty minutes to give him just that little extra bit of time.

And then he played.

What followed was not just a display of mastery. It was something quieter and more powerful. The music, limited by the broken section, had a new kind of depth. A presence. Not in spite of the problem, but because of it.

Contemplative writers often remind us that our difficulties are not obstacles to the path of our spiritual growth—they are the path. That night, Nathan walked the path that showed up, not the one he'd prepared for. And he walked it with steadiness and grace.

I often mistake success for getting what I want—or thought I wanted. But the deeper invitation of the spiritual life is to meet reality as it is, not as we wish it were. Nathan did just that.

I imagine he had hopes for how the evening would go. But when those hopes dissolved, he didn't react with resistance. He responded with care. With adaptation. With a kind of dignity that comes not from control, but from letting go.

In my experience, this level of equanimity doesn't just happen. It comes from an inner life cultivated in awareness. It grows through the willingness to feel disappointment without being consumed by it. It takes root when we stop needing life to match our preferences in order to be at peace.

And those of us who were there—we were changed. The music didn't just fill the Cathedral. It settled into us. It showed us something true: that when things fall apart, we can still make music with what remains.

Nathan's recital wasn't exactly as he'd hoped. But it was honest. And maybe that's what makes it unforgettable. It didn't shine with brilliance alone—it radiated presence.

Sometimes we imagine grace to be something rare or supernatural. But grace can be as simple as not turning away when things are difficult. Grace can be the willingness to stay open, even when the wind dies.

And perhaps, in the end, this is the heart of spiritual practice: to be with whatever comes—without needing it to be different—trusting that even in limitation, even in loss, we can still take the next right step, and let it be enough