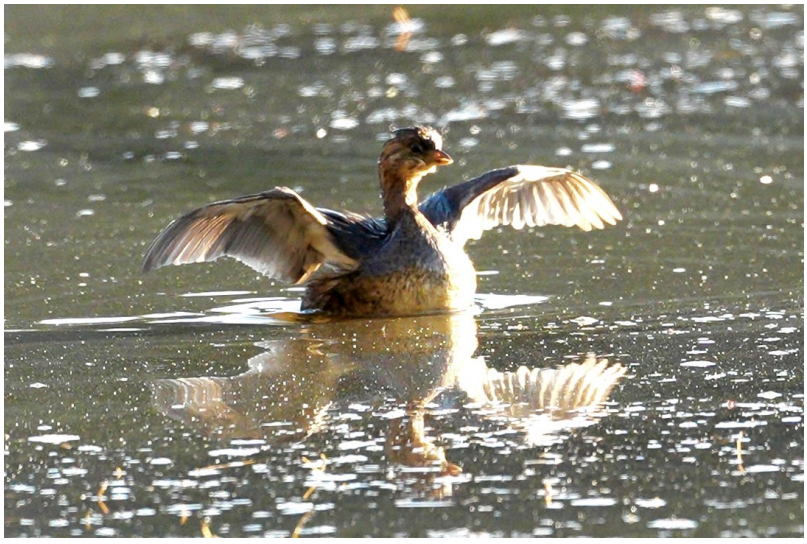
The CATHEDRAL of ST. PHILIP
SERVING ATLANTA AND THE WORLD

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Pied Beauty!

An article for *The Cathedral Times*



by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*

Glory be to God for dappled things! The fall weather turned chilly and refreshing last week. What great joy for me to take a long walk, out by a lake, out in the pasture, out in the woods full of fallen leaves.

I love those leaves, crackling with pied colors like the flames of familiar fire. I grew up walking in those dappled woods, always looking for new and old wildlife. Last week, I stopped to stare at a mature buck, who was staring at me. I saw a beaver gliding through the water. But it is birdlife that I most want to see when I walk. I like birds, as most friends of mine know, especially birds around the water. And I enjoy observingand photographing them whatever time of year it is.

In the fall, there are still a few warblers around (my favorites!) and I still enjoy the tiny kinglets and gangly great blue herons. I delight in the dancing kingfishers! Especially in the cold of early winter, I am also looking for ducks. One of the great beauties, of course, is the wood duck, who is always trying to hide his amazingly bright colors. Talk about dappled green and red and brown and black!

Last week, however, it seemed like all I was going to see were the obnoxious Canada geese. And, then, suddenly, there it was! A pied-billed grebe! A pied-billed grebe suddenly emerged from that lazy gaggle of rude geese. The pied-billed grebe raised his wings and dashed through a dramatic show for me. My walk was satisfied.

This Thanksgiving, I give thanks for dappled things, for pied colors throughout God's creation. God mixes colors pretty well, from wildlife and birds, to leaves and people. We are all some sort of colorful creation, and I give thanks for our dappled colors.

Some people claim that it is only in the fall that we see a leaf's true colors, that the summer green chlorophyl is merely covering the hidden glorious reds and oranges and yellows that are always there. Maybe so. Maybe it is when seasons change that we discover the inner natures, and true natures, of each other. Maybe the fall is a time to discover another color inside us.

And, so, here is a poem for this time of year, Thanksgiving, from one of my favorite poets, Gerard Manley Hopkins, titled, “Pied Beauty.”

Glory be to God for dappled things –
  For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
    For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;
  Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
    And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
  Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
    With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.

Amen!



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Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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