

# Thoughts from Ken

December 29, 2025

What an eventful Christmas Eve Service!

86 in attendance / great choir sharing their voices and leadership / Luke on the cello / the altar guild with impressive decorations / Joe B. and Dan at the entrance / Ursula and Cheryl reading/ Jason, Luke, and Holly helping me / Holden streaming the service.  
Wonderful.

Yet the more impressive part took place after George suddenly needed medical assistance. Our nurses sprang to action, others grabbed pew cushions for his head, Susan had everyone's attention as she comforted her husband, Trey (or someone) immediately called 911, we got out the AED, thankfully readily available but more thankfully not needed, water and a damp wash cloth appeared. Robyn went to show the EMTs our side-door ramp, and we all remained in silent prayer mode. As the EMTs left with George on a gurney, shouts of "We love you George," rang out, and I assured Susan that we would do whatever was necessary to help her.

We caught our breath for a time of special prayer for George and others we had heard about moments before the service began. George went home after an overnight stay at the Columbus Hospital, Patrick is out of intensive care, David and Tomi are ready to fight his recent "gut punch" news, and Norman came home from the Brenham hospital Saturday, ready to follow instructions from nurse Sally.

This Christmas "special needs" situation was something I never before experienced in 53 years of leading thousands of worship services. But I can't imagine a more faithful response than what you all provided on the 24th. Love in action. Proof that we are a faithful part of the Body of Christ - of the one who entered into humankind as we celebrated that day.

I pray for all of us to continue happily with the reminder of our joyous Christmas season.

*Ken*

December 9, 2025

## Thoughts from Ken

Here's something worth thinking about at this season or anytime.

In a sermon a few months ago, I quoted the following invitation that stands in front of the Episcopal Church in Marfa, Texas, but here it is in print.

Welcome.

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, widowed, trans, gay, confused, filthy rich, comfortable, or dirt poor. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds. You are welcome if you are Old Marfa, New Marfa, Neo Marfa, or are just passing by.

We welcome you if you can sing like Pavarotti or can't carry a note in a bucket. You are welcome here if you are just browsing, just woke up, or just got out of prison. We don't care if you are more Christian than our presiding Bishop or have not been to church since little Jack's Baptism.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet and teenagers who are growing up too fast. We welcome soccer moms, football dads, ranchers, starving artists, tree huggers, latte sippers, vegetarians, and junk food eaters.

We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you are having problems or you are down in the dumps or if you do not like organized religion. We've been there too!

If you blow all your money on the fantasy football, you're welcome here. We offer a welcome to those who think the Earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell, or because grandma is in town and wanted to go to church.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced, or both. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid, or got lost on a West Texas road and wound up here by mistake.

We welcome tourist, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts... And you!  
Come worship with us Sundays at 10:30 AM.

I know those folks out there may seem like desperate West Texas nuts, but they sure sound like Jesus to me.

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December 3, 2025

Thanksgiving Redux

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, we all filled out on small cards the ending of a sentence beginning with "I am thankful for:" Since none listed a name of the "thanker," I felt comfortable, reading them all.

There were remarkable expressions of values and people. (No one listed a material possession! )

Among them were such comments as “Health, Religious Freedom, The Cross, God’s love, God’s graces, Christian parents, and our day school students. About 80%, however, also included one or both of two categories: family and friends and St. James Church.

I was not surprised because I know that family is important to all of us. That so many, a majority, listed our spiritual family and our spiritual home warmed my heart. It made me feel even closer to all of you.

Please pause for moment when you read this to consider how honestly you can answer “I will, with God’s help” to the Baptismal Covenant question “Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?”

If you can believe in this ministry to which Jesus calls us, consider following the vow by letting another know about our spiritual family and how thankful we are for the way the spirit of God moves among us. And in doing so you will enable our gratitude to spill out to others like the iconic overflowing cornucopia of fruit and vegetables.



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November 18, 2025

What a great bunch of parishioners you are!!

For example - On Sunday we heard and inspiring stewardship talks by several members. Jane and Jim Malik illustrated our pledges by watering a small plant grown

from seed by Jim, the master gardener. It will grow as we at St. James continue by our co start “watering”.

Norman Reynolds reminded us of what Jesus taught through the parable of the talents, treasure and the ideas but to put them to use for God’s purposes in Fayette County.

Laurie Krupala shared a teaching she uses for the preschoolers. Each student brings a small bag of favored snacks that are combined in a “Bounty Bowl” for all to share, reminding us we are all in this together and can multiply individual resources to produce a “great feast”. She showed us a gallon-sized baggie to remind anyone who has not had time to turn in a pledge that the vestry’s “Budget Bounty Bowl” is not yet filled and awaits their portion of the mix.

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November 11, 2025

### **Thoughts from Ken**

Nearly every week I discover something amazing about the people of this parish.

Last Sunday it came from reflections by Chuck Gibson and Mark Mikulin. Chuck, a 15+ year member, courageously shared a personal story that began with his resigning as senior warden a year ago after a very frustrating time of “disruption” in the parish. Before many months had passed, he and Marilyn realized that, regardless, St. James is their spiritual home and the folks in the congregation are their extended family.

I am fairly new around here but I wonder whether there are others reading this who might still struggle with similar trying experiences at St James and might be in need of the kind of healing Chuck and Marilyn have experienced. If so, I welcome a chance to visit with you so I can hear your story and tell you about the joy I have experience in the last twelve months as a part of this parish.

Mark spoke for his young family - saying they all agreed that having entered as strangers they quickly become friends of everyone. It’s the people here that creates a warm and caring family for them - a second family and a family of faith.

If you have not been able to attend church recently for any reason what the Gibson and Mikulin families represent is something very good that I hope you will consider re-connecting with. And your story is something I would welcome hearing about over lunch or a cup of coffee.

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October 29, 2025

### Thoughts from Ken (on Stewardship)

When I retired, I thought, “Good. I’ve done my last stewardship campaign and preached my last stewardship sermon.” Little did I know I would fall in love with a wonderful congregation in La Grange and realize how important it is for me to do that once more.

I wrote a little sermon for Joe to read on Sunday, but I also want to address you more personally about what I consider as the importance of this season.

Stewardship is not just about money - although it is one thing that we are able to count and which we must have to operate as a functioning community to complete what God has given us to do.

Stewardship is about care-giving – care-taker-ship - of everything we have and that we understand as God-given. In everything we are and everything we have; we vow to faithfully return a portion to God’s use.

We do so in following the values of God and actually BEING the Body of Christ in this generation – the only feet and hands and voice and heart and mind and (even the pocketbook) that the Risen Christ has to do the work of God among us.

So I ask you to think about that when you consider what you can do for the church in terms of a pledge of financial support to help us create a sufficient budget next year so we will not worry about money but concentrate more fully on all we have to do together as a family of faith.

Consider that whatever the source of your finances, it comes from the actions of your lives – from what you have done to earn it. So it means giving a part of yourselves – not just money – for God’s use. And – it’s an offering to God that we lay on the altar – just like the bread and the wine of communion or the gifts to A.M.E.N., the Second Chance Emporium, and the organizations we fund through the ECW and the Men’s Club and the people we bless on birthdays and anniversaries.

In this case – however - it is more personal and more individual. It's our particular relationship with God that we address. As you pray about your participation in this Stewardship Season, please consider that. – It's what I did when I filled out my pledge card for the work God gives us to do in 2026.

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September 11, 2025

God of love, we place in your loving arms the thousands of lives lost on September 11, 2001. We also remember the courage of the countless men and women who risked their lives to rescue, comfort and heal those in need. Through Jesus Christ We pray.

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September 9, 2025

Past priest report

I received a call from some outfit that wanted to send a priest from Florida to preach at St James. Turns out they came last just before Eric Hungerford headed north. I inquired with him about the past experience. He graciously called me back in the midst of his vacation, and we had a good chat. We agreed that this is not good time to invite them.

He said to tell you everything is going well for him, and I told him the same about us.

He noted that he regrets not having been able to come to La Grange for a funeral last year, and I said I thought that's just a little long of a trip for him and that the church managed okay without him - though many people have told me how much he is missed.

He returned the sentiment and asked me to send you hugs from him -

so here they are - 🤗🤗🤗

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July 29, 2025

I hope everyone who was able to attend church last Sunday had an interesting and rewarding experience handing a "We love the people of Fayette County" cupcake to another person.

For those who were not able to attend, I encourage you this week to tell another (in person or by telephone) that we at St. James are privileged to follow the example of our patron saint by spending a moment reminding another person that we believe that God's love is available to everyone without condition.

Remember how Jesus said "whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." (Matthew 20:26-28.)

## A MODERN EXAMPLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

In Waco a few years ago, a well-respected 93-year-old Black woman named LaRue Dorsey was interviewed by famed journalist David Brooks in a local restaurant. She prided herself on being an effective teacher for decades because she was a stern disciplinarian. Brooks described her as a drill-sergeant type who was good at laying down the law - an independent woman with tough standards and - to him - a bit imitating. Brooks wrote.

"In the middle of the interview, a mutual friend named Jimmy Dorrell entered the diner. He is teddy bearish White man in his 60s, who built a church for homeless people under a highway overpass and a homeless shelter by his house. He served the poor of Waco in various ways for his whole life. He had worked with Mrs. Dorsey over the years on many community projects. He saw her across the room and came up to our table, smiling as broadly as possible for a human face to smile, and grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her way harder than one should ever shake a 93-year-old. He leaned in - inches from her face - and cried out in a voice that filled the whole place:

"Mrs. Dorsey, Mrs. Dorsey, you're the best, you're the best. I love you. I love you!"

I've never seen a person's whole aspect transform so suddenly. The old disciplinarian face she put on under my gaze vanished, and a joyous, delighted nine-year-old girl appeared.

By projecting a different quality of attention, Jimmy called forth a different version of her.

Jimmy is an illuminator. .... who sees each person - any person - as a creature who was made in the image of God. As he looks into each face, he's looking at least a bit into the face of God. when Jimmy sees a person -any person - he is also seeing a creature endowed with an immortal soul of infinite value and dignity. He tried to live up to one of the great callings of his faith - to see a person the way Jesus would see that person. He is trying to see them with Jesus's eyes - eyes that lavish love on the meek and the lowly the marginalized and those in pain, and on every living person. Meeting

every person, Jimmy comes in with a belief that this person is so important that Jesus was willing to die for their sake. As a result, Jimmy is going to greet people with respect and reverence. ... This awareness of the infinite dignity of each person you meet is a precondition for seeing people well.

I ask you to believe in the concept of a soul. You may just be chatting with someone about the weather, but I ask you to assume that the person in front of you contains some piece of themselves that has no weight, size, color, or shape. It gives them infinite value and dignity.

If you consider that each person has a soul, you will be aware that each person has some transcendent spark inside them. You will be aware that at the deepest level, we are all equals we are not not equal in might, intelligence, or wealth, but we are all equal on the level of our souls. If you see people as precious souls, you will probably be treating them well.

If you can attend to people in this way, you won't be merely observing or scrutinizing them, you'll be illuminating them with a gaze that is warm, respectful, and admiring. You'll be offering a gaze that says "I'm going to trust you before you trust me."

Being an illuminator is a way of being with other people, a style of presence - an ethical ideal. When you're practicing illuminationism, you're offering a gaze that says "I want to get to know you and be known by you." It's a gaze that positively answers the question everybody is unconsciously asking themselves when they meet you. Do you care about me? Am I a person to you? Am I a priority for you ? The answers to those questions are conveyed in your gaze before they are conveyed in your words. A gaze that radiates respect. A gaze that says every person I meet is unique. Every person is fascinating on some topic. If I approach you in this respectful way, I'll know that you're not a puzzle that can be solved but a mystery that can never be gotten to the bottom of, implying " I will do you the honor of suspending judgment and letting you be as you are. Respect is a gift you offer.

Jimmy Sorrell is a living saint. He is the best, most committed example of the Good Samaritan I have ever known. When we began to occasionally work together in Waco, I soon discovered I could never measure up to his commitment. But knowing and watching him, made me work harder to be more like him as a follower of Jesus. I hope by the end of my days on earth to have learned to emulate him much more closely. And I pray you will accept the same challenge.

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August 5, 2025

Our "Back to School Sunday" was a decided success.

I appreciate Fran Mason's support with the backpack donations and delivery to students who will greatly benefit from having ones equal to those of their classmates.

It was good to have Laurie Krupala and several of her award-winning preschool staff allowing us to bless them and their soon-to-begin new session.

Those who presented themselves for a new year as students highlighted what the special day was all about.

The camp song sing-along went well. Don, the choir, and Miles allowed us adults to be kids again – and remember our school days.