

Each Sunday evening since March 22, four or five people find their way to All Saints' Chapel; one sets to work wiping doorknobs, a votive candle, and lighter. A reader makes a few last markings in the text, and someone with a cell phone checks the lighting. Organ music is practiced in the background. Their tasks completed, they gather at the 'pandemic six' (feet) to check signals for the 8 p.m. service of Lucernarium, a liturgy that is scarcely five minutes in length but rooted in the early church and centered on the symbolism of light. The Lucernarium was first connected to the evening office, *vespera*, since candles were often required at the time of day. Monastics, being rather pragmatic, went about this efficiently. In time, cathedrals developed a separate liturgy and music for this action. What Cramner had in the beautiful text was not equaled in liturgical extravagance; liturgies in both the 1549 and 1552 Prayer Books were purposefully simple and restrained. The Lucernaria was lost to the Episcopal Church (officially) until the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

This service was never planned as part of the worship of All Saints' Chapel. In the momentous ten days of March that are labeled spring break on the academic calendar, COVID-19 viciously spread across the country; the first states were ordered to send home all but essential workers, and the University of the South, as most other colleges, notified students, faculty, and staff that the remainder of the semester would be taught on-line. Students were asked not to return to campus and all persons on the domain were soon under 'Safer at Home' actions. So many hopes, plans, and expectations suddenly evaporated. A community accustomed to celebrating and mourning as one body, seemed torn and scattered to the wind. Yeast and toilet paper curiously disappeared from store shelves.

In the midst of this emotional turbulence, a chapel staff member was returning from a trip and read the Instagram post titled "Don't Pull up the Drawbridge" by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. In the United Kingdom, cases were rapidly multiplying, mortality rates rising, and fear prompted hoarding of goods. The United States was not far behind. The Archbishop and other religious leaders jointly called for a day of prayer and action on Sunday, March 22, with a reminder that physical isolation does not need to include physical and spiritual isolation. The religious leaders called for each person to carry out one action for the benefit of another person in need, and that evening, at 7 p.m., read the Lucernarium and light a candle in your home.

A few texts later, students from the college and School of Theology were in communication across the miles (from Florida to North Carolina to Kentucky and Tennessee) to prepare the service and secure permission to use the chapel. It was expected to be a one-time offering but there seemed to be a resonance among many that a regular but brief moment of prayer and the simple lighting of a candle, knowing that so many others were doing likewise, was a much-needed salve at a disconcerting time.

And so, each Sunday night, we gather in the midst of that great, beautiful space that is often the source of 'jokes' (you only need to go twice; it used to be mandatory, etc.) We quietly offer a prayer and light a candle, as believers have done for centuries

and pray that our beloved Sewanee is once again brought together to rejoice in All Saints' Chapel.