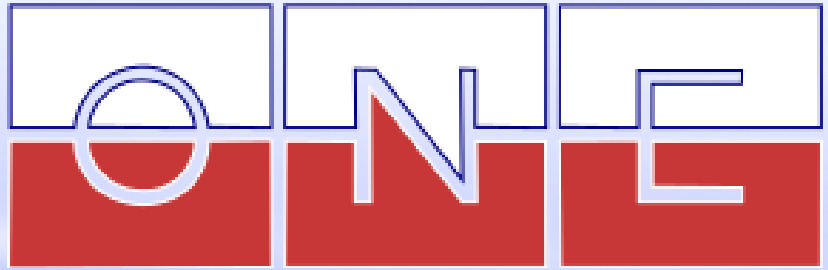


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A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
August 2024

**“WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME, AS
THE SCRIPTURE HAS SAID,
‘OUT OF HIS HEART WILL FLOW
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER.’”**

- JOHN 7:38



ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

one@ourecma.com.

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Editor's Note:

This month we asked our writers how to hydrate our faith and write about water themes from the Bible.

Hydration of Living Water

Written by:

Rev. Jonathan E. McCottry Sr.

It has been said, "We have to drink three glasses of water a day if we want to survive, eight if we want to be healthy, and ten if we want to be rejuvenated." So, if we want our spiritual life to survive, we must drink daily at the fountain of living water. In John 4, you will find Christ coming into Samaria. Some think that Christ needed to go through Samaria because of the good work he had to do there: a poor woman to be converted, a lost sheep to be sought and saved. This was work his heart was upon, therefore he must go this way. The water at the well gave occasion to his discourse of spiritual hydration.

Here comes a woman of

Samaria to draw water. This intimates her poverty, she had no servant to be a drawer of water; and her occupation, she was self-employed. His disciples went away into the city to buy meat. Christ did not go into the city but sent his disciples to fetch his meat because he had good work to do at that well.

Let us observe the particulars of this spiritual discourse. Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things. Christ devised a plan to convert this woman, not by showing her that the Samaritan worship was schematical, but by showing her her own ignorance and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour.

Secondly, He fills her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she

was aware of) of gaining that which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had to discern the signs of the times, and therefore Christ tells her that she had now an opportunity for water that will eternally hydrate the soul.

He hints to her what she should know but was ignorant: "*If thou knewest the gift of God*", that is, as the next words explain it, "*who it is that saith, Give me to drink. If thou knewest who I am*" John 4:10 (KJV). She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveler but he would have her know something more concerning him that did yet appear.

Jesus Christ is the gift of God, the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us; a gift, not a debt

Hydration of Living Water (Continued)

which we could demand from God; not a loan, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift. It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it: "He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to thee."

He assures her what he would have done for her if she had appealed to him: He will give anyone living water. By this living water is meant the Spirit, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, but was much more valuable. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity. Jesus Christ can and will give the Holy Spirit

to them that ask him; for he received that he might give.

She does not think it possible that he should furnish her with any better water than from this well which she could come to and draw. Her question is clear. Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well? The water of Jacob's well yielded but a transient satisfaction and supply. Whoever drinks of this well water shall thirst again. It is no better than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much need, and as much desire, of water as ever he had.

However, the living waters Jesus gives yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss.

Christ's gifts appear most valuable when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel, shall never thirst, he shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are longing, but not languishing. Therefore, he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives shall be in him a well of water.



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Water: Vital for Life

***Written by:
Rev. Ben Houchen***

Staying hydrated in Kansas is no joke. I work with farmers and people in land management. Water tables and rain fall totals are near constant conversation points with them. The importance of water simply cannot be underestimated

here. We see a very similar view of water in the Bible. The value of water is so high that it almost immediately takes on a supernatural characteristic.

The Holy Spirit hovers over the face of the water, the waters flood and destroy the earth, the Jordan parts for the safe passage of the

Israelites, Jesus is immersed in water as a sign of his divine nature and calling, and we are to be baptized to show our same connection to the life and works of Christ. Cups runneth over, rivers pour forth, wells spring up... it's kind of a big deal. This all happens, and fits so well, because water is vital for life, and thereby

Water: Vital for Life (Continued)

makes a wonderful metaphor for the necessities of our faith.

Water can be a metaphor for the presence of the eternal that springs up in us to be a constant source of renewal and life. It can be a metaphor for the uncontainable life that then pours out from us to the world around us. It can also be a metaphor for the destruction and chaos of our sin, or the boundaries of a sin filled world that seeks to keep us enslaved.

It can also be a baptismal metaphor of a life lived fully enveloped by the presence of the divine creator God. Cleansing, yes. Restorative, yes. But what we tend to lose in the translations of it all, is that the baptism of

water is a showing of our total emersion into the life and presence of the divine. After all, that is the actual command given by Christ before his ascension.

When he tells us to baptize people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, what he is telling us to do is not simply to dunk them under water, or sprinkle some on their heads. He is using a common word of the day to tell us to immerse ourselves and each other in the very person and presence of God. A more direct translation of that passage would be just that, to "immerse" in the name. Just as Jesus had done with the disciples and the people around him all those years: spending time together, being the love and

life of God with and for each other.

The act of baptism is meant to be a powerful testimony to our lives as Christians... a testimony to the community that we create with one another to keep the wells of life flowing, to keep the river running, and rain pouring down. The greatest act of faith hydration I have ever found is that of building community. The baptism of the water is wonderful, but to be baptized in the truth and love of the divine, that is life itself.



Rev. Ben Houchen is the Priest at St. Michael's and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Hays.

The Bath of Rebirth

***Written by:
Cody Marintzer***

Why was Jesus so insistent upon His being baptized? Jesus is God and He never sinned. He always was, is and always will be completely in line with the will of the Father and doesn't need cleansing. So, why do it? If we look to Scripture, we

can find our answer.

Let us look to the book of Acts for some help. Acts is what is happening in first century Christianity with the Apostles. Here, we are getting an account about St. Paul and some disciples of Jesus. It states in Acts 19:1 (NABRE) "*While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled*

through the interior of the country and came (down) to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a holy Spirit." Notice here that these men are already followers of Jesus, yet they haven't

The Bath of Rebirth (Continued)

received the Holy Spirit. How can this be?!? St. Paul has a lightbulb moment and is able to solve this conundrum for us as Scripture continues: *3He said, "How were you baptized?" They replied, "With the baptism of John."* *4Paul then said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus."* What we are able to understand here is there is a difference between the baptism of John, and the Sacrament of Baptism. Turning from our old life of sin and toward Christ is a very good thing and is what John's baptism signified; however, Scripture shows us that this act alone is not how the Holy Spirit is imparted upon us.

Notice what happens next. *5When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* *6And when Paul laid [his] hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied."* It is not until they are Sacramentally Baptized and have the accompanying laying on of hands that the Holy Spirit then comes upon them. Now we have the whole picture and why Christ himself was

baptized. John's baptism was an outward sign of an inward disposition (a very good thing); however, the Sacrament of Baptism is a whole lot more. It is a sign, but not just a sign. It is an efficacious one.

What this means is that by the Grace and power of God, Baptism brings about a spiritual change in that person. We become a new creation in Christ as we see in Colossians 2:12 (NABRE) *You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."* It also washes away our sin and brings the Holy Spirit upon us as we see here in the book of Acts 2:38 (NABRE) where St. Peter says: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* And here in Acts 22:16 (NABRE) where St. Paul is recounting his own conversion to Christianity when Ananias tells him: *"Now, why delay? Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon his name."*

Before Jesus' was baptized, the Holy Spirit had not come upon the waters.

Christ was baptized so that He could show us the way and to purify the waters, so that they may purify us. This is why those disciples were then Sacramentally Baptized. They had already been washed in the bath of belief in Christ, but had not been washed in the bath of rebirth. Turning from our old life of sin and toward Christ is a very good start, but the Sacrament of Baptism is what changes us into a new being.

Finally, I think it is best summed up by Jesus himself as to the importance of the Sacrament of Baptism as He says in the book of John 3:5 (NABRE) *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* That is some pretty strong language coming from our Lord, but is what brought me into the faith - a desire to follow Him, be created anew, receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit and have my sins washed away so that one day I may enjoy eternal life with Him!



Cody Marintzer is the parish life coordinator at St. Nicholas of Myra Church.

NEWS BRIEFS

Pastors at Two Hays Churches ‘Swap Pulpits’

Written by:
Linn Ann Huntington

The pastors at two Hays churches “swapped pulpits” on Sunday, July 21. The Rev. Chris Prater, pastor at Hays First Baptist Church, swapped pulpits with the Rev. Jason Murray, pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church. Prater preached at 10:30 a.m. at Cornerstone, 29th and Indian Trail. Murray preached at 10:30 a.m. at First

Baptist, 12th and Fort.

According to the First Baptist newsletter, “This is an event that has come about from a challenge from the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) to serve as an example of ecumenical partnership between the churches of Ellis County.”

“The ECMA desires to remind the various bodies of Christ throughout the county that what unites us-- Jesus Christ--is far more

powerful than anything that might seek to divide us.”

Hays First Baptist is a member of the American Baptist denomination. Cornerstone is a member of the Southern Baptist denomination.

Prater is the outgoing president of the ECMA.



Linn Ann Huntington of Hays is a professional writer and retired professor. She attends North Oak Community Church.



PICTURED: Rev. Jason Murray of Cornerstone Baptist Church (above) and Rev. Chris Prater of First Baptist Church (right).

First United Methodist Church Welcomes New Pastor

Written by:

Linn Ann Huntington

Hays First United Methodist Church, 305 W. Seventh, welcomed a new senior pastor on July 1. The Rev. Dr. Susan Murithi replaced the Rev. Craig Hauschild, who recently took over as pastor of the United Methodist Church in his hometown of Hutchinson.

Murithi's first Sunday in the pulpit in Hays was July 7. The service was followed by a potluck lunch. Murithi most recently was the pastor at St. Paul United Methodist Church in St. Paul, Neb. She also currently serves as a mentor with the Lily Foundation's Women Thriving in Ministry Initiative, as an Intercultural Ministry Trainer in the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church, and as a member of its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee.

Originally from Kenya, Murithi previously served



Rev. Dr. Susan Murithi (Courtesy Photo)

as senior pastor of a Methodist Church in Kenya and as pastor of the Mentor and Gypsum United Methodist Churches in Kansas.

Murithi received a Bachelor of Theology at Kenya Methodist University; a Master of Theological Studies at Drew University in Madison, N.J.; and a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky.

In the Hays church newsletter, she wrote that she considers her gifts to be leadership, preaching, discipleship, and prayer. "I am a disciple of Jesus Christ who is passionate about the mission of God in the world," Murithi wrote. "I serve as a pastor who is dedicated to shepherding all God's people and to nurturing them toward Christlikeness. I desire to join God in kingdom work through missional outreach and discipleship communities for the transformation of the world."

Murithi and her husband, Jeffrey, have two daughters. Faith is a student at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Neema will be a student at Hays High School.

Linn Ann Huntington of Hays is a professional writer and retired professor. She attends North Oak Community Church.