

❖ Embodied Hope and the Spiritual Practice of Resilience ❖



Dr. Courtney Cowart

Guest Preacher and Presenter for Coffee Hour Conversation
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, October 5, 2014 – 10:30am

Courtney Cowart is Associate Dean and Director of The School of Theology's Programs Center at the University of the South (Sewanee). She holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Vanderbilt University; an M.A. in Ascetical Theology from The General Theological Seminary; and a Th.D. in Anglican Studies from The General Theological Seminary.

Dr. Cowart is a scholar in the fields of ascetical theology and American Church history whose work has explored the relationship of spiritual practice and leadership. She is best known for her service at the epicenters of recovery from 11th September (2001-2002) and Hurricane Katrina (2005-2010).

On the morning of September 11, 2001 while serving as program officer for spiritual formation and development grants at Trinity Church Wall Street in New York City, Cowart hosted the Archbishop of Canterbury (the head of the worldwide Anglican Communion) and several other prominent faith leaders for the filming of a Lenten series: *The Shaping of Holy Lives*.

Cowart's 2008 book, *An American Awakening: From 9/11 to Katrina – The People We Are Free to Be*, vividly chronicles the events of that morning and their impact on her spiritual vocation, first as an organizer of the 24/7 respite center for recovery workers at St Paul's Chapel immediately following 9/11, and four years later as co-director of the Office of Disaster Response for the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina.

In 2010, Cowart left New Orleans to oversee the congregational learning initiatives of The Fund for Theological Education in Atlanta. There she developed and taught practices for shaping the next generation of Christian leaders. Informed by experiences of discovering massive resilience in the midst of massive trauma, these practices help generate communities of safety, dignity, alliance, and hope.

Our choice to embody a faith based on these essentials will set the course for the future of Christianity – especially as we actively reject the ways of violence and domination, choosing instead to embrace and embody the ways of non-violence and radical hospitality.

Courtney Cowart is an author of grace: as a subject matter, as in the elegance of her art, and as a person who knows it when she sees it and can respond to it with her whole heart. Grace cannot be planned, manufactured, packaged, or earned. It is different each time. How then may [we recognize] it when it happens and clear the way for its power? Courtney's graceful story shows how.

– Jerome Berryman, founder of Godly Play