

A Tribute to Cynthia J. Hallas



When Cynthia J. Hallas answered our call for a new rector in 2004, she became the first female spiritual leader of St. Giles. There may have been some members who were skeptical or unsure about having a woman lead our congregation. We had a history of strong, male rectors, and we all know that sometimes change is difficult.

After a brief “honeymoon” period, Cynthia had to attend to the “difficult business” of building strong relationships with parishioners and the even more difficult work of enlarging our faith community. She took to both of these tasks like a fish to water (and Jesus to fishermen).

To say that she brought a wealth of talent and skills to our parish would be an understatement. She brought a virtual hardware store of these qualities and resources to our community, and she wielded them deftly, showing her sensitivity when needed, being strong and decisive when necessary.

It is not easy to sum up a person’s life or even her contributions to and accomplishments for our modest church community. Cynthia possessed all of the qualities her flock sought in their pastor: kindness, directness, tact, honesty, consistency, education, intelligence, initiative, support and much, much more.

Among the characteristics which Cynthia may be remembered for, her scholarship and support are two which bear emphasis. Her sermons were consistently thought-provoking, scholarly and full of promise and a positive outlook and/or interpretation of scripture. She would spend hours preparing her homilies, and this thoughtful preparation paid off on Sundays. She would deliver her ideas in a very engaging way: she could be dramatic or ironic or humorous or melancholy as befit the sermons she gave us. And, truly, her sermons were among her most precious and thoughtful gifts to our parish.

Another gift she bestowed on us was support and willingness to change. Her openness to suggestions led to our community’s developing and implementing a variety of initiatives that benefited not only ourselves but also our community at large:

- Second Sunday Community Breakfast
- “Open mic” sermons
- Hunger Resource Network
- St. Giles Community Garden of Feedin’
- Meditation Labyrinth
- Ministry Teams
- Bible Challenge

(Continued on Page 2)



**St. Giles
Episcopal Church**

3025 Walters Ave.
Northbrook, IL 60062
Phone: 847-272-6622
www.saint-giles.org

Office Hours

Monday: Office closed
Tues-Thurs: 9 AM - 2 PM
Friday: Office closed

Diocese of Chicago

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey D. Lee,
Bishop

Vestry

James Brooks, Sr. Warden
Kay Okoli, Jr. Warden
Ellie Bonebrake
Ted Chabraja
John Hanzel
Glenn Hunt
Lewis Kirkwood
William Perley

Jocelyn Turner, Clerk
Gloriann Harris, Treasurer
Ned Libby, Bookkeeper
Tom Page, Chancellor

Team Leaders

Building & Grounds (Facilities) -
Bob Schultz
Communications - John Hanzel
Fundraising - Huw Williams
Green - James Brooks
Hospitality - Jan Hutchins-DeWitt
Newcomers - George Miller
Pastoral Care - Leslie Ruttenberg
Social Justice - Jocelyn Turner

Staff

The Rev. Thomas Scott
Priest-in-charge
The Rev. Charles Hensel
Assisting Priest
Jim Brown
Director of Music
Cathy Leimbeck
Parish Administrator
admin@saint-giles.org

This is a sampling of initiatives that began with Cynthia's support and blessing. All but one of these continue to function and grow to this day. The Bible Challenge was a year-long program that was fulfilling for all of its participants.

Her support for new programs and activities did not stop with those listed above. If there was one area of secular and spiritual life that seemed near and dear to Cynthia, it was social justice. She persuaded the Vestry to add the rainbow flag to our church sign, announcing to the community at large that St. Giles accepts everybody as they are. This may seem like a minor action, but it was emblematic of Cynthia's commitment to serve and protect everybody who wanted or needed any kind of aid.

A tribute to Cynthia would be incomplete if it did not include mention of her artistic side. She loved to sing, and she always displayed her musical flair during Sunday services. She also graced us with her musical talent when she performed at some of our musical events. Her interest in and love of music led her to build a strong working relationship with our music director, and they would have many conversations about all kinds of music, not just liturgical selections for our services.

Cynthia J. Hallas was a strong, compassionate, scholarly, sensitive, supportive spiritual leader of our church for 15 years. She shared with all of us her grace and generous spirit, her intelligent insights, sense of humor, and sense of social justice. She was the best and right person to lead St. Giles Church during a period of trials and turbulence and change. She will be remembered for all of her gifts to and guidance of our community.

—Jim Brooks, Sr. Warden

A message from our Priest-in-charge:

Dear friends,

These are difficult times for us all, especially when we feel isolated and cut off from each other and unable to worship in our church building. But please do not think that nothing is going on at St. Giles, as this issue of the Bells will show.

Your search committee is doing online interviews with job candidates.

Your vestry is delving deeply into the challenges we face to be able to open the buildings for our worship and the groups who use our space. Your wardens are tireless in their work for St. Giles and truly lead us all by example. John Hanzel and others have been looking at the mechanics of our doing worship online.

As I hope you have heard and seen in photos, the rectory improvements are complete and the result is just stunning!

Our outreach ministry continues. In fact, there is a plan already being developed for resuming our Christmas basket ministry. CROP walk plans are coming together. And the life-saving work of the food program we participate in is a godsend to more people than you might imagine.

There is a weekly check-in and prayer time on Wednesdays at 5 p.m. Kay Okoli sends out the weekly zoom details for that. In addition, many of us are checking in with people in a regular way.

Our choir still gathers weekly (online, of course). Your parish administrator is a faithful and dedicated "connector and facilitator" for all paperwork and publishing.

The faithfulness of committee members and the finance people for St. Giles is humbling and very encouraging to see. Updates on our finances are coming.

The Community garden flourishes.

(Continued on Page 3)