

Carolina Compass

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Feet in the vineyard

Al Phillips

By Prioleau Alexander

Many successful businessmen reach the peak of their church service when they assume the vaunted role of usher. This is not the men's fault, of course — it is a tradition stretching back more than 2,000 years to when a little-known apostle named Fred served as the usher for the Last Supper, then slipped out before communion.

In contrast, 2002 found Carolina Eastern CEO Al Phillips teaching second-grade Sunday School at St. Philip's in downtown Charleston. As the father of four, he was forged in the fire of second-grade attention spans and carried on the Sisyphean task with a smile on his face.

Then the real trial began: He was asked to step in to teach a seventh grade confirmation class ... already underway. With no set curriculum, Al pondered and prayed and arrived at a solution: Since the Anglican process of confirmation is about teaching youngsters "what Anglicans believe," he went to the source of what they believe — The Nicene Creed, which is read aloud each Sunday, confessing the tenants of the faith. He prepared a lesson plan to go through each sentence of the Creed and cited the passages and lessons in the Bible that correspond to each statement of faith.

After year one, Al agreed to undertake the challenge again ... no small task, as the confirmation course runs every Sunday through the entire school year. He expanded the curriculum to take the youngsters through the basics of the Old and New Testaments, then carry on through the Nicene Creed.

Now, 14 years later, he is still going: Every Sunday at 9:15 a.m., eschewing even trips to Clemson home games when the kickoff is too late for him to return home to teach the following morning.

"Al knows how to inspire our children to read the Bible and how to love Jesus," says Catherine Wallace. "He explains the stories in the Bible by using examples in our everyday life. I've had three children go through his class, and every one enjoyed Al's great sense of humor, kindness and generosity. They actually paid attention."

Part of his secret of success is offering relatable and humorous teaching for seventh graders. At the end of each week he administers a test on the day's lesson, with questions such as:

"How did God react to the odor

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The first floor drawing room.

IMAGES BY CHARLES W. WARING III

Building faith while restoring the St. Philip's rectory

Buz Morris explains the honor of doing 'God's work'

By Charles W. Waring III

Rarely do we have the opportunity to be a little like the Old Testament's Nehemiah and rebuild something meaningful and a key element of our own Holy City. Some might take all building projects in stride as just business, but that was not the way it was going to work when Robert S. "Buz" Morris III learned that he won the bid against two other firms to serve as the general contractor of the St. Philip's Church rectory at 92 Church St. After all, Buz is a longstanding member of St. Philip's and keenly aware that his grandparents also worshipped there.

His Broad Street-centered firm, Morris Construction, LLC, was ready to renovate the home in three months but old homes hide various issues, so change orders pushed the project completion time to four

months. Tucked South of Broad amid some of finest real estate on the East Coast, this historic nugget originated at the hands of Scottish merchant Alexander Christie in about 1805. It is across the street from where George Washington stayed when he came to Charleston in 1791.

Owned by the church since 1908, the early 19th-century Adamesque home is an extension of the Good Lord's hands on church life and hospitality to the community; though it is not the walls of Jerusalem, it is the Mother Church's home for its rector. After all, St. Philip's has been active since 1680 when it was then located at the southeast corner of the Four Corners of Law, the current site of St. Michael's.

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Parenting and worship at Advent

By Lissa Long

My ten-year-old daughter Macie's favorite part of the Christmas Story is from Luke 2: "So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her hearts. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

For Macie, it hasn't been only about the birth of Jesus, but about everyone coming to see the new baby and celebrating the Son of God being born. Jesus coming was only part of the story; so much more happened after Mary placed the baby Jesus in swaddling clothes.

It is the more that we anticipate during the coming Advent and Christmas season as well. We await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ again in truth and wonderment. How then do we forget to allow for Advent to happen and let Christmas be Christmas? Perhaps it is because we forget that Advent and Christmas, while in the same months, are two different liturgical seasons in the church. It is an easy

blend with the way our secular calendars become overwhelmed with office parties, school functions, shopping and trying to absorb as much Christmas spirit as possible before January 2, when we are forced to return to normal.

So, what are the differences?

First, we have Advent: Four Sundays which are to guide us through the days and weeks prior to Christmas. Many churches will bring out their Advent wreaths to help mark these Sundays. The first Sunday this year is November 27. Each Sunday, a candle is lit as part of the Advent journey and the waiting being done for Christ's return. Some churches will have themes for the candles (yes, there are different themes). Some churches will have the acolyte or member(s) of the congregation light the candles along with a hymn, reading or prayer. The candles are purple (three), rose (one) and white (one). The white candle is lit on Christmas Eve and is called the Christ Candle. Churches who use paraments (the cloth covering the pulpit, Lord's Table, stoles, etc.) will use purple during Advent.

During Advent, we read scripture passages from the prophets and Gospels. We are invited to remember the prophesies of God's plan for God's people

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Lifeline Thanksgiving in the midst of loss

By Barbara Boatwright

We must become a people who say, "in anything and everything I will give thanks."
— Bill Johnson

Where were you on October 8, 2016? We all have a story, and it probably has much of the same theme. No, not just about Hurricane Matthew, but a theme that forces us to examine what is truly important in our lives.

We evacuated to the mountains of North Carolina to stay with family. We found ourselves with Kelly and Bill, who had been visiting there and, instead of vacationers, found themselves unexpected refugees from the storm as it headed toward their hometown of Jacksonville, Florida. We spent two days together glued to The Weather Channel, supporting each other as the storm made its way up the coast and impacted our families, friends and neighborhoods.

We marveled at and feared for those who stayed behind to weather the storm and, simultaneously, our hearts broke for the people of Haiti, who lacked the resources for the most basic safety or escape. Whether people had hurricane parties or gathered in shelters, the need for staying connected was paramount.

Author Heather Wright has written about loss and says, "Our attention is refocused toward those we love, our faith and our gratitude for the blessings we do have. As we face the realities of our loss, we have the opportunity to choose hope as an act of the will, that there can be a better tomorrow."

As these Florida friends processed the potential total destruction of their home, I saw them shift from a place of shock to a sense of opportunity at the thought of rebuilding their home and lives again. As with us all, the things they most feared losing were photographs and meaningful items that attested to

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Morris, cont.

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As an active parishioner with a heart for God's Word and his city's history, Buz blends in his love for classic architecture, which produces a special passion behind the project. As he speaks of his association with the undertaking, he comes across as an absolutely focused man who is thinking in a European Renaissance manner of being tapped by his peers for something about which he could have only dreamed. However, he is a Charleston gent and does not speak in such lofty terms because some might perceive such comparisons as being over the top — this is not something he explains but is something a friend would perceive.

In actuality, Buz has truly served in the greatest Old World traditions of stewardship of what belongs to God, and although he did not paint the ceiling with an image from scripture, he put his touch on the final product in a way that speaks to his faith and relationship with his church. No stranger to church work, he recently drew up architectural plans for renovating the nearby dependency of the St. Michael's rectory.

Decades before this project started, Buz was in an apprentice stage of life after two years at Wofford and having previously graduated from Christ School in Arden, N.C. He was living in Charlotte, N.C. and working for a construction firm, which he did for two years, giving him the opportunity to put his hands around and in what he estimates would be 60 buildings. He thoroughly enjoyed the building process and the feeling of achievement in crafting something from nothing. However, he came to appreciate that he needed

structure(s) to replace the Twin Towers lost in the attacks of 9/11. By 2003, his compass pointed south to Charleston where many relatives welcomed him. With a head of steam filled with experience, Buz started his own building and architectural firm. He has been moving at a New York pace with a Southern attitude ever since.

In the last nine years he married the former Nevitte Swink of Effingham, S.C. and settled into a home in The Crescent, which he renovated painstakingly. Now, he and his wife are raising the precocious Caroline, the apple of her father's eye. With a rugged grin, Buz speaks of his little girl and taking her hunting, crabbing and to soccer games.

His adventures outdoors are just part of the passion he projects. Pull in the importance of classic architecture and he shows a determination to be closely attached to what is traditional and honest and life giving. He knows his brier patch and is glad the vestry of St. Philip's tossed him into 92 Church St.

From a structural perspective, the kitchen became a much bigger job than he expected. As with so many renovations of old homes in Charleston, the scope of work is never certain until the eyes get in the walls, under the floor and in the roof. He found out there was an old cistern but no crawl space and rotten wood; he came up with a plan to strengthen the foundations, repoint the bricks and replace the sheetrock. Furthermore, he undertook to replace the faulty polybutylene pipes.

In addition, he had to pull the fig vines that were growing in between the heart of pine wood frame and the roof, and a new roof had to go over

“Integrity always matters — no matter the project”

more education to learn how to design and build or renovate the kind of classic structures that truly appealed to his aesthetic bent. He put down his hard hat and dove into the books. Subsequently, he earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Architecture degree from UNC Charlotte.

After school and in a highly competitive process, he received the honor to work in the Big Apple as an intern for Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects for four years. One project included planning for the

old kitchen. Buz had creative license on the kitchen but brought in Travis Dew to choose paint colors and lighting elements. He explained that he “came up with the idea of the dark wooden trim in the kitchen cabinets that mirrors the white pews with the dark brown mahogany in the sanctuary.” Buz showed how the kitchen's gray and white stone tiles suggest the color and pattern of the church aisles.

With the right educational background in hand, he was perfectly placed to have the Holy



Buz Morris stands at the front door of the St. Philip's rectory, which he recently restored with care.



The rectory at 92 Church St.



The second floor library holds many history books and historic artifacts that Jeff Miller has collected.

Spirit inspire the details — something that mightily humbles this craftsman. He clearly understands that he was doing God's work; however, he said that he would do the same quality work for any client.

“Integrity always matters — no matter the project,” he says when we discussed his business philosophy. Nonetheless, success in this project was no small thing to Buz; he said it was like a “pat on the back from God.”

He speaks of how he developed stronger bonds with his fellow parishioners who were involved. Moreover, he said he “saw how the Lord wants us to be good stewards of what He has given us.” Buz also found it rewarding to get the rectory ready to welcome the large family of the new rector, Jim Miller who had been the rector of St. Helena's in Beaufort.

Before the job began this summer, Buz prayed about being sure he was doing the right thing and prayed throughout the experience. When the moment of truth arrived and it was time to show the Rev. Miller his new home, Buz had the honor of seeing a wide smile on the rector's face.

He said, “The house has beautiful bones but we made it a home for him. I really think it fits his family hand in glove. I was so excited that my rector was happy with it . . . We delivered it on time and on budget.”



The inspired kitchen of 92 Church St.



One of the handsome outbuildings at 92 Church St.



Buz Morris and Jeff Miller discuss the renovation details within the kitchen.