
Come to the Laboratory!

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

If you want to have some fun exploring, and observing, and studying, and discovering, and even putting cool things together, come to the laboratory!

I, for one, am quite ready, to do all those things! I have spent some of this summer on retreat, in a cabin on a lake in Ontario, Canada. Each year, the old place accumulates more conveniences, but it is a still a "camp" in the mind of my family, who have been living at this lake in the summers for over one hundred years. It is in the bush. The power goes out frequently. Heavy rains flood the paths and wash out the roads. Every day there are maintenance chores. And we love it. For me, the camp functions as a retreat, where I learn to observe and study and focus.

Observe and focus. As we observe Homecoming Sunday, this Sunday, August 17, at the Cathedral, I am seeing the Church as a wonderful and thrilling laboratory! Yes, we use several different definitions for "Church" in our lives. We call the Church the Body of Christ. The Church is holy community. It is beloved community. It is a community of faith.

But Church is also a laboratory! We come here to observe, and to explore, and to learn! We practice here. We practice paying attention to God, the Holy; and we practice paying attention to people, each other. We learn to love God and our neighbor.

If you have passed through the Cathedral in the past two months, you have surely noticed dramatic changes in magnificent construction along Andrews Drive. The Good Faith Chapel is now topped out, with a beautiful oculus! That chapel is a new feature of our laboratory, our "Laboratory of Good Faith." The oculus will serve our search for the Holy in the transcendent, in the clear heavens above us. And the octagonal gathering space will serve our search for the Holy in each other! We will see each other when we gather there. Thus, the Good Faith Chapel will be a new place to learn about God, and a new place to learn about each other. We will serve God and neighbor from that holy place. We will practice transcendence and intimacy.

Of course, the "Laboratory of St. Philip" will continue to practice praying and serving in all sorts of other ways this fall. We learn to pay attention in laboratories! We practice paying attention! Practice! For instance, the Cathedral Choir practices; and that work results in magnificent music! The rest of us are supposed to be practicing, too. Mission groups practice service, over and over again, seeking to serve people better. Bible studies gather around ancient texts. Theology groups pause and contemplate. Students and teachers practice in the Preschool. Farmers and vendors practice in the Cathedral Farmers Market. And, of course, prayer groups practice prayer throughout each day.

We come together to practice paying attention, paying attention to God and paying attention to the needs of the world. Pay attention to what you pay attention to! What are you paying attention to? Come pay attention at the Laboratory of St. Philip!

Wherever we have been this past summer — at home and at work, or in the mountains, or at the beach — I hope we have practiced observation again. I hope we have practiced paying attention. Now, schools are beginning again, and the Cathedral of St. Philip is resuming its practices of prayer and service. Join us! Come to the Laboratory!





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

© The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.