

*With Fr. Jim away for vacation, this edition of the Radiant Cross provides a good opportunity to help our members and friends know a little more about our rector. Here is an updated biography of Fr. Jim.*

Fr. Jim and his wife Lee Elena are recently celebrating their twenty-second year together. They met in St. Louis, Missouri where Jim was born and raised, and near Lee Elena's hometown of Monticello, Illinois. Lee Elena is a Nurse Practitioner working at a clinic in Elgin. Their three children are Valerie, soon to be 20, Emily, 18, and Melanie, 15. Fr. Jim attended a Lutheran elementary school and credits his early education in this Christian environment as formative of his faith in God. It was there that he began to sense a vocation from God to Holy Orders.

Before attending college, Jim worked variously as a self-defense instructor (earning a black belt in Chinese Kenpo), as a carpenter building custom homes, then as a laborer and/or department supervisor at a variety of manufacturing companies. Responding to a re-emerging sense of call, Fr. Jim returned to church life in his mid-twenties. Having drifted from the Lutheran Church of his childhood, he looked up "Church" in the white pages of the phone book. There he found a local Church of Christ congregation listed and began attending worship services. It was at this congregation that he was blessed to meet Lee Elena Mathis, his wife-to-be.

The two were married in 1988, and headed off to Abilene, Texas where Jim attended Abilene Christian University. Jim earned Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies. In Abilene, Lee Elena and Jim were blessed with their first daughter Valerie, and then their second daughter Emily. It was also in Abilene where the family found their spiritual home with the Episcopal Church at Church of the Heavenly Rest. Upon graduation, they moved to Boston, Massachusetts and Lee Elena resumed

graduate work in Nursing Education at the University of Massachusetts. While there, Jim earned a Master's of Divinity degree at Harvard University. They were blessed in Boston with the birth of their third daughter Melanie.

After graduation, Jim and his family moved here to Austin, where Lee Elena began working with Brackenridge Hospital and the Heart Hospital of Austin. Jim worked at Austin State Hospital as a chaplain intern in the hospital's Clinical Pastoral Education program. In preparation for Holy Orders, Jim attended the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest for a year, and earned a Certificate of Individual Studies. In 1999 Jim was ordained a deacon in the Church; and in August of 2000, he was made a priest. Fr. Jim served as Assistant Rector at St. Stephen's, Houston for two years. In 2001, he was invited to come to ECR as our new rector, and gratefully accepted.

Fr. Jim came to ECR at the end of October 2001, and held his first Sunday services here on All Saints Sunday of that year. As he approaches the beginning of his ninth year with us, Fr. Jim is excited with the energy and movement of the Spirit of God here at ECR: "Working together, praying together, serving others together in Christ's name, worshipping God together, we are Resurrection people. We move into our future energized and guided by the Spirit of the resurrected One, giving witness to the Love of God for all. Christ is lively within this community, in the sacraments of the Church administered here, and in the sacramental people that comprise our community. Jesus is moving us further into the world around us, and through us is moving ahead of us, to meet us there when we arrive."

We're thankful that Fr. Jim is with us, and that God has blessed all of us in bringing our ministries together in the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Evelyn Griffin, Editor*