

Easter V Year A 2026

For the past eight years I have served as dean of the Mobile convocation in our diocese. That's not as fancy as it sounds. My task has been to convene the clergy in this corner of the diocese on behalf of the bishop to consider matters that affect our common life; to collaborate on opportunities for mission; and just to socialize, check in with each other; talk shop, as it were. All of us clergy tend to get caught up in the demands our own congregations, to the extent that unless we are intentional about it; we rarely see each other.

We gathered for lunch this past Tuesday here at All Saints. Just a few of us. We invited Jeri Stroade, the executive director of [Dwell Mobile](#), to be our guest. Dwell Mobile is an agency, formerly funded by Episcopal Migration Ministries, an agency of the National Episcopal Church that assists immigrants and refugees with resettlement in this country. You may remember that in January of 2025 the Trump administration issued an executive order requiring that the ten largest national non-profit agencies that assisted refugee and immigration resettlement, which included Episcopal Migration Ministries, must only assist white South African immigrants... else they would lose their funding. Episcopal Migration ministries refused to comply; made a moral stand, and thus lost its funding from the U.S. Government. Episcopal Migration Ministries represented over fifty percent of Dwell Mobile's annual budgeted income.

Since that time, Dwell Mobile has had to scramble for grants and community support. They have survived principally from another government grant; but that grant too

is now under scrutiny and will likely be cut or eliminated altogether in September. They are at a loss as to their future.

Our clergy group met with Ms. Stroade at the Dwell Mobile headquarters some four years ago, and invited her to return this past Tuesday to give us an update on their operational status, and the status of U.S. immigration in general. Ms. Stroade was unable to make it as she was attending to a death in her family, so the assistant director, Molly Broders came in her stead.

She gave us an overview as to the breadth of what Dwell Mobile actually does. Resettlement ministry is a complicated and extensive enterprise. Not only do they assist immigrants and refugees with the complicated legal means by which they may live here... the arcane legal protocols, which are changing every day; but they also assist in finding refugee families housing, and transportation; they help these families navigate the complexities of our healthcare system; they teach English as a Second Language classes five days a week; they help with school enrollment; grief counselling for family members whose parents or siblings have been detained or deported. They help with groceries and furniture... the list is endless. They serve people simply looking for a better way of life, people abused by their homeland governments. Dignity and well-being... the stuff of salvation. So, a friendly reminder.... At least according to scripture; salvation is not about going to heaven.... Salvation to the biblical scribes is social, economic, and political vitality... sustainable well-being. And moreover, Hebrew scripture and the New Testament is

unequivocal in admonishing us to receive the immigrant, the resident alien, as if they were members of our own families. That is a biblical imperative.

I was so struck, inspired by Ms. Broders' compassion; her resilience in the face of our government's willful cruelty. She said that she and her coworkers have received counselling in order to manage their own anxiety and anger from the administration's callous opposition to their calling... a calling to simply love their neighbor... a calling that is opposed by our racist and autocratic executive branch of government. She spoke of the improbable gratitude of the many immigrant families they serve at Dwell; their hope; their resilience. As she spoke, I expected her to cry, but she didn't... she spoke calmly, with clarity and resolve... her soul luminous in the room. I thought how grateful I was that there are such good people still in the world... people who live the Gospel. Who live in the grit of it. A life of Grief and toil.... But characterized by a wistful joy. A fragile joy; I heard it in her voice.

While she was speaking, I thought of John's Gospel reading assigned for this the fifth Sunday of Easter.... One of those poignant coincidences. "In my Father's house are many dwelling places... and that I prepare a place for you there... and I will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." This passage we hear often at funerals, and the preacher usually avers that Jesus is preparing a place for us in the hereafter. And while it is the church's hope that there is life after death, a wider consciousness perhaps, this passage is not about the hereafter.... It is about how we live now. God's house is here on this earth, a place to stay along life's journey. As followers of the Way of Jesus, ours is to make a

sacred space for our brother, our sister in which they may abide in well-being and dignity. This teaching of Jesus is testimony to the solidarity of community, a community of friends that see to the good of each other. Love's work, in short. In the grand dramatic sweep of life on earth, we only have a proverbial day. And we are called to make the most of it; and that is simply to Love. This passage is testimony to the real presence of God's realm among us. God's realm is not a utopian future, but is present in the small, intimate spaces we make for each other where love is present. God's kingdom, in effect, coexists and thrives in intimate proximity to the world's brokenness and ruin. Amid its cruelty and despair.

We are sent as the Christ is sent to make places to stay for our brother and sister sojourners... places of rest and peace and dignity. The dwelling places of which Jesus speaks are not up there in the heavenly future... they are here and now on earth... and it is for us as the raised body of Christ to make dignified space for our brother, for our sister... to attend to the well-being of our fellow travelers.

John is speaking to us of the secret of life itself...actually, no secret... not rocket science, he tells them (my paraphrase)It's something we know and have known... something we certainly should know... that to live open, and vulnerable and honest, serving the well-being of our neighbor, is to live in God... and to live in God is to know perfect freedom... not a pie-in-the-sky promise attainable only in the hereafter... but freedom to live into our full humanity without fear, and suffering notwithstanding, to live into joy. Why wait for eternal life in the future, when it is for the choosing now?

These are words of wisdom for our journey.... Our translation of this text from John uses the word believe, but that word also means trust. And John tells us to trust with courage the process... God is process, alive and on the move among us, taking us into Godself... to a sacred place that feels like home.... Trust the Journey, good people... trust the day trip.... Give yourself to it... call on the improvising spirit within... pay attention on the way... there are signs for our journey, and places to rest and rejuvenate... you will meet rare circumstance, and there will be much to discover.... Invite into your life those whom you meet on the road... make room for them... befriend unguardedly.... Improvise goodness on the way. All shall be well. All is possible.

Half the battle it seems to me is to recognize that this gift we call life is something for which to be profoundly grateful. What an astounding privilege to be invited into such a journey... if only for a day... a day of miracles and wonders... It is a profound privilege to live in the great improvisation, which is God's very imaginative life... despite the troubles, and the rigors of such a journey.... I know that I am so grateful for this day's journey... grateful for those I meet along the way... like Molly and others, good people and trustworthy... the luminous souls given to God's redemptive work; grateful for the freedom God offers us, and the freedom we are called to engender in our world. Jesus' prayer for us is that our joy be complete, and that prayer, that promise, brothers and sisters, is not a future fantasy... but a promise for today... for now....