

Martin

in the **Narthex**

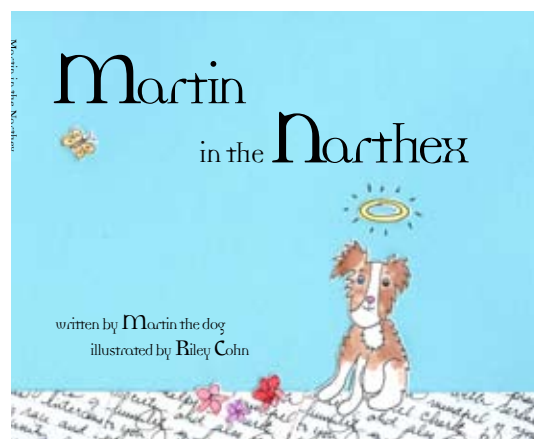


My 'job description' given to me by my dad, the priest, was to greet people and make them feel welcome. I was very good at what I did. I happen to be quite an attractive dog and I love everyone and everyone loves me. That's the way it ought to be, don't you think?

So begins **Martin in the Narthex**, written by Martin the dog, an Australian Shepherd and the official greeter at St. Barnabas in Fredericksburg, Texas, for almost five years. With canine insight, he describes his joyful role in helping to make the church a friendly, caring community. Readers of all ages will enjoy and understand this story of love and redemption.

The book's cheerful, engaging illustrations are the work of twelve-year-old Riley Cohn, who brings Martin's story to life with drawings that reflect her own unique way of viewing the world.

ISBN# 9780940672826
40 pages
Full color
Hardcover, \$14.95



About the Author...



Martin, an Australian shepherd, was born on February 14, 2000, in Weslaco, Texas. Reverend and Mrs. Richard H. Elwood got Martin the day after Easter that year, and he has been with them ever since. Dick and Jane Elwood, and Martin, moved to Fredericksburg in 2005 when Dick began serving as the interim rector of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, one week after he had retired from active ministry. What was expected to be a twelve-to-eighteen-month

assignment lasted four and a half years. His final service at St. Barnabas was Easter of 2009, which marked his forty-fifth year in the Episcopal ministry. Jane Leister Elwood is a Christian actress who has written and performed dramatic monologues about biblical women. She has taken her "Women of the Bible" all over the country to churches of every denomination. Following a two-year stay in Houston to be near their children and grandchildren, the Elwoods have made Fredericksburg their permanent residence. Martin continues to be a blessing to his owners and to countless others who have encountered him along the way. As he says, "All I have ever known is love. That's the way it ought to be, don't you think?"



About the illustrator...



Riley Cohn is a sixth-grade student at Fredericksburg Middle School. She lives with her parents, her sister Sydney and her seven dogs—Scooter, Bobbaloo, Schmitty, Chancho, Rosie, Starsky, and Hutch—on five acres outside of Fredericksburg, Texas. She enjoys drawing, eating Popsicles, making drip castles at the beach, and swimming in the ocean when the water is cold. Through her amazing artistic talent, she can capture a

person's true essence with the simplest of strokes. Her gift of autism has given her the ability to see the good and beauty in all. What a magical gift, don't you think?

A portion of the proceeds from this book will be donated to Autism Speaks which is America's largest autism science and advocacy organization. In addition to raising money for research, Autism Speaks works to educate the public about Autism, so that individuals with Autism can be celebrated for their differences and given opportunities to highlight their unique talents.



Some questions...



How did the idea of Martin in the Narthex come to you?

I concluded my work at St. Barnabas, Easter, 2009. Jeff Hammond had been called as the new Rector and it was time for 'me to go...' The opportunity presented itself to return to St. Martin's, Houston and so I began there (again) on June 1. On the second Saturday of June, 2009, I had the Saturday morning duty (from 8:00 until noon) and Martin went with me. It was a very quiet morning and I was reading something...all of a sudden I looked up and Martin was looking at me and I said: "Martin, do you want to tell the story about your life and work at St. Barnabas?" He nodded, "yes!" He began speaking and I began typing and 35 or 40 minutes later the story had been told.

I sent a copy (roughly six or seven pages) to Nan Mosley and Morey Weldon (who had been my Senior Warden), just because I thought they would enjoy it and thought nothing more of it.

A month or so later, Nan Mosely called and said you have to come to Fredericksburg and meet Camille Cohn and her daughter Riley...the rest is history. (From the perspective of Fr. Elwood)

Some questions...

In what ways have you seen Martin “herd his people”?

Herding? See Riley’s drawing of all the people in the courtyard with Martin standing there...getting ready to “herd” them into church. That pretty much says it all.

By his presence at the church everyday, he “herded” people pack into right relationships.

He wasn't interested in all that had happened before. He was interested in bringing people back into right relationships...back into caring for each other rather than being angry with each other. As a herder he reminded and taught people how to love again. (From the perspective of Fr. Elwood)



Some questions...



What do you and Jane think is the best part of being Martin's parents?

Martin has taught us...in his eleven and a half years...how to love unconditionally. That's how he has loved us..."warts and all" with total trust and total assurance that we would be there for him and he would be

there for us...REGARDLESS! In short, he has taught us, he has taught many people, how to love. (From the perspective of Fr. Elwood)



Some questions...



How did Riley get the “job” as illustrator of this book?

A friend of ours mentioned that she knew someone who had written a children’s book and they needed someone to illustrate it. She asked me if I thought Riley might like to work on it. She knew that Riley enjoyed drawing and has always had a special connection with animals, so this seemed like a perfect fit. The project sat in my to-do pile for about a year, when finally one summer I got motivated to break the task up into pieces and have Riley work on it a little at a time. It was really just a motivator for me as a parent to keep my girls creating and doing art over the summer. Riley and Sydney (Riley’s little sister), each worked on illustrating and writing books that summer. We treated it like a job and they got paid in trips to Clear River Ice Cream. We put a book together on Blurb, which is an online bookmaking program. When we got our little “comp” book back, I sent a copy to Fr. Elwood as just a “Hey look what Riley did!” I was already so proud of Riley for sticking with the project and working so hard. I had no idea it would actually get published. (From the perspective of Riley’s mom, Camille Cohn)

Some questions...



When did Riley meet Martin?

The funny thing is that when we read the story about Martin, we realized that we were already long lost friends. Father Elwood and Martin had rescued the girls and I one time when we had run out of gas. They came zipping up in the Mini Cooper with a gas can. Riley and Sydney were 5 and 3 at the time, and I had just picked up all the dogs from being boarded after Christmas vacation. I was busy worrying about dogs and kids flying around the car, so I didn't even think about the gas tank. You can imagine what heroes they seemed like at the time. I thought it was so funny that our paths were crossing again. (From the perspective of Riley's mom)

As a mother of a child with Autism, what would you like people to know?

I think the most important thing I want people to know is that people with Autism might be **different**, but they are **not less**. Most people on the Autistic Spectrum are extremely intelligent but they are wired differently and have a hard time expressing themselves. My hope is that as awareness increases, the general public will be able to give Autistic people opportunities that celebrate their unique talents instead of seeing them as individuals who have something wrong with them. (From the perspective of Riley's mom)

Some questions...

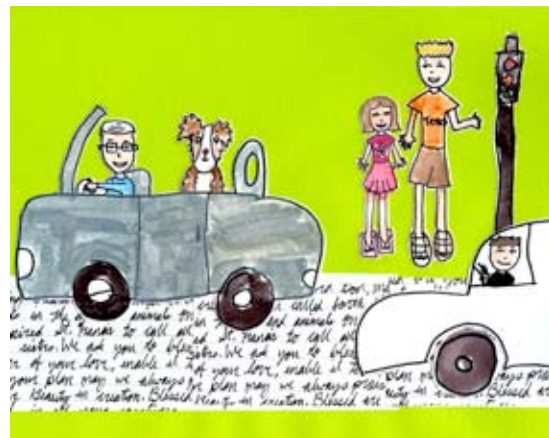
Riley, what pictures do you like in the book?

I probably like the picture of Martin with sunglasses.

Why?

Because it is me being silly!

I also like the picture of Martin in the car on the street. I like that picture because me and my daddy are in it.



About St. Barnabas...



St. Barnabas Episcopal Church was established in 1946 when a group of eight Episcopalians began meeting once a month in one another's homes in Fredericksburg. In 1954 the growing congregation purchased the church's present location, the homestead of a pioneer family. For a decade services were held in the fachwerk cabin, con-

structed in 1848 and still used as a chapel. The church was named for St. Barnabas because it was officially established on December 16, the day St. Barnabas was ordained.

When the cornerstone for the new church was laid on November 11, 1964, President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson were among those who attended the ceremony, presenting the limestone rock from the St. Barnabas Monastery on the Greek island of Cyprus. Placed on the south wall of the new sanctuary, the stone was a gift to Mrs. Johnson from the Archbishop Makarios when the Johnsons visited Cyprus in 1962. The stone is from the site where St. Barnabas, according to tradition, met a martyr's death by stoning in the year A. D. 61.

Today the church continues to grow and serve the community of Fredericksburg in a myriad of ways, from Mom's Morning Off childcare to providing meeting space for the Boy Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other groups.

About Autism...



Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication and social interactions. Today, it is estimated that one in every 110 children is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined. An estimated 1.5 million individuals in the U.S. and tens of millions worldwide are affected by autism. Government statistics suggest the prevalence rate of autism is increasing 10-17 percent annually. There is not an established explanation for this increase, although improved diagnosis and environmental influences are two reasons often considered. Studies suggest boys are more likely than girls to develop autism and receive the diagnosis three to four times more frequently. Current estimates are that in the United States alone, one out of 70 boys is diagnosed with autism.

The puzzle piece in the symbol for autism awareness.



Father Elwood, Riley and Martin on the grounds of St. Barnabas



Father Elwood and Martin take off in the Mini



Martin getting treats from his friend Mrs. Jessie Leigh



Riley near the chapel at St. Barnabas



Martin with his parents
Jane and Dick Elwood



Riley working on illustrations



Martin smiles for the camera



The grounds of St. Barnabas

Contact information...

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Fr. Elwood, Martin and Riley are available for book signings and school visits.

Be sure to follow Martin on Facebook.

