

Marquand Chapel  
November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005

**All Saints**  
Emily Scott

*Upon entering, each congregant receives a card similar to the following:*  
*Case File 536UMTX*  
*Male*  
*Found October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003*  
*Huston, Texas*

*For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

As a child, I had a secret place to play.  
It was a cemetery.

After school I would often get a note to go home on the bus with my best friend Cammie.  
Her mother would give us a snack, and we would sit together and do our homework,  
until, finally, we were released.  
We'd dash out the door, and run the back way to Indian Hill Cemetery.

The cemetery was always quiet and empty.  
There were never any other children.  
It was a beautiful place, and covered a huge expanse of ground.  
There were small, shady groves covered in moss.  
Violets would grow there in the spring,  
And the sun filtered through the leaves.  
And there were meadows filled with wild flowers.  
There were giant old maple trees, that were brilliant in the fall.  
There was one with branches the perfect height for climbing.  
We'd sit as far up as we could go, and tell secrets.  
Look out over the town through the leaves.  
To two little girls, the place seemed enchanted.

But it was more than the beauty and quiet of the place that drew us to Indian Hill.  
Most days we'd wander around the cemetery looking at all the headstones.  
*Jonathan Zechariah Halverson III*, we'd read.  
*Beloved father and husband lost at sea.*

Cammie and I would look at each other.  
Lost at sea?  
*I bet he had an eyepatch!* I would say.  
But Cammie was already at the gravestone next to Mr. Halverson's.

*Grace Lydia Halverson* she would read.  
*She died 23 years after him! What a long time to be all alone.*  
*She must have waited up nights, waiting and waiting for him to come home!*  
And we'd continue this way, reading names, and weaving stories.  
Imagining the lives of those who had gone before.

This practice of imagination gave us something.  
It reminded us that we were not alone in the world.  
That so many others had come before us.  
That just by letting their names cross our lips, we could participate in the past.  
In speaking their names, we became connected to something – like history, but deeper.  
A sense of a living past.  
A sense of being part of some great arch of time, some ongoing narrative.  
Part of the story.

The names on those headstones said, *I was here.*  
*God created me, and I lived.*  
*I was part of all of this,*  
*And I am part of you.*  
*Remember me.*

*Remember me.*  
Is there anyone who doesn't want to be remembered?  
To leave some kind of mark on this earth?  
Something that says, "I was here"?  
We see evidence of this all around us.  
Graffiti in bathroom stalls.  
*I was here.*  
Headstones in graveyards.  
*I was here.*  
Days like today.  
All Saints Day.  
Days when we remember those who have died.  
Those whose lives were a witnesses to faith.  
All Saints Day is a day for remembering those who have gone before, for they are an important part our journey.  
And we remember them through names.  
So many names, read in churches all over the world.  
The names are an invocation – a way of invoking the memory of someone who has gone across to the other shore.

But what about people who have no names?  
The woman found dead one morning.

No one knows her name.  
No one comes to claim her body.

If she has a caring family, they don't know where she is.  
And she will be buried, like so many others, in a government grave for the nameless, a Jane Doe.

She has slipped away to the next world unnoticed,  
She is one of the unidentified dead.

Somehow she became lost.  
Perhaps homeless.  
Perhaps caught up in crime.  
Drugs.  
Prostitution.  
Maybe just a victim of bad circumstances.  
Or a victim of violence.  
Somehow, she became isolated from whatever friends or family she had.  
And when her body was found, no one knew who she was.  
No one could identify her.  
Who will remember *her* today?  
How can we invoke her memory?  
We don't even know her name.

But God knows her name.  
God knows her name.

God formed her.  
God made her.  
God wove her in the depths of the earth.  
God knit her together in her mother's womb.  
God created her, brilliant and new, and breathed life into her.  
God loved her.  
She: a new creation.  
A new day.  
A new world.  
Beloved by God.  
And when she died, however she died,  
At the hands of, hunger, or cold, or sickness, or violence,  
God was with her.  
And her name is held in God's heart.  
She, that perfect child of God.

Blessed are you, Case File 267UFIN, a female found May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004 in Arlington, Indiana.

God knows your name.

Blessed are you, Case File 573UMCT, a male found July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003 in Middleton, Connecticut.

God knows your name.

Blessed are you, Case File 846UFWA, a female, found December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Port Angeles, Washington.

Who else?

*[Congregants read their cards out loud]*

Blessed are the broken.  
Blessed are the lonely.  
Blessed are the destitute.  
Blessed are the hopeless.

Blessed are you, you children of God, you saints of Christ.  
For God is with you.  
Let your hearts be still.  
For you are not forgotten.

Amen.