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## *Telling Stories*

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Rev. Julia Mitchener, Canon for Mission  
August 6, 2023**

Barbara Brown Taylor writes of the visits she used to make to residents of a nursing home. Each month, she celebrated the Eucharist on a care unit for people living with dementia. Many of these individuals slept through much of the service; others had their eyes wide open but in a way that made clear they were not fully present. Nonetheless, Taylor says, she tried to make the liturgy as engaging as possible. When it came time to read a passage from scripture, she liked to offer the congregation a choice. "What Bible story would you like to hear today?" she always asked. On one occasion, nobody spoke up; the room remained still and silent. After a long pause, Taylor began to run through some possibilities in her mind when, suddenly, a voice piped up from the very back: "Tell us a Resurrection story!"

*Tell us a Resurrection story.* What one of us doesn't want to hear one of those? In a world where there is so much that is deadening and defeating, so much that evokes cynicism and despair, what one of us doesn't long to hear a story about something hopeful and unexpected, a story in which death is not the end but, somehow, the beginning?

This is actually one of the most compelling reasons I know for coming to church—for the encouragement of hearing, week in and week out, the words through which Jesus breathes new life into people and situations everyone else has long since abandoned to the grave. *The child is not dead, but sleeping. Lazarus, come out! Go in peace, your faith has made you well.*

Of course, not all stories need words. Many of the best never appear in print or get spoken out loud, and yet they are still told quite powerfully. I know, because I see this all the time in the beautiful faces of the people of this parish. I see proof of Jesus' life-giving work, of his victory over death and the forces of evil. I see it in the child who has been bullied at school but who finds welcome and acceptance in EYC or Choristers. I see it in the individual who is overcoming an addiction with the support of church friends, friends who she knows mean it when they say they are praying for her. I see it at a Braver Angels workshop in the Gould Room where people of varying social and political persuasions gather to learn ways to listen to each other instead of just seeing who can shout the loudest. I see it in the space made at the table when a stranger wanders over to a group of lifelong friends drinking coffee together after the 11:15 service.

I see it, too, as I go around Atlanta visiting some of the agencies the Cathedral helps support in bringing hope and healing to our broken and troubled world. I see it in the dignity afforded a parent who can select items he knows his children like to eat at a "client choice" food bank. I see it in the animated gestures of students from Emmaus House planning what they'll do when they get to Camp Mikell and have a whole weekend to run and splash and play. I see it in the joyful exhaustion of a woman hammering nails into what will soon be her own home, thanks to the ministry that is Habitat for Humanity. All of these are Resurrection stories. They are stories of rebirth and renewal, and you, the people of the Cathedral of St. Philip, are helping to tell them, not only with your lips but in your lives.

I wonder what new stories we will tell at 2744 Peachtree Road these next few months? What stories will our lives speak to the world as we begin another program year? Whatever the plot twist and wherever their setting, I hope you'll join in sharing them. There is a narrative of redemption that is uniquely yours, and our world longs to hear it.

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