

...OR THE ...
OF



Community

Carolina
GRACE

GOLD FOR THE SOUL

FORGIVENESS
2015

The logo for Carolina GRACE features a stylized, circular emblem on the left, composed of several curved lines that suggest a wreath or a laurel wreath. To the right of the emblem, the word "Carolina" is written in a large, elegant, serif font. Below "Carolina", the word "GRACE" is written in a smaller, all-caps, serif font. A horizontal line is positioned below the word "GRACE".

Carolina GRACE

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WHY FORGIVENESS?

People who have the capacity to forgive recognize that one forgives in order to be free—free from hatred, bitterness and anger—free to love and to be loved. We forgive because we are forgiven.

Forgiveness is of course different from reconciliation. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has taught us that there can be no reconciliation without a proper confrontation—a *proper* confrontation, not a violent one.

Forgiveness requires empathy and the ability to see ourselves and others as members—together—of the human race. When we separate ourselves, forgiveness becomes more difficult. At times, forgiveness may need to be as much or more an act of the will as of the heart, which is why it may be necessary to forgive more than once—perhaps even seventy times seven.

The compilation of this issue of *Carolina Grace* has been a small step in the healing process for each of the contributors. We hope it is for you, as well. My prayer is that we would not only know the healing touch of our Lord, but also that we might be moved to see where perhaps before we were blind.

Peace in Christ,

*Calhoun Walpole, Editor
Grace Episcopal Church, Charleston and
The Episcopal Church in South Carolina*

“When we forgive others, we begin the process of healing ourselves. When we forgive others, what we are saying is we really trust God.”

REV. JOHN PAUL BROWN
MT. ZION AME CHURCH, CHARLESTON



EMANUEL

We're "lost in wonder, love and praise,"
Poet parson bids us pray.
Lost am I, to witness love so
Well lived out, mirroring above
A love so deep it conquers all
Brokenness since Adam's fall.

God is with us, All is well.
God is with us, Emanuel.

"God is with us," the faithful pray
Hard to see amid the day
Of violence and of bloody rage,
Same old book, another page,
And more of what we've known as plain,
Cloaked by us, concealing shame.
But known too well by those who live
Lives of loss, much to forgive.

God is with us, All is well.
God is with us, Emanuel.

Forgive, you say? I can't conceive
Of such a love as you grieve.
We live for one who teaches still,
Nailed and bruised, he knows the drill.
For hating back, there is no place,
His great tale knows only grace.

God is with us, All is well.
God is with us, Emanuel.

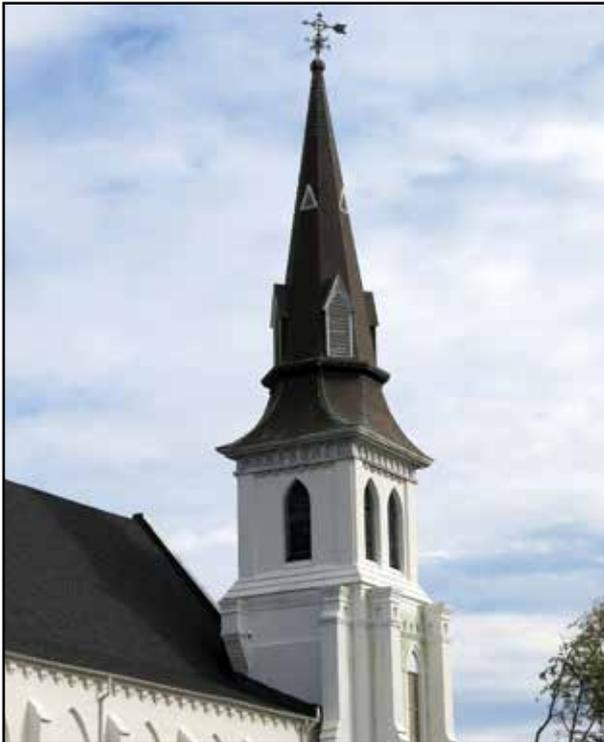
There is no bridge from hate, my friend,
No pathway, its own dead end.



So love must live amid the loss,
Live on love despite the cost.
Love's sweet banners before us rise,
Lesser flags meet their demise.
We, who witness such great ways, are
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

*God is with us, All is well.
God is with us, Emanuel.*

*The Rev. J. M. A. Wright, 2015
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



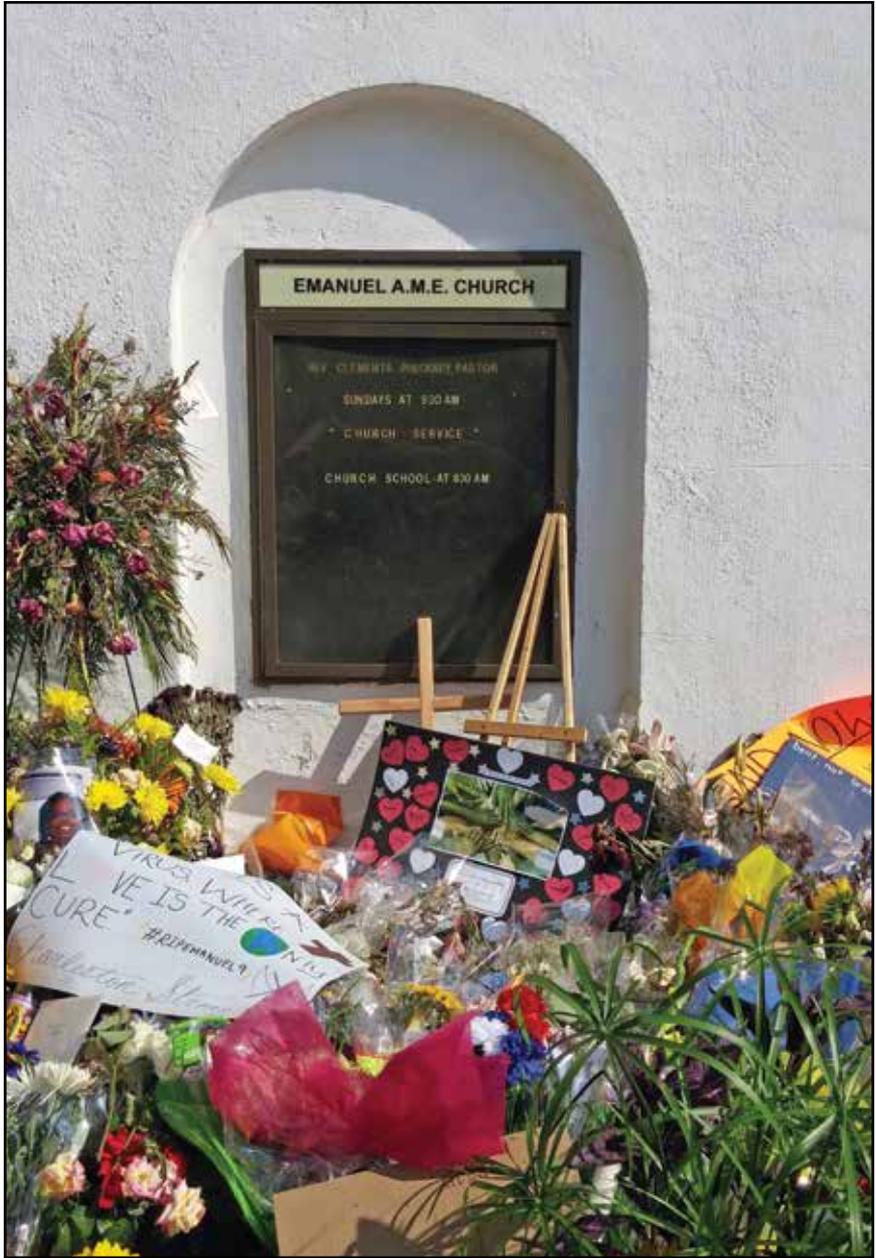


Photo courtesy: Cassandra Foster



THE HOLY CITY: A MEDITATION

I woke at 5:30 a.m. on June 17 the way I always do, stretching, savoring the morning smells of chicory in the coffee, and trying to squeeze in a few more minutes of sleep.

I failed. The cats were begging for food—the new puppy insistent for attention. The vision of everything I needed to accomplish in the garden before the heat entered its punishing phase started scrolling against the blank screen of my eyelids, and I couldn't make it stop. I reached toward the nightstand, barely cracking my eyelids, intending to check the time and temperature on my iPad. But the first words I saw on the screen were the morning headlines from CNN... and they did not make sense.

“Nine killed in shooting at black church in Charleston.”

“*Charleston?*” I thought, *I'm from Charleston.* “*Nine killed,*” the words said. “*A shooting ... in a church?*” My mind raced... *Which church?*

Dawn was just a whisper on the horizon. There was no one I felt I could call at that hour. So I rose—and went out into the garden. I went because there the stakes were straightforward and easy to understand. We had corn and beans and watermelons and six weeks without measurable rain. They needed water. We had Japanese beetles chewing the cannas and the lovely crimson zinnias I had grown from seed. They needed killing. We had cucumbers and tomatoes putting on a growth spurt because they loved the heat. They needed staking. *Everything* needed mulching. And it would soon be blazing, stinking, make-you-wanna-holler hot. So I went out and my body performed the repetitive motions needed until my shoulders ached and the sweat was pouring off me in red clay rivulets. I did these tasks methodically and well, and I was nearly done with them before I realized that God's daily grace, extended through the simple act of contact with the soil, had eluded me. I was not at peace.

I didn't actually break down, though, until after lunch





Photo courtesy: Andy Brack

when I was halfway to work. As I slowed the van to cross the one-lane bridge stitching the two halves of my country lane to the main road, keeping a sharp eye out for the neighbor's geese, which fed on both sides of the road, the words *nine dead* and *Mother Emanuel* set off a reverberation and, in the after-shock that followed, something small and fragile fell off a shelf in my heart and just...broke. I did not care who had done this. What I was desperate to know—what I could not find out because no one at home was answering their phones—was which of my beloved had been sacrificed on the altar of this city's 300-year-old hates?

The road narrowed to a ribbon, bloodied by memory—red cushions and dark wood, a sanctuary of immense size hosting weddings, baptisms, choir programs, funerals. When I was a girl, *Mother Emanuel* (I could almost see my mother's lips forming the words) was the beating heart of a segregated city, the place where all our complex social networks converged: sororities and frats, the Links, the Jack and Jill, the Eastern



Star, all the churches with their stalwart names like Morris Brown, Calvary, Morris Street Baptist—the times, the places, the faces all blending into a single image of a time when black Charleston was one family, diverse, brawling, loving, at the center not the margins because “white flight” in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Martin Luther King’s visit (to Mother Emanuel), and a hospital workers’ strike had made the peninsula ours as it had not been since the Great Migration out of the South, ours as it had not been since Boundary Street was renamed for that architect of secession, Calhoun. Safe? Our haven? Violated.

Drowning in memory, I found myself swerving and clutching the wheel, frantic to keep the van in a straight line as I rocked and sobbed and howled *NOOoooooooooooo! NOOoooooooooooo!*

I did make it to the office that day. I did not meet with students. For the next 48 hours, I didn’t do much of anything but sit riveted alternately by the television and computer screens ... and weep.

It would be another 24 hours before Charleston County Coroner Rae Wooten released the names of the Emanuel Nine. Before saying anything further, I must speak their names.

Cynthia Hurd, 54; Susie Jackson, 87; Ethel Lance, 70; Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, 49; the Rev. Sen. Clementa Pinckney, 41; Tywanza Sanders, 26; Rev. Daniel Simmons Sr., 74; Rev. Sharonda Singleton, 45; Myra Thompson, 59.

Mothers, teachers, nephews, freedom workers, warriors for the Lord. They included my sorority sister, Myra, of the Charleston Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, and sweet-faced Cynthia, who like my mother was one of the city’s few black librarians.

On June 17, they welcomed the stranger and the alien into their midst for Wednesday evening Bible study. They pored over scripture and shared insights for nearly an hour. The assassin is said to have found them “so nice” he nearly faltered in



his mission. But as whatever demonic force he was wrestling with regained control, he pulled out the Glock he should not have been able to purchase and methodically, with premeditation and malice aforethought, gunned them, one after the other, down.

No sooner had his name and picture been published than an internet posse formed. It unearthed his domain name,

“We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.”

THE REV. MARTIN
LUTHER KING JR.

“lastrhodesian.com,” and a manifesto that outlined his white supremacist beliefs, the sources of his radicalization, and his political aims. He chose “Mother Emanuel” deliberately and with care—the church had symbolic and historical weight for him as Denmark Vesey’s congregation. Here, he would sow seeds of terror hoping for a bloody harvest: a race war.

And in at least one heart—my own—he came damn near to succeeding.

Charleston likes to call itself the Holy City, because of its many churches. But being of the generation that integrated the city’s schools in the 1970s, the veneer of piety has always struck me as communion wafer thin, cracking easily

to reveal the snarl behind the smiling façade.

A holy city? Perhaps if you’re speaking of the way it worships its own distorted image in a cracked mirror, the way it has crafted a highly selective and self-flattering history as its bible. Holy? Perhaps if you’re speaking of its idols—the mortuary landscape of “lost cause” memorials that cluster thick as flies in the historic district; the pint-sized battle flags that blossom as predictably on the graves of the long dead as the azaleas of early May.



I recall Charleston as a city of casual psychological violence. My senior year: in a bar crowded with rowdy underage drinkers, my friends are pulled aside and gruffly told, “get the n--- out.” In my thirties: a glorious January day hand in hand with my love on lower King, our joy in the day and each other soured by the hate-filled eyes of a shop owner giving us to know we would not be served. In my forties: a summertime conversation with a regional manager from CVS. Yes, Ms. Hamilton, the pharmacist admitted it: she lied about the bathroom being broken. And the other customers were right, too. She routinely tells such lies to black customers. We’ve spoken to her, sternly... You won’t be... ummm, planning to sue, will you?

These are memories from casual visits over a nearly 30-year absence. A pinprick here, a slap there. Moving back represented a leap of faith for me—that despite having full knowledge of what might be awaiting, in a state that has never been too busy to hate, the proximity to family would make it all okay. On June 17, I received a roundhouse blow. And I came to know it was *not* okay. It might never again be okay.

Juneteenth fell two days after the massacre. Friends from far and wide were making the pilgrimage to Charleston, to join family, to lay flowers, to stand with people who knew without being told how assaulted they were feeling. My father was far away—in Salt Lake City at the Episcopal General Convention—so I stayed put in Laurens County, wrestling with hate.

As my Facebook feed filled with messages and memes about liberation—and pleas to save the red and blue rag—I found myself struggling with unfamiliar thoughts and emotions. “Why are they talking about the flag?” asked one bewildered woman on a Facebook page devoted to Charleston history. “The flag is history! They should leave it alone!” And in a moment of clarity, I discovered...I hated that woman. I hated her willful ignorance of the facts of my existence, hated her blithe assumption of the mantle of wronged innocence. I hated them all: the church-going ladies agreeing that somebody in that Bible study should have had a gun; the 11th generation blueblood thundering about his grandfather’s “sacrifice”; the



men blustering about “our” guns, our pride, our culture. I hated them all. And it felt... good.

I was conscious that this was wrong, that it was against all my values, everything I’d ever been taught or believed in. I was conscious even of a presence that was pleased with, gloating over, my slip-slide into darkness. I recall thinking, “What a victory for Satan it would be, Kendra, if you lost your religion over this.” But the hating... Well, it provided such unexpected comfort, such certainty. I had always known who the enemies were, after all. They had never

bothered to hide, except possibly from themselves. Now, rather than struggling to understand them, to forgive them, I was free to loathe them with every fiber of my being. And in my secret heart of hearts, I was reveling in that freedom.

Friends who had gone to Charleston, or who had never left, spoke of different emotions: an outpouring of love and compassion. They spoke of strangers weeping in each other’s arms, downtown office workers using their breaks to take water to those standing vigil. I was not comforted or convinced. On



Photo courtesy: Cassandra Foster



June 21, a multiracial human chain 10,000 strong stretched across a bridge named for a noted flag-waver, holding hands and singing freedom songs, demanding that the flag come down from the Statehouse grounds. I teared up at the sight, but not enough to melt that chip of ice that hate had lodged in my heart.

Twenty-four hours later, the assassin stood before a Charleston magistrate and faced the kin of the men and women he'd slain. He looked withdrawn, his face an expressionless mask. Then the first of the family members stood to speak.

"I forgive you," the daughter of Ethel Lance said. "You took something really precious away from me. I will never talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again. But I forgive you and have mercy on your soul."

"Repent. Confess," said Anthony Thompson, speaking for Soror Myra Thompson's family. "Give your life to the one who matters the most, Christ, so he can change your ways ..."

For just a moment, he looked shocked—and then his face flattened into blankness once again. But the voices continued to speak, and I began to recognize the words and cadences of the liberation gospel of the A.M.E.

"You have killed some of the most beautiful people that I know. Every fiber in my body hurts ... and I'll never be the same," said Felicia Sanders, mother of Tywanza Sanders, before adding, "...may God have mercy on you."

Bethane Middleton-Brown said, "DePayne Doctor was my sister. And I just thank you Lord on the behalf of my family for not allowing hate to win. For me, I'm a work in progress and I acknowledge that I'm very angry. But one thing DePayne ... taught me [is that] we are the family that love built. We have no room for hate. We have to forgive. I pray God on your soul."

"I am a work in progress," she had said. And with those words, I was released from the bondage that hate had laid upon my heart. Those stunning gestures of forgiveness—radical acts of grace that, in effect, extended the circle of the "beloved community" even to the most egregious act, the most heinous offender—healed me. This was the victory of the liberation



gospel, which for centuries saved our souls from the relentless hatred and violence that had for centuries been wielded against us. Just like that, in a personal miracle of salvation, I found myself restored to myself.

Later, much later, I learned the scripture the nine were studying that night was the Parable of the Sower, my favorite parable, the favorite, I like to imagine, of every gardener. “A farmer went out to sow his seed,” it begins...

“And as he was scattering it, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no roots. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

(Matthew 13: 3-9)

I think now, with the advantage of a several weeks' hindsight, that Charleston indeed proved itself a holy city on the night of June 17. Not holy in the beauty of its buildings—but holy in terms of the power of the Spirit that dwelled inside one of them. The killer traveled over 100 miles to sow his seeds at Emanuel, a church with a nearly 200-year history of resistance to hate. There could have been no soil less friendly to the harvest he wished to reap.

And the Spirit of God moved that night.

Recall this. The assassin took nine lives: nine, a sacred number, a number of completion.

Imagine this: the nine entering that other world together. As spirits joined now to Spirit, seeing all things that had been and all that were to come, recalling the lesson they had been study-



ing, in all its deepest significance. And now imagine this: the nine grasping the Wheel of Time and History, all nine pairs of hands...*and together turning it.*

Yes, the blow was grievous, and aimed at our collective hearts, but the assassin found no victory, not over Emanuel AME, not over my heart, and not, ultimately even, over the hearts of his white brothers and sisters. They, after all, have been the loudest voices clamoring to bring the flag that symbolized his hate down. As down it came, after an unimaginable series of events, on July 10.

So, a fire has swept through all our hearts, like the burning of canefields after harvest. There's been a storm of smoke and fire, and now a layer of ash sits on the earth waiting for the rains. The seed that's being planted—will it fall in the ruts beside the path or among thorns or on thin soil? Or will it take root in deep earth and bear fruit a hundredfold, as in the parable?

Only time will tell.

*Kendra Hamilton
All Saints Episcopal Church, Clinton, S.C.
Trinity Episcopal Church, Charlottesville, VA
Calvary Episcopal Church, Charleston*

"I'm a follower of Christ who prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers. I was raised to believe that Christianity is not about dogmatic exclusion, petty and human-inspired doctrinal arguments or fanatical vengeance, but about love. Forgiveness is also 'hard-wired' into the African-American church tradition."

THE REV. JOSEPH DARBY,
PRESIDING ELDER BEAUFORT DISTRICT AME CHURCH



THE STORM

On Thursday at 11:15 a.m., the day after the massacre, we began the walk from Grace to Morris Brown AME Church. It was hot. This was not just Charleston heat. This was something else. I thought to myself, perhaps this blanket of heat that has fallen over the South this past week is a form of penance. The hot walk itself something I needed to take part in to remind myself of the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

I must confess, and I imagine we all must confess, that for too long the storm of racism in this country has been unnoticeable to those of us who are able to reside in ships big enough to weather the waves. But for many, as we all have seen over the past few days, for many who are in the skiffs and the



lifeboats, the winds and waves have never subsided.

In Mark's Gospel and in the ancient world, the sea, the waters, are perceived as chaos. Dare I say evil? This is where the dragons and the sea monsters live. This is where fisherman and sailors go and sometimes never come back. Evil: A way to describe in the ancient world that which we cannot understand.

I think that it is safe to say that evil exists. As much as we do not want to believe it, as much as we want to push it to the side and explain it in some other way, evil exists. You want to know how I know evil is a force in this world? Because it takes effort to resist it.

But as much as evil persists there is someone who came into this world

to overcome it. Someone who came into this world and endured it himself. Jesus. He is the one who triumphed over the evil in the human heart and rose victorious from the grave that we put him in. He did that for us.

The translation we have been given for Jesus' words, "Peace! Be still," do not do justice to the Greek. What Jesus is saying to the overwhelming storm of chaos is "Silence! Shut up!"

Jesus is the one who tells Satan himself to SHUT UP! You have no power. You may think you have power, but you have no chance. So shut up. Go home. Leave this place.

This is what we heard at the vigil at Morris Brown AME on Thursday. Evil has no power in the community of Christ. As much as it seems insurmountable, like the story of David and Goliath, we

"Forgiveness is always an important stepping stone to reconciliation."

CHARLES T. FERILLO JR.



as a community in Christ, can overcome anything when we stand on THE foundation. Nothing less. Only Christ can silence the storm that seems to be swamping the boat. Only Christ.

Only Christ in us. His hands and feet. His eyes and ears. His body. His community here on earth. The assembly of God. The Church. Not just Grace Church, not just Mother Emanuel, but all of us together. Black and white, rich and poor, old and young. Together. With Christ at the helm of that boat in the storm. Telling that storm to shut up.

I believe the storm was telling Dylann Roof to do what he did. I believe the storm exists in our very own hearts: Swamping us, holding us back from our greatest potential. The storm was with Jesus in the wilderness, tempting him in every way. The storm was with Jesus in the garden, telling him not to carry his cross. The storm is telling me that this is just another

mass shooting we can do nothing about. The storm is telling me that racism will never end. The storm was telling those victims' loved ones to speak words of vengeance during his bond hearing. But Christ in their hearts, and Christ in the community supporting them, silenced that storm and beckoned each of them to speak words of mercy, forgiveness, and GRACE. Grace in the midst of a mighty storm. May we have the courage to see the storm for what it is: An imposter. Something that Jesus can silence with a few words: Silence; shut up. Maybe we can think of some other three-word phrases that can silence a storm.

“I am sorry.
I am praying.
I love you.
I need help.
I forgive you...”

*Caleb J. Lee
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*





MY PATH TO FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. When I saw that the topic for the next issue of Carolina Grace was, primarily, forgiveness, I thought, as I suspect many did, of the grace and forgiveness shown so masterfully by the families of the Emanuel Nine. Honestly, how could there be any more moving example of complete, Godly forgiveness than these grief-stricken, heartbroken families had already provided.

But this is forgiveness that we witnessed. What about forgiveness we ourselves experienced and allowed? An issue I've struggled myself with in the jarring days since June 17 is my own part, not in this tragedy specifically, but in the persistence of racism in this world. It is easy to tell myself that I'm okay; I'm certainly not a racist. I can even believe that the majority of the time. However, I carry some responsibility to my community, and that can be very easy to forget in the hurry of work and bills and obligations.



Silence, complacency, comfort...those are the allies that racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of intolerance all rely on to keep thriving in this world. So what I have challenged myself to do is to forgive myself for being a silent partner to social inequality and injustice.

Now, I'm not going to pretend that I am capable of the Christ-like act of forgiveness that these families were able to show. For me, I have to work a little harder on forgiving. I'm just not as actualized on that front.

To this end, I've been trying to examine what has kept me silent. Desensitization? Partly. Lack of empathy? Probably more than I'd like to admit. Not because I don't feel angry or sad at the injustices when I see them. Instead, it's more because I don't experience them myself. Since I'm not impacted day to day, I just don't SEE them. So, to work towards this forgiveness, I've challenged myself to really consider what it's like outside my white, comfortable world.

How to figure this out; how to re-examine my comfort zone and contrast it with that of people from differing backgrounds is proving work in itself. For example, since the shooting, two Confederate flags have gone up in my neighborhood. This made me feel angry and frustrated at the lack of compassion that was being shown. Then I realized that even this was comfortable. I thought about the very real possibility that some of my neighbors very likely felt fear—on their own street, in their own neighborhood. I hope that they can forgive my silence up until now. I hope that I can earn my own forgiveness, and theirs, by continuing to be mindful that words matter, but so does the absence of words. I think it is this work, the refusal to be a quiet accomplice, that will make me come to forgive myself. I hope to figure out my path to become part of a solution rather than a quiet participant in the problem. I pray for the grace and strength to guide me in how to best do this work.

*Carrie Kithianis
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



OUT OF THE DEPTHS

I didn't know the first time I saw you all
gathered for breakfast
dressed to the nines, laughing
with the white haired white couple
something about going on sixty years;
I just hoped to waken, spigoting my first coffee from
the lobby urn.

Back in my room, I sipped what was still too hot to
take in
the dangerous brew of fear and news closer to home:
nine your color dead, a sanctuary profaned
by a slight night visitor
after a taste of prayer.

I didn't know as I saw you again
walking to your parked cars,
me making my way to a second cup,
how my throat would clutch,
my eyes flood; how I would stop speechless,
but silently scream: *I am sorry, forgive ME.*

You must have known about these losses,
as so many before,
and yet you carried on
showering each other with divine smiles, easy words
that reached all the way along our sidewalk
to my heart
broken open
to receive this holy moment
your perfect saving joy.

*Amy Webb, June 18, 2015
(While in Louisiana, enroute home to Pawleys Island)
Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church*



PILGRIMAGE TO MOTHER EMANUEL CHURCH

Picked out on purpose
silk ones, to last the heat,
bold red, white, blue blooms,
nine, one for each martyred.

I could not not go
pay my respects, stand with,
as once pilgrim to the sunken Arizona
where there too the faithful didn't see
death delivered on the fly.
There, intermingled,
uncertain how to meet the eyes of other,
Japanese joined the bowed American heads,
perhaps wanting forgiveness, weeping for their own,
witnessing in silence the shocking drama
preserved fathoms below their feet.

Today it was like that
only different:
wounds fresher, blood barely dry
but still
a truth maintains—
hate mounds like so many bouquets
pressed against the gate
wilting, dying, as we will
until we find our way to love.

*Amy Webb,
June 19, 2015: Two days
after the Charleston massacre
Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church
Pawleys Island, S.C.*





MOMENTOUS EMBRACE

White and black crowd the pews
at Mount Zion Baptist, less than a week
after the churchgoers' massacre
a short ninety miles south.

Above the pulpit, on a screen hanging from heaven
faces lost to us all
peer out as angels
stirring hearts deeper than they could know.
For me, regret:
I wish I had known you before now.
I wish I had known
without the way I know now
it takes opening the door to strangers
to change the world
as tonight, when arms spread wide, wide enough
to hug out the grief and guilt,
music moves breath and bodies beyond, into,
this moment --
a memorial becomes feast and we
together
turn water into wine.

*Amy Webb, June 23, 2015
(After the Ecumenical Prayer Service,
Pawleys Island)
Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church*



FATHER FORGIVE

On the night of November 14, 1940, more than 500 German bombers struck the British city of Coventry. Wave after wave of bombers set the city ablaze in an attack lasting all night. Thousands of homes were destroyed and more than 500 people died. The incendiary bombs set fire to St. Michael's Cathedral in the city center. After the fire went out, only the charred walls of the cathedral stood, a monument to the devastation and horror of total war.

Five years later, the German city of Dresden suffered a similar fate. On the night of February 13, 1945, a force of 722 British Lancaster bombers attacked the city whose population was swollen with refugees from other areas of Germany. The next day, 316 American B-17 bombers added to the death and destruction. In four raids, the Allied bombers dropped

3,900 tons of high-explosives and incendiary devices on Dresden. The fire burned for five days and destroyed much of the city, including the lovely Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), the city's main Lutheran church. No one knows how many people died, but estimates put the minimum at 25,000 lives lost. Like Coventry Cathedral, the ruins of the Frauenkirche served as a memorial to those killed in the war.

In a national radio address on Christmas Day 1940, Richard Howard, the provost (dean) of Coventry Cathedral, called for a feeling not of revenge, but for a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness. He fashioned a cross from the medieval nails fallen from the roof, and this cross of nails became the symbol of an international ministry of reconciliation and peace born in Coventry. When the Frauenkirche was rebuilt in the 1990s, a British charity helped





raise funds for the reconstruction and the cross that was placed on top of the church was fashioned by the son of a British bomber pilot who had flown in the raid on Dresden. Today Dresden and Coventry are twinned cities.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I had just finished teaching a history class in Moncks Corner. When I got in my car to return to Charleston, I turned on the radio and heard the news about the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. The first thing that came to my mind was the bombing of Coventry and

Dresden. I remembered standing in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral in 1976 as an Air Force officer serving in Britain. I recalled the bare altar made from the rubble of the cathedral. On it stood a cross of two charred oak beams that had fallen from the ceiling as it burned that night in 1940. Carved on the wall behind the altar in gold letters were just two words. They were the words of Jesus when he hung on the cross, “Father Forgive.”

*Lester G. Pittman
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



TRANSFIGURATION

August 6 is an important day for me, a significant day in the life of the Church, and a memorable day in the history of the world.

Tomorrow is an important day for me. I was born early morning, on August 6, 1947, in Westfield Mass., the first daughter, the second child of a veteran of the Second World War. I am grateful to my husband, my children and family for their love and support these last 68 years. I give thanks to God for every year, and every memory.

It is also a significant day in the life of the Church.

On August 6, in the Church year, we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration. Jesus, with Peter, James



and John, went up on the mountain to pray, “And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.”

We are told that a cloud overshadowed them and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, my chosen, listen to him.”

In St. Paul’s *Letter to the Philippians*, Paul writes “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Tomorrow is memorable day in the history of the world!

On August 6, 1945—70 years ago, two years before my birth and the Feast of the Transfiguration—the first atomic bomb was dropped and detonated over the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing tens of thousands and decimating the city.

Three days later on August 9 at 3:40 a.m., a B-29 bomber christened “Bock’s Car” took off from a little-known island in the south Pacific with the prayers and blessings of Lutheran and Roman Catholic chaplains.

The bomber’s pilot and crew, all Christians, had instructions to drop their one bomb only with visual sighting, but the target city of Kokura was clouded over, so the plane headed for its secondary target, Nagasaki.

Nagasaki is well known in the history of Japan as the city that had the highest concentration of Christians in all of Japan. The cathedral, St. Mary’s, in the Urakami River district, was a megachurch of its time with a membership of 12,000 and the largest church in East Asia.

Christianity in Japan has a tortured, persecuted history. For 250 years, it was a capital crime to confess a faith in Jesus Christ. In the 17th century, Japanese Christians who refused to recant their faith were subjected to torture, even crucifixion and death. After this reign of terror, it appeared that Christianity in Japan was extinct.

But by the mid 19th century, it was discovered that there were thousands of baptized Christians, unknown to the



government, living out their faith in hiding. The government of Japan began again to try to purge the country of this foreign religion. Due to international pressures the persecutions ceased and the Christians of Nagasaki came out of hiding. By 1917, the revitalized Christian community had completed the beautiful St. Mary's Cathedral.

What irony! That massive cathedral, one of two targets identified through a break in the clouds, became Ground Zero for the drop of the second atomic bomb.

At 11:02 a.m. August 9, 1945 during a Thursday morning mass, hundreds of Nagasaki Christians disappeared in a radioactive fireball that exploded 500 meters above the cathedral. Most Nagasaki Christians did not survive the blast. Six thousand of them died instantly. Of the 12,000 members of the cathedral, 8,500 eventually died as a result of that bomb. Three orders of nuns and a Christian girl's school simply disappeared. As in Hiroshima, tens of thousands of other innocent noncombatants also

died instantly and many more were wounded.

Today only one percent of the Japanese population confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. What the Japanese Imperial government could not do in 250 years of persecution a small group of American Christians accomplished in nine seconds.

"Father, forgive us for we know not what we do."

*"Resentment is like
drinking poison
and then hoping
it will kill your
enemies."*

NELSON MANDELA

*Jean Bender
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



ON THE GROUND

April 4th 1968

Martin Luther King Jr. stands on the balcony
of his hotel room in Memphis his hands resting
on the thin black guard rail, deep in thought
about how the world is changing, about how
he's flipping the *b* in black
to form the *p* in power,
how those words
black and *power*
are becoming synonymous
one letter, one march at a time.
I read that the bullet bounced
off his neck tie.

Coretta Scott King got the call when she returned
home from shopping with her eldest daughter.
The phone hit linoleum and soon she followed
bringing her head to her knees her tears leaving
dark coffee colored stains on her pantyhose.
Coretta Scott King lost her King April 4th,
the humid Memphis air turning the *g* into nothing
but the last bit of sweat on Martin's brow
the *n* and the *i* trailing behind the bullet
as it burrowed its way through his jaw.
The *k* landed like thunder as he hit the ground
Coretta Scott was on the ground Scott was on the
ground

April 4th 2015

Scott was on the ground you,
Walter Scott, were on the ground.
You were on your way to a barbecue,
headed in the right direction.
They stopped you for a broken tail light
but you feared the uncovering of the past,
of your warranted arrest and beneath that



a hazy black and white collection of 1960's police
brutality.
You tried to escape the history creeping up on you
five times you were shot
onetwo like a Birmingham bomb
threefour like a high powered fire hose
five
and you hit the ground
Scott was on the ground
your life soaking into the dirt behind a Pawn Shop.
the *W* in Walter flipped upside down for the *M* in
murder,
murder which starts with *M*
that cop his name started with *M* too
there are two consecutive *m*'s in the word
immortalized, you are immortalized,
dipped in honey gold you are a symbol,
even face down on the ground you stand
for everything Dr. King stood for
You were on the ground
Scott was on the ground
the ground decorated with flowers and crosses
like the one I wore around my neck the next morning
sitting prim the Easter service,
my legs crossed real pretty.
I wore orange like a flame.
Alleluia! He has risen! You have risen too, Mr. Scott,
you have risen you stand tall beside the Father next to
everyone else who stands for what He stands for
love thy neighbor as thyself
you stand tall next to those who felt the same shots you
did
one shot for Emmett Till
who flirted with a white girl
two shots for Henry Dee and Charles Moore
whose bodies floated down the river to the tune of



We Shall Overcome

three for James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and
Michael Schwerner

who died free men kissing Klan captivity

four for Addie Mae Collins,

Denise McNair, Carole Robertson

and Cynthia Wesley who simply sat in church,

Birmingham sun shining through stain glass,

crosses 'round their necks, my neck

like ones on the ground where you were shot

April 4th 2015

fifth shot for Lincoln

fifth shot for JFK

fifth shot for Medgar Evers

fifth shot for Dr. King

They all hit the ground so many

have hit the ground

When will they ascend to a place

where there names are printed in gold,

their stories memorialized in marble

a history only our grandmother's had seen.

But you are tangible you are here.

you are five minutes outside my classroom window,

your legacy stuck between teeth.

knotted in our throats, you are here,

this history is no longer hearsay,

you were on the ground

I saw you, I saw you on the ground.

Scott was on the ground.

Reese Fischer

The Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion

Charleston



ON FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

“Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.”

– *Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

In October 2010, I was privileged to be part of a people-to-people delegation of historians and museum curators to South Africa where we discussed with our counterparts in Johannesburg and Cape Town how best to document unpleasant – and sometimes horrible – parts of our nation’s history.

As well as meeting with colleagues at various universities, we visited museums and prisons from the apartheid era. One of the most poignant encounters was when we toured the prison on Robben Island outside of Cape Town, where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for 18 of the 27 years he served behind bars for opposing the apartheid government.

Our Robben Island tour guide was himself imprisoned for 18 years when he was 19 for belonging to the ANC military wing. His story was chilling to say the least. Not only was he tortured by the guards, but when his father applied for permission to visit him, his father was shot eight times by the security forces, leaving him permanently paralyzed. His father’s attackers and his torturers were later given full amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Today, they are prominent businessmen; his father is still in a wheelchair.





Quite honestly, our delegation came away from Robben Island wondering about the efficacy of such a commission. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the Government of National Unity and based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995. The TRC effected its mandate through three committees: the Amnesty Committee, the Reparation and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee, and the Human Rights Violations (HRV) Committee. “Applicants could apply for amnesty for any act, omission, or offence associated with a political objective committed between 1 March 1960 to 6 December 1993.... Being granted amnesty for an act means that the perpetrator is free from prosecution for that particular act.” We could see how it was necessary to reveal the truth of what happened during the horrors of apartheid, but to grant amnesty to the perpetrators of such crimes? To forgive one’s enemies?

President Nelson Mandela knew what he was doing when he appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu to head the Truth and Reconciliation Commission tasked with investigating and reporting on the atrocities committed by both sides in the



struggle over apartheid. Forgiveness and reconciliation were needed if South Africa were to become a democratic nation. As Mandela once quipped, “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”

Tutu reminded his fellow citizens that “Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.” (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/reconciliation.aspx>) We record and confront unpleasant parts of our histories and we forgive our enemies because only God’s grace brings real healing and inner peace.

“Dear Child of God, I write these words because we all experience sadness, we all come at times to despair, and we all lose hope that the suffering in our lives and in the world will ever end. I want to share with you my faith and my understanding that this suffering can be transformed and redeemed. There is no such thing as a totally hopeless case. Our God is an expert at dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine. God created order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, and God can do so always, can do so now—in our personal lives and in our lives as nations, globally. ... Indeed, God is transforming the world now—through us—because God loves us.”

— Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream:
A Vision of Hope for Our Time*

*Amy Thompson McCandless
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



THE WAYS TO FORGIVENESS: FIRST STEPS

On a sultry summer afternoon a few years ago, the Roman Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Charleston, Robert J. Baker, stepped out of the front door of his residence on Broad Street to witness a scene of mayhem. Two cars had collided after one of them crossed the centerline and ran head-on into the path of another headed in the opposite direction. One can easily imagine the scene. There were police officers and their cars, a fire engine, EMS trucks, and many curious onlookers covering the street in front of the bishop's house. It soon became apparent that a young man headed west on Broad had gone into the oncoming line of traffic and, according to the quick judgment of the police, was under the influence of some substance that led to his erratic driving. The car he hit was driven by a young woman who was injured but, as it turned out,

fortunately her injuries were not life threatening.

It was obvious to the onlookers and to Bishop Baker that the investigating police officers had quickly sized up the situation and arrested the car driver who had caused the crash. They handcuffed him, and put him into the back seat of a waiting police car to take him to the jail. It was to this car where the young man was inside with his hands cuffed behind his back that Bishop Baker turned his attention. He told the police officers who he was and, with their permission, got into the back of the police car with the restrained young man. It was there that the bishop consoled him, prayed for him, and blessed him. The irony of what he did was powerful for anyone watching the scene. What does this simple act mean?

It is, of course, impossible for us to know what was going through the Bishop's





Photo courtesy: Barbara Dotterer

mind when he did what he did to help this prisoner, but we can reflect upon the lesson it imparted to those watching him do it. He, I think, recognized the prisoner as a child of God whose human frailty put him in the situation he himself had created. The bishop did not pass judgment, assess guilt, or exact shame on this child of God. Nor did the bishop suggest that he would not be punished for his wrongdoing. But, as a servant of the Prince of Peace (which we all say we are), the bishop approached the prisoner to impart a gentle message of comfort from the Prince

of Peace. By doing what he did, he fulfilled his baptismal vows (which we also have taken) to respect the dignity of every human being in every situation one confronts in this mortal life.

Bishop Baker's simple acts on that summer afternoon teach us that the mercy and peace of the Holy Spirit are available to everyone in every situation, and may even lead to forgiveness and the ability to accept forgiveness which often leads to reconciliation.

*Thomas Tisdale
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*





FORGIVENESS IS FOR DO-GOODERS, TOO

Right now a lot of us are asking ourselves about how forgiving we are.

It's an important question, but at the moment I am more interested in what it is like to be forgiven—to act like a forgiven person, to think like one and actually to believe that I am one. Something tells me that how I answer the question of my own forgiveness has a great deal to do with whether or not I can forgive others.

When I was growing up, I got the strong impression that there were two kinds of people: good, right-thinking people, and not-so-good, wrong-thinking people. As a result I came to believe that my happiness and well-being depended on right thinking and right doing, and that following such a path would result in an attractive girlfriend-then-wife, 2.5 smiling



children and a vacation home in the Poconos. Wrong thinking and doing would mean a life of trouble—except that the wrong-life path was nowhere near so boring as the right one.

Then at the beginning of my last year of high school, I heard some new friends telling me that God loves sinners. What's more, I actually read the New Testament for the first time and heard the same thing there, which changed my life forever.

Or, at least it started to.

I became a lay evangelist, walking the streets of poor neighborhoods in inner-city Atlanta. I went to seminary and became a pastor, preaching the amazing grace of God's forgiving love.

Only there was a catch.

In my personal life, in my marriage, in my friendships, and most importantly, in how I understood my deep self, I was still stuck in that old either/or thinking I learned as a boy. I preached God's forgiving love for other people, but had real problems believing it myself.

I expended an enormous amount of energy trying to do the right things and say the right words, because after all, my happiness and the avoidance of unpleasantness depended on it. Moreover, people patted me on the back and applauded my do-gooder efforts, and those affirmations became a kind of drug I craved more and more. Only when people said, "Look at how high a moral hurdle he's cleared" when I succeeded, the higher I felt I had to set the moral bar.

"It is surely better to pardon too much than to condemn too much."

GEORGE ELIOT

But, here's where the miraculous, ineluctable love of God came splashing all over me. I collapsed under the ever-growing burden of trying to get everything right. I woke up one day (actually it took the better part of a year) and realized I had been playing my life to an insatiable audience of real and imagined expectations of what I thought an ideal Christian would look like. It never had occurred to me that God might want me



to be just the real human being that God intended: a person with strengths and weaknesses like everyone else, and that it was about time for me to own who I really was—a mixture of the good and the bad, the ugly and the beautiful.

What a relief! What a joy to lay down my enormous bag full of perfectionism and its unattractive cousin's impatience, judgmentalism, people-pleasing and self-doubt. If I were to say what God's forgiveness means to me today, it is the freedom God daily gives me from being obsessed with whether I'm getting everything right or wrong, even if I am frequently tempted to jump back on the works' righteousness train. So now when I am with other people, I spend a lot less time worrying about whether I am as good as someone else. Everyone I know is both not OK and OK, when seen through the eyes of God in Christ—a God who actually does love sinners.

I'm still trying to figure out what this means for my day-to-day living. What I'm clear about is that I'm called to be one of the real people, who does not know what is right for everybody and often not for himself. But, I also know that God stands ready to help, often quite insistently, and that there are a great many sister and brother pilgrims from whose stumbles and insights I can learn.

*Steve Rhodes
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*

"God's going to work it all out for good. Just hold on and hold out; and don't let anyone take away your joy."

THE REV. LEROY RUSSELL
RETIRED AME MINISTER, CHARLESTON



IF NOT NOW, LORD, WHEN?

If not now, Lord, when
are we going to make it alright.
Such sorrow and trouble.
Will we make the change?
We can when every son and daughter,
Every single soul sees something
brighter and shinier—
A Gathering of Spirits
in the hopeful heart of every man.

Lord, when if not now—
It will take a change of heart
for miracles to happen
as they do now and then.



After death and Falling Stars—
there are mercies received
just as there are marks upon our brows.
Our lives before and after Cain and Abel.
All of us bewildered by the damage done.

If not now, oh Lord, when.
Dust settles after the hit and run.
Why do we choose the road we march on?
How could a life become so unraveled?
This is the moment, the time.
It may not come again.
We once forgave ourselves
for what we claimed we didn't know.
If not now Lord, then when.

*Amey Lewis
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*

IN THE DARK

As I can't repair the air,
can't thin or cool it,
I'll paint the porch instead.

And as I can't heal the land,
I will fix this garden,
mulch the Queen Anne's lace,

in wedged Eden's fading light,
tilt my head and pray that rain'll fill
the spaces of a frog-silent night.

*William Baldwin
St. James-Santee, McClellanville*





Photo courtesy: Barbara Dotterer

LOWCOUNTRY MARSHES

A great swath—neither land nor liquid—defines
The Lowcountry as it abuts the sea

Two-sided Cordgrass of misery and mirth
Rice fields, sun, and the Gullah hush

Marshes at dawn, marshes at moonlight
Ebbing tides and endless skies

Soaring egrets, snaking creeks
A tidy network that creatures seek

The smell of pluff mud, rotting detritus
The taste of oysters—salty and pure



Popping sounds that break the silence
Muffled by a distant thunder

Ethereal and earthy, mysterious, familiar
Living, breathing, lapping gently

Place of wonder, place of peace
Forgiving, loving, God's own grace

*Frances Boyd
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*

SUDDENLY

I've made space for time,
marked my place
and closed the book,

set the clock back,
held my breath,
and stopped my heart.

Now to fix the sun.

*William Baldwin
St. James-Santee Episcopal Church, McClellanville*



A HURRIED EMAIL

I have to tell you this right now! I am not submitting my “forgiveness” article for publication. I am submitting this email to you to say thank YOU! Earlier this week, I read the call for submissions and thought, “Who am I to write an article? Nothing so horrific has happened to me. I have had all the slights in life, but nothing so big and bad.” I blew the call off.

Then driving to Grace Wednesday, my head nearly blew up. I was thunderstruck by forgiveness for myself. Me, I need to forgive me! Wow, what a blessing. This notion, dare I say, this truth has not left my thoughts. I don’t know how to forgive myself, but I do realize it is my thoughts, my imagined conversations with folks, that I have to change. Of course, I can spend the rest of my life being pissed at something from my past or I can be big, brave, bold, filled with love, adventure and forgive myself. It is in forgiving myself I believe I will find freedom, peace, awe and God.



There are times when I fancy myself a writer, but I am not. It stresses me to the max. But I can fire off an email to my friend and say thank you. I am not so bold as to put my pain, my name and my shame out for print, but one day, yes one day, this scared chicken of a girl is going to burst out the flames just like the Phoenix I so frequently see in my dreams.

*Kathee Dowis
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



ELEGY FOR FRIEND

*In Memoriam, Donald Wayne Henry
April 28, 1939 – April 10, 2015*

One lone sentry. Set apart to bid watch.
The others loft and spring, a-cackle up and down the
railing.
Plaintive laughter “I want! I want!” “Mine!” “Mine!”
The tide low and still, the gulls search impatiently,
frantically.
Laughing, laughing, maws agape.
Life ebbs from the rock salt tomb back to where it
came from.

One lone sentry. Set apart to bid watch.
Perched atop the dock pole, keeping silent vigil.
A single soul...is it him upon the pole?
Or a vizier of the heir who lies below in particulate
form,
Water born again....not at journey's end,
But re-baptized in death, now to begin life anew.

One lone sentry. Set apart to bid watch.
Kindred depart to resume the journey.
The sentry gull, not laughing, neither sad
Stays until tide's turn.

*Chris Huff
St. George's Episcopal Church
Summerville*



HOW TO FORGIVE A BOSS WHO'S WRONGED YOU

I woke up one morning a few months ago and blurted out, "Jerk!"

I'd been having a dream about my boss... from nine years ago.

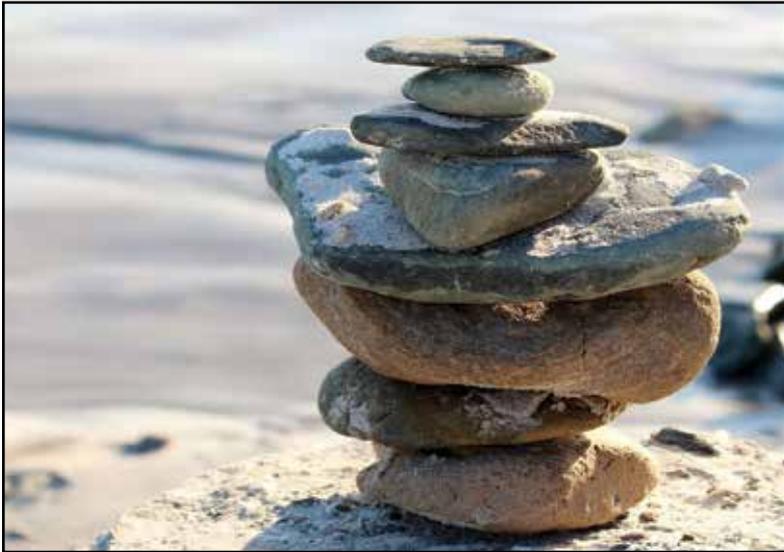
As an executive coach and consultant, I enjoy helping others with challenging personal interactions, but I've held onto some serious resentment towards the worst boss I've ever had.

You see, I've had a lot of bosses in my career—

some great, some not so great. But there was one who wounded me so deeply years ago that I've struggled to forgive him even after all this time.

Sometimes I'd fantasize about what I would say to him if I ran into him at the airport. Maybe I'd tell him off or share the successes I've had since I packed my things under cover of night and never returned.

He bullied, threatened me and my coworkers. He



seemed relish doling out public ridicule, frequently referring to my “Alabama way of doing business” and that “it would never cut it in the Big Apple.” Instead of threatening to firing anyone, he preferred “offer them a de-motion.”

Let’s just say I hadn’t considered forgiveness even once. A guy like that doesn’t deserve it anyway, right?

But holding onto to this hostility comes at a cost. It requires a lot of energy and becomes a distraction. I’ve been ready to let it go but haven’t until now.

Sometimes it takes an event to move you.

For me, it was two events in the same week. I was inspired by how the Charleston community pulled together in forgiveness so quickly after the massacre

at Mother Emanuel AME Church.

Then soon after that, a friend from high school lost his father in a boating accident. It was a wake-up call for me when he requested that everyone stop sending him the name of lawyers because he had no intention in suing the other party. He and his family just wanted to move forward in forgiveness.

My example may seem small compared

to these two tragedies, but I’ve decided to forgive that boss and let that go. Since then I’ve experienced more calmness and peace, which is something that’s common for many people who offer forgiveness after they’ve been wronged.

Forgiving is a little easier when you understand that it’s not about forgetting.

“The joy of God is the joy of forgiveness...it is love that saves, not the simple observance of rules.”

POPE FRANCIS



It's simply declaring: "Although I remember what happened, I won't hold onto it and use it against you."

So the event that happened informs your trust, but you won't use it as a weapon for keeping score.

With my old boss, I'm not going to be working with him anytime soon, but I'm giving myself permission not to invest any more energy in thinking about that.

Here are few small steps to help you down the road of forgiveness whether it be your boss or someone else in your life:

1. Consider forgiveness a path, not a destination. By considering forgiveness a path, it takes the pressure off for it to be immediate and it's easier to be patient with the process. Even after you decide to forgive, you may occasionally find your anger and resentment re-emerging ... and that's OK. When that happens, just remind yourself with, "Oh, I remember now that I'm done with that."

2. Practice every day forgiveness. When you practice forgiving for the small things, it helps you build capacity to forgive for the bigger things. It's easier to start with what you can forgive today. Maybe it's someone leaving dishes in the sink or forgetting your birthday. Or, perhaps, practice by forgiving yourself.

3. Share your desire to forgive. Even if you're not quite ready to forgive, share your desire to forgive with someone else. It doesn't have to be with the person you want to forgive. Sometimes just declaring it can release enough momentum to help you forgive. Writing this to you now is helping me move forward.

The good news here is that you can start with any of these steps. Just trying one can move you down the path of forgiveness.

Try it today and notice the difference.

*Ben Fanning
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*





Photo courtesy: Cassandra Foster



A GUEST READING AT METANOIA'S
FREEDOM SCHOOL IN CHARLESTON ON
THE TUESDAY AFTER THE MASSACRE

(Adapted from Irish Cream by Father Andrew Greeley)

“**T**he issue,” said the little bishop in his homily, “is whether the tombstone or the flowers are more ultimate. “We must ask God, with all due respect, why he permitted these lives to be cut short. We don’t expect an answer but we must ask the question. Indeed he expects us to ask the question and not to lose sight of the tragedy.

“Yet we put flowers on the tombs and we surround our homes—and Mother Emanuel—with flowers. Hence the question: Which is more ultimate, the flower or the tomb? Death, which the white cross represents, or life, which the flower represents? Do we just make the tomb pretty, or do we defy it?

“I put it to you that we defy the tomb. We do not pretend that there is no tragedy in these deaths. We do not turn away from the stupidity, the futility, the ugliness of death, of any and every death. Because of our faith, we seek to transcend it. Love is as strong as death, the Song of Songs tells us. It is a kind of draw between the two. If, however, love cannot prevent death, so death cannot prevent love. And thus in the end love wins. Consider the flowers outside Mother Emanuel: In nature, they ought to have been wiped out long ago by the wind and the cold. Yet they reappear every year to remind us that there is beauty in the cosmos. If there is beauty with a little “b,” then there is Beauty with a capital B. And if there is Beauty with a capital B, death is not quite the end. There is yet more to be said. Beyond that today we cannot go and we need not go. All the beauty of this wonderful day once again defies death and we join in that defiance. Life is too important ever to be anything but life.”

And I, Harriet, add to you today Love is stronger than hate.

*Harriet Popham Rigney
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*





DECEMBER

Wings in the air flail
as if to raise the dead
from underneath the big flat stones,
ledgers they're called,
that cover almost all the graves,
big enough to picnic on,
in summer when the clearing's done.

Ledgers, the cutters call these stones.
They look like old account book pages,
oblong, the sheets that used to rule
the workmen's pay, words viewed with
very serious attention when coins chinked
upon the table.



My sister's grave lies naked;
her children haven't marked it,
although a year and more has gone,
and once again the cold has come.

A cousin's stone lies here,
and here a childhood guide's;
yonder some bishop's vulgar stone –
et cetera.

The lettering is fading fast.
Chiseled in slate or granite,
a few in marble,
the words were meant to last,
for uncle, mother, brother, father:

If monument you need, then look about you.

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.

Philanthropist.

Home is the sailor, home from the sea.

It may be acid rain, it probably is;
whatever it may be,
the words are vanishing,
and lichens of some rarity
speed up the disappearance.

But what accounts do these stones keep?
They list no debits
– at least none I've ever seen.

A strutting little popinjay.



*She loved her guests on Sundays,
and seldom treated me, her child,
in any warmer way.*

*Mean-heart, philanderer
who played at love in cruel ways.*

*Drunk every night, morose,
brooding his life away,
not half a day
to spare for me.*

*She threw me from her heart
one silent day
pretending still to say,
I love you.*

Well. None of these words testify
on the big ledger stones
that lie among the scrawny trees
below the sullen clouds,
the swollen sky
brooding above
the wings that beat.

And nor do these:

I'm going up the country, you come too.

*Well, look who's here! With open arms
and gorgeous smile, It's Boo!*

It will be beautiful, if it is made by you.

*Oh, China, I was so alone.
I'm sorry that I missed you.*



*So bent and crippled, still I move
to share my lap robe's warmth with you.
And after all, and after all,
what do the debits matter?*

I loved them.

Let that be final.
Let the accounts be closed.
Let there be peace
beneath the wings

*Harriet Popham Rigney
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*

THE WADER

Water roars down into the pond,
across the stones and brilliant fish
who rise in pleasure to the air,
flanks bright as jewels,
fins and tails swaying
like Isadora's scarves,
shouldering against my legs
like subway bullies,
strong muscle sheathed in light.
Water roars down, alive and fresh.

*Harriet Popham Rigney
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



SIGN LANGUAGE

After years of self-seeking exile
while hungering for home,
and a long day's drive down I-95,
I see up ahead the sign:

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE LINE

I make another sign
as I drive across,
touching fingers
to forehead and heart.

For me this will always be
a religious experience.
Naysayer Thomas Wolfe was wrong:
You can go home again.



*Eugene Platt
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Charleston, and
St. James Episcopal Church, James Island*



GOD IS DELIGHTED TO HEAR FROM US

From the time I could fit my fingers into the rotary dial on our beige family telephone, I called Granny Louise. She wrote her phone number in Horatio, South Carolina, on a strip of masking tape and stuck it on the front of the old leather suitcase I used when I went to visit her. 803-499-2126.

Regardless of the time of day, her level of “busy-ness” or the reason for the call, nothing matched the pure joy in her voice when she heard me on the end of the line. “Hi, Darling!” Her happy, unfailing delight to hear from me and to know about every little detail of my life always reminded me of how much I was loved.

Granny Louise passed away in 2008 when she was 94 years old and I miss that easy, warm feeling she gave me that I am loved and special for just existing.

In recent days, I have a deeper appreciation of my grandmother’s happiness in hearing from me. I realize that we all desperately need an encouraging voice, or the loving, presence of another, who engages with us regardless of whether we are “worthy.”

If a person can’t find, or chooses not to seek, that love and support among his family or friends, he will find it in God. I believe that, even more than my grandmother, God is always delighted to hear from us. When we live in the certainty that it is not “who we are, but whose we are,” we are set free from grasping at the temporal to distinguish or give value to ourselves. No danger or threat can diminish us. “No weapon formed against us will prosper.”

Enveloped in God’s love, we are able to venture out into the world and love others who might not love us back. In His love, we are so braced and secure that we have the holy strength to love the unlovable and forgive the seemingly unforgiveable.

*Hayden Shook
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*





THE RAVENSBRUCK PRAYER

In 1938, long before the outbreak of World War II, the Nazi government began construction of an internment camp about 50 miles north of Berlin near the tiny village of Ravensbruck. The camp was intended to hold exclusively women inmates and later became known as the Ravensbruck Concentration Camp.



From May 1939, when Ravensbruck opened, to April 1945, when it was liberated by the Russian Army, between 130,000 and 150,000 women were interned there. The women inmates came from all over Europe, but their principal nationality was Polish. Only a small percentage of the inmates were Jewish. No records exist of the number of women who perished at Ravensbruck and estimates vary widely, ranging from 50,000 to 90,000.

When Ravensbruck was liberated, a prayer was discovered written on a piece of scrap paper. Some accounts say that the prayer was found in the hand of a dead child. The prayer has become known as the Ravensbruck Prayer:

O Lord, remember not only
the men and women of goodwill

But also those of evil will.

But do not remember all the suffering
they have inflicted upon us.

Remember the fruits we have borne
thanks to this suffering.

Our comradeship, our loyalty,
our humility, our courage, our generosity,

The greatness of heart
that has grown out of all this.

And when they come to judgment,
let all of the fruits that we have borne
be their forgiveness

*John West
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston*



ACTS OF FORGIVENESS MAY BE KEY TO REAL POWER

The whole notion of forgiveness has been in the front of many people's minds in the weeks since the massacre at Emanuel AME Church. Just how, they wonder, could family members of the victims, one after another, forgive the accused shooter so quickly after such a reprehensible deed?

One pastor explains forgiving is the natural, almost instinctive reaction of people who live lives based on a deep faith in God. Because of faith, they already feel forgiven for the sins they confess to their maker. When an evil was done to members of their family, forgiveness was a way for the faithful person to cope and react.

The act of forgiving, he said, allows those who mourn to feel free of hatred, free of anger, free of bitterness. Instead of spiraling down and succumbing to the evil, they stare it in the face and

find solace in what they've learned for generations from their families and their churches—to feel free to love, not hate.

For blacks in South Carolina and across the South, forgiveness has been built into day-to-day life, year after year, from slavery and Jim Crow times to civil rights marches and *#BlackLivesMatter* rallies.

It's pure New Testament. Jesus Christ taught love and forgiveness, observes the Rev. Joseph Darby, presiding elder of the local AME churches. It's part of what blacks, often powerless in a patriarchal, plantation society, had to do to survive.

"Black people had to coexist with people who owned them, who could rape, kill or sell them, and the black people couldn't strike back," says Darby. "Black folk in South Carolina learned to forgive."

That doesn't mean that faithful families aren't angered, saddened or hurting



from the violence that took their kin from them. But forgiveness helps compartmentalize the pain—to shove it aside so that love can bloom and heal.

For the victims' families who worship at Emanuel AME Church and other churches, forgiving is part of faith and love of God. But for those who don't grow in a religious culture that forgives may have a hard time grappling with the bold, public examples of forgiveness by worshippers at Emanuel AME. The concept of forgiveness may be more abstract, something not as ingrained in daily living. But the tragedy in Charleston is forcing people across the Holy City to confront the intertwining of forgiveness, hate, fear and love.

A new novel by Asheville writer Vally Sharpe may offer some help and warmth



Photo courtesy: Cassandra Foster

to those struggling with faith, reality and forgiveness.

The Gospel According to Emily is a story of a Georgia family with two sons, one of whom is a little different. This son helps people, does good deeds and changes lives as he tries to unburden people of their troubles. The parallels to the story of Christ are familiar and comfortable.



In a key passage, Sharpe examines how people can interpret the same incident in different ways, which is instructive for those seeking to better understand forgiveness.

Consider how a guy stuck in rush-hour traffic might react if he were cut off by another driver who slid ahead of him. The enraged driver could speed up—even bump the rear of the driver’s car to get him to pull off the road, which could then escalate into a fight, or even worse—one of them would pull a gun on the other.

But what if, Sharpe wondered, the guy who slid ahead of the other car was lost or made an honest mistake. If the second guy knew that—instead of assuming malice—the reaction might have been different. Sharpe writes:

“We do it all the time. We focus on scarcity where there is none and by hoarding whatever we *think* is scarce for ourselves against the day we imagine it will all run out, we bring bonafide scarcity into existence.

“We focus on fear instead of love, on judgment and blame instead of acceptance and forgiveness, on war instead of peace. And some, particularly in political circles, do it on purpose, because they know that if you can influence what others think, you can gain control over them. We think of that as *power*, when it’s yet another illusion because *that* version of power operates from a place of fear ...

“If you buy into that definition of power, then the only way you can contain your fear is by destroying those you *think* are out to take it away from you—by influencing others to perceive them as dangerous to them, too. But *real* power can’t be taken away.”

Forgiving, as Sharpe suggests in the novel that she calls “an imagining,” offers real power that strips away hate and feelings that will destroy. Isn’t that how victims’ families reacted to the Emanuel Nine tragedy?

Andy Brack
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston





Photo courtesy: Andy Brack

WHAT NOW?

The slaying of the nine saints of Mother Emanuel is changing South Carolina, and beyond, in ways that we simply cannot yet fully see.

We know that events can change a community. This is no new or great or profound revelation; it's simply the way of life. General agreement exists for the following two statements:

The Spoleto Festival, founded in 1977, has changed the Charleston community.

Hurricane Hugo in 1989 changed the Lowcountry.

It could also be argued, and has been argued, that the perceived threat of the Denmark Vesey slave revolt of 1822 changed the city of Charleston.



Our challenge, I believe, in the weeks and months to come will be allowing our eyes to be opened to see how the massacre of the Emanuel Nine is changing each of us in new and perhaps even challenging or uncomfortable ways. The greatest questions for us at this point in our collective healing process are:

*How am I being invited to see in a new way? And,
Am I in need of healing in ways that I cannot yet see?*

We human beings are often in need of healing of some form or other. We sometimes find ourselves figuratively blind and in need of having our sight restored. The Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost reads in part: “Almighty God . . . you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking; have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which . . . for our blindness we cannot ask. . . .”

Only those who know their need will ever reach out to touch the fringe of the cloak of our Lord. Only those who know their need can ever know what deep and eternal healing feels like.

It is essential for us not only to remember the horrific event of June 17, and the poignancy and beauty of its immediate aftermath, but also to internalize it, so that we may externalize it—as, together, we grow and strive to create a more just and open and compassionate society.

As we examine our own need, we need not fear or dismiss any of the internal tensions that may present themselves within us. It may well be that our very own Lord Christ is knocking on the doors to our heart, desiring to offer us his healing touch, and grant us sight where we are blind.

Peace to you,

*Calhoun Walpole
Grace Episcopal Church, Charleston, and
The Episcopal Church in South Carolina*



The editorial committee of
Carolina Grace invites contributions for
the upcoming issue on these themes:

RESURRECTION
AND
REDEMPTION IN HISTORY

Our hope is to reveal with consistency the breadth and depth of our rich heritage as Anglicans. Contributions should be uplifting in tone and reflective of God's active presence in our lives. Submissions may be of any genre; they should not exceed 750 words. Electronic submissions should be in Microsoft Word format. The editorial committee reserves the right to make reasonable corrections to grammar and syntax and to determine whether or not a submission appropriately fits the theme of the issue and the direction of the journal.

Please email questions and submissions
to justicepg@cofc.edu, with "Carolina Grace
submission" in the subject line.

We must receive submissions by Dec. 15, 2015,
for our next issue.



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A COLLECT FOR CAROLINA GRACE

God of Grace and Glory, be present with us to guide and nurture, to comfort and instruct. May the words contained herein continue to feed us as they themselves have been the product of your sustaining presence in the lives of your faithful people. This we pray in the name of the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Collect written by
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