
It Felt Like Spring!

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Rev. Canon Cathy Zappa**

It felt like spring! Even in the dog-days of an Atlanta August, it felt like spring here at the Cathedral this past Sunday. It wasn't just the soft, pink and white flowers on the altar or the rich green vestments. It was you! It was the people of this community, gathering together, offering your ministries, and inviting others into them.

It has been two years since our last Ministry Fair, and much has happened since then. There has been a pandemic! There is *still* a pandemic! There have been many, many losses. We have witnessed many tragedies and injustices, close to home and far away. There have been painful divisions. There has been rage and violence and fear.

In March 2020, our church building had to close. That marked the beginning of what Dean Candler called a "season of social distance for the common good." It has been a hard season, like a long, hard, cold winter. For months, we hibernated at home, worshipping and meeting online. Then, in September 2020, some of us began to gather for worship outside. In the colder months, we gathered around a fire, which provided warmth, light, and, at times, lots of smoke! On Christmas Eve, we celebrated Christ's birth as the first shepherds did, outside, in the cold dark, weathering rain, snow, sleet, and a mighty wind that upended the tent over our altar.

Finally, in March 2021, we held our first service in the nave in over a year. We carefully and joyfully made our way back into the building... in masks. A few weeks later, we started singing again, together! And a few weeks later still, without masks! It was as if the first, small signs of spring, of rebirth, were asserting themselves: the blades of a daffodil here, buds on a dogwood tree there.

Then another cold front blew through: this latest COVID surge. The masks came back out, and we're wearing them still. We need to be cautious and vigilant again; some of us will need to stay at home. It is discouraging, to be sure.

But what I saw at the Ministry Fair filled me with hope and gratitude. What I saw was life. Resilience. Joy. What I saw was the persistent beauty and faith of this community. What I saw was a commitment to serving God, loving one another, and caring for those who are most vulnerable.

As any gardener knows, gardens do not die in the winter. They lay fallow. There is work to be done in those winter months. That is true of this church, too. There has been a lot of work done over this last year and a half. A lot! Remember those online services? They took hours to prepare. One two-minute reading might have a ten or more takes behind it. (Thank you, lectors and intercessors! Thank you, Dan Murphy and Brant McCaskill!) Our Altar and Flower Guilds came in to prepare the worship spaces for recording, and then again for in-person services--adapting again and again as things kept changing. (Thank you, Altar and Flower Guilds!) When we were registering for services, ushers ticked off names as worshippers arrived. Volunteers and staff arrived early and stayed late to set up and took down our outdoor altar, sound system, and chairs. (Thank you, ushers, vergers, and sextons!) We held baptisms, weddings, and funerals outside, too, so that we could continue to mark these holy transitions together. (Thank you, Baptism, Wedding, and Funeral Guilds!)

Our community—you!—hung in there through all these changes. You have been patient, supportive, and gracious as we all have made—at times *fumbled*—our way through this pandemic. You kept caring for one another, being intentional about checking in with others and reaching out to those who have been sick, absent, bereaved. You have been persistent in showing, through prayer and material support, loving concern for those in need, in our community and beyond. Thank you, thank you!

It *has* been a long winter. And this past Sunday, I got a glimpse of spring, that vibrant season of growth, rebirth, rebuilding. I saw a vibrant community, which has been busy tending the soil, planting, watering. I look forward to seeing the good fruit we will bear this year, together, in the name of Christ.

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