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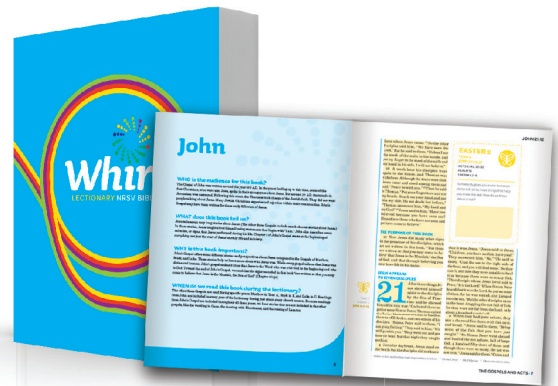
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## ON THE COVER

Photographer Richard Hill aims to show the lovely and the derelict, the dignity and the irony, the pain and the joy of everyday life (see “Common Prayer,” p. 30).



# THE LIVING CHURCH

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We are grateful to the dioceses of Long Island and Southwest Florida [p. 40], the Diocese of Chicago [p. 41], and S. Stephen’s Church, Providence [p. 43], whose generous support helped make this issue possible.

# Who Will Lead Episcopalians?

The election of the 27th presiding bishop reflects a church in flux.

By Tom Sramek, Jr.

Perhaps it is human hubris for a generation to see itself living in a pivotal time. But with the rise of unaffiliated “nones,” disaffiliated “dones,” and a church that can no longer count on inertia or brand loyalty, the 78th General Convention at least meets in turbulent times. When the 75th General Convention met in Columbus, Ohio, in 2006, seven nominees stood for election. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has served through a tumultuous and in many ways transitional period in the history of the Episcopal Church.

Beginning June 23, bishops and deputies will tackle proposed legislation on same-sex marriage, liturgy, and various topics of justice. But a clear central theme will be the health of the church and whether it is prepared for effective ministry in the still-young 21st century.

The election will occur amid discussions of the Task force for Reimagining the Episcopal Church’s report and the subsequent “Memorial to the Church” endorsed by many bishops and deputies. That restructuring may include changes in how the presiding bishop engages with the broader church.

Digital culture already has affected the presiding bishop’s work. When Bishop Jefferts Schori was elected the iPhone had not yet been introduced, Facebook had just been made available to users other than university students, and YouTube and Twitter were still finding their core audiences. The church now functions in an immediately global context, in which a tweet, a text message, a podcast, or a video sermon may quickly find a global au-

dience. At the same time, hands-on ministry occurs mostly in dioceses and congregations.

Into this tide of change and challenge walk four nominees who have agreed to stand for election as the 27th presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. There are no women this time. All four nominees are in their late 50s or early 60s. Their tenure as diocesan bishops ranges from five years (Ian Douglas), to eight (Thomas Breidenthal and Dabney Smith) to 15 (Michael Curry). THE LIVING CHURCH offers a glimpse into each nominee’s vision for ministry and the Episcopal Church’s future, based on interviews with each man.

## Thomas Breidenthal

*Ancient witness, open mind: the church at its best.*



Breidenthal

Thomas Breidenthal held a variety of positions in the church — parish rector, school chaplain, seminary professor, and university dean — before being elected Bishop of Southern Ohio. As a parish priest in Oregon, he observed that not only is the church increasingly on the margins but faith itself is an anomaly in many parts of the country. This demonstrated to him the increasing need for ecumenical and interfaith partnerships. He appreciates, for instance, the increasing fascination of evangelical Protestants with sacramental worship and work for justice.

He expresses concerns much like those of the Task Force for Reimagining the Episcopal Church (TREC). “We are to approach every neighbor

as one for whom Christ died, and we are to trust that the God who made us for community can take whatever is most broken in our relationships and heal it,” he said. “So we must always face where we are with one another and work from there, without pretense, but with real commitment to the kingdom of God, of which we are the raw material.”

Such engagement with neighborhoods would be a central theme in his tenure as presiding bishop: “Were I to be elected presiding bishop, I would use that office’s pulpit to drive home the local congregation’s crucial role in living out connection every which way.”

What the Episcopal Church has to offer the world, and especially the unaffiliated, is a “firm grounding in the mainstream of Christian teaching coupled with a hard-won and well-honed ability to tolerate disagreement among ourselves.”

What we often lack is an ability to talk about our faith. In this, evangelicals have something to teach us. “Evangelicals are becoming attracted to liturgy, and are feeling uncertain in the face of that,” he said. “Likewise, we who are quite comfortable with liturgy are inching toward witness. The same Spirit is pushing both traditions to a new meeting place. What will it look like when evangelical liturgy and liturgical witness come together?”

How does he see the role of presiding bishop? Breidenthal sees it as largely a teaching role. He sees a presiding bishop as someone who empowers others to use their gifts and talents. The Episcopal Church works best when widely scattered individuals, congregations, and dioceses see

themselves as a part of a larger whole.

Breidenthal sees some difficulties in TREC's proposal that the presiding bishop be CEO of the church. "The presiding bishop," he said, "is not a CEO hired by a board, but a pastor elected by fellow bishops to focus their spiritual leadership of our branch of Christ's church." Accordingly, the presiding bishop is accountable to "the community of bishops, and on that basis, stands in collegial relationship with Executive Council."

He believes that acknowledging differing convictions and respecting them is an important way to unite the various factions of the Episcopal Church. "In a fairly moderate to conservative diocese, I have brought people to agree to the blessing of same-gender unions, and have publicly promoted health-care reform and care for immigrants in the name of the diocese," he said. "How was this possible? I think people trust me

to listen to all sides, and to act out of my own Christian (rather than merely partisan) convictions, as well as a considered sense of what we as a diocese can live with. Respect and acknowledgment go a long way."

### Michael Curry

*Tweet the vision, then help people make it happen.*



Curry

Michael Curry stands as one unapologetically focused on making disciples of Jesus. "I think that the primary business of the church is to form and make disciples of Jesus — and that makes a difference in the world." As Bishop of North Carolina for 15 years, Curry feels open to a new chapter in that work or to beginning an entirely new chapter as presiding bishop.

"While a presiding bishop has important responsibilities as CEO (Chief

Executive Officer), I believe this mission moment in which we find ourselves demands a presiding bishop be a CEO in another sense: Chief Evangelism Officer," he said. "That approach seeks to live out the meaning of the Great Commission to 'make disciples of all nations' and is how we share in the Jesus movement of our time, making a difference in our world through evangelism, personal and social witness, and prophecy."

Curry believes that social media offer opportunities to be "a messenger of God's loving, liberating, and life-giving word in Jesus the Christ" to a global audience. "Today [the presiding bishop's] pulpit is not just of wood or stone," he said. "It is digital. Sometimes it is a tweet, sometimes a post on Facebook or Instagram, sometimes an article online and in print, and very often personally preaching and teaching."

In involves "listening and encouraging the faithful people of God in

(Continued on next page)

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# Who Will Lead Episcopalians?

(Continued from previous page)

their discipleship, following in the way of Jesus.” He has experience with digital media, having “all of these means, in addition to a weekly video message or interview,” to communicate with his diocese. In a coordinated and strategic way, a presiding bishop can utilize these and other vehicles as means of evangelism, encouragement, formation, teaching, and proclamation.”

Far from believing that Christianity is dying, Curry thinks the church’s best days are still ahead. What is coming to an end, he said, is *nominal* Christianity, simply membership in an organization. The death of that type of Christianity leaves an opportunity for *real* Christianity: loving God and loving our neighbor as Jesus did.

He remembers a remark he heard long ago: someone who is really studying and following the path Jesus took, and doing the things that Jesus did, cannot help but change the world. It is with that sort of Christianity that we can “live and survive as people of the Spirit.”

What about the many restructuring discussions scheduled for General Convention? Curry said the church’s task is not organizational development but community organizing — getting out into the world and engaging the world with the gospel so that people “run into Jesus when they run into us.” He suggested that the Episcopal Church could focus on four dimensions of sharing the good news: formation as disciples of Jesus, encouraging and fostering networks and ways of training and support, supporting evangelism initiatives through churchwide resources, and, supporting all of these, “the direct evangelical ministry of the presiding bishop.”

Within the church, mission requires moving beyond an immediate

crisis to a vision of something more. In his diocesan work, “having an overarching and compelling vision that summoned us beyond the immediate toward the ultimate really made a difference,” Curry said. “Having that greater mission vision gave us a reason for being and gave us direction. And that sense of direction guided our discernment and helped us make a decision consistent with the mission vision. The vision ultimately set us free to decide. The King James Version of the old saying in Proverbs was true — ‘Without a vision the people perish’ (Prov. 29:18). And the corollary is even more true: With a vision there is always a new possibility.”

## Ian Douglas

*Think globally, act locally — together.*



Douglas

Ian Douglas sees his participation in this election as part of a continual and lifelong process of discernment. He has studied Christian mission formally but has not served as a rector.

He likely has the most experience with the structures and processes of the Episcopal Church, having served as a Volunteer for Mission in Haiti and then as the Episcopal Church Center’s associate for overseas leadership development in the 1980s.

He served as a consultant to the Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, the 25th presiding bishop, during the last half of Griswold’s tenure and in dozens of other positions within the wider church and the Anglican Communion. Douglas said he is able to hold such structures and processes lightly and recognize both their utility and their transience in an increasingly connected and networked world.

“In the 20th century, organizational models of the corporation (National

Council) and the regulatory agency (Executive Council) made sense,” he said. “In the postmodern, post-Christendom, digitally networked world in which we now live, 20th century organizational structures have lost most of their efficacy.”

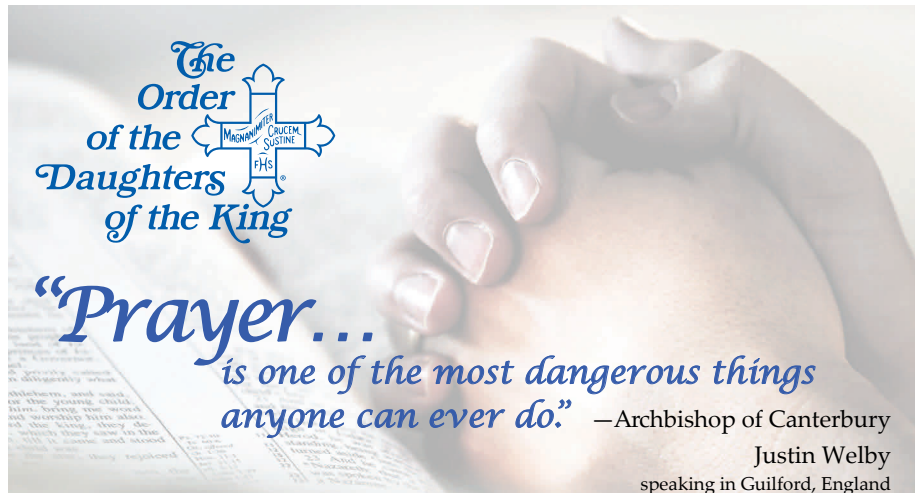
“Local congregations are appropriately concerned with local needs,” he said. “Extra-diocesan” structures are ebbing away and, in fact, have been fading since the 1970s, when the Episcopal Church Center employed more than 400 people. As someone who experienced the reduction of that staff during his tenure there, and now as a diocesan bishop, he understands both the strengths and the limitations of a central structure.

In the Diocese of Connecticut, he was a driving force behind selling the “diocesan mansion” that served as headquarters and moving into an open, shared, and rented space in a converted ball-bearing factory. “The Commons,” he said, “is an icon of our new commitment to transparency, flexibility, and collaboration across the parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.” As presiding bishop, Douglas said, he would “assist bishops to imagine new ways, and try experiments, in their own contexts and dioceses that would foster collaboration and new commitment to God’s mission at the local parish level.”

As a student and teacher of missiology, Douglas is wary of what the late Rabbi Edwin Friedman would call “technical fixes” as a cure for what ails the institutional church. “The question before us as the Episcopal Church is not so much a need to clarify roles,” Douglas said, “but rather the much larger question of how we understand the mission of God in the world today and how we as Episcopalians can best serve that mission in our local parishes, in our dioceses, and at the pan-diocesan level.”

As a member of the Anglican Consultative Council and the more recently designated Anglican Communion Standing Committee, Douglas has seen the Communion change from a

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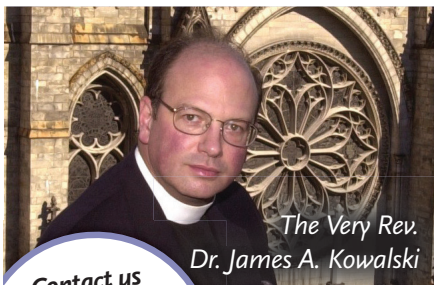
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## Who Will Lead Episcopalians?

(Continued from previous page)

largely Anglo-centric institution to one in which bishops and others of the developing world have found and claimed their own voices. The realities of globalization and digital communication are simultaneously pulling us together as a church and driving us apart.

“We exist because we are a part of the body of Christ,” Douglas said. “If we are going to be faithful, we need the other who is radically different from who we are.”

Douglas said he is committed to the sort of evangelism that crosses boundaries and restores wholeness. “I believe that in Jesus, fully human and fully divine, God crossed the boundaries, division, and alienation that separate us from God, from each other, and from all creation,” he said. “In Jesus, God has restored all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. As presiding bishop, I would invite all Episcopalians to own their baptismal call to be evangelists of the good news of God in Christ as they participate in God’s mission in the world.”

### Dabney Smith

*There are no “discards.” Love one another.*



Smith

Dabney Smith initially resisted the call to stand for election as presiding bishop. He is bishop of a healthy diocese located in the state from which he hails and in the area of the country where he has spent the bulk of his ordained ministry. Eight years into his episcopate, he is reaping the rewards of the hard work done by him and those whom he leads. “It’s not about you, it’s about the church,” one of Smith’s fellow bishops said when he was nominated.

As a result, he sees standing for nomination as an offering to the church.

As Episcopalians engage the modern world, Smith believes that evangelism provides both capacity and motivation to tell our story. “The religious landscape of the world is ever evolving,” he said. “The love of God through Christ for us remains consistent. Episcopalians have the capacity to be effective evangelists. Like any other Christians, we simply have to know our own stories honestly, to reveal joyfully how we’ve been called, changed, and claimed by Christ.”

How does he see himself changing the role of presiding bishop? “My proposals before General Convention are simple: name, identify, and clarify the perceived problems in our polity; allow time within our existing polity to practice ideas, such as the unicameral house,” Smith said. “This would give us patience and wisdom to gain perspective for purposes of both positive impact evaluation and the weighing of consequences of our potential decisions before making them canonical.”

Bishop Smith is clear on the need to ground leadership in prayer. “I have discovered that being bishop is a humbling experience, in that my personal prayer life has been so challenged and enriched by the call,” he said. “The demands, personalities, administrative issues, discernments, conflicts, and mission opportunities reveal a deep well of need for divine wisdom. The structure of the Daily Office is foundational for me in keeping rooted in the prayers of the church while I pray of the needs for the church.”

He is similarly passionate about the health of congregations: “As presiding bishop I would hope to maintain my outlook on the need to continue the work on the building up of strong, local congregations. The Episcopal Church itself is as strong as our local faith communities. I would work with



seminaries, theologians, diocesan schools, fundraisers, the General Convention, the Executive Council, the bishops and leaders in the House of Deputies to maintain this focus. I would teach and encourage congregational health and vitality in every diocesan visitation. The big picture of our whole church and the global Anglican Communion is intimately connected with each congregation.”

Does Smith perceive himself as “the conservative candidate”? He said he has been characterized in a variety of ways throughout his ordained ministry, likely depending on who describes him. He gives the impression of striving to do a great deal of listening, and he wants to honor and trust churchwide discernment in all areas: structure, liturgy, the canons. He is unlikely to enforce conformity or advance his own agenda, but would instead reflect the agreed-upon agenda and priorities of the wider church as expressed through General Convention.

How would Smith keep people of

widely differing opinions in relationship with one another? Our “baptismal wisdom” teaches that there are no “discards” (disposable people) in the church, he said, but that we are all in this together and called to be diligent about fostering connection, even as we disagree about a range of issues. To love one another is “divine, demanding work that changes one’s soul.”

“Every opinion one can find in the Episcopal Church will be discovered in the Diocese of Southwest Florida,” he said. “The opinions will be voiced, though, in a collegial, supportive atmosphere. Unity does not require agreement, but an awareness of the God we serve.” He would “seek to bring people together for the same result” as presiding bishop. “We do not need to agree,” Smith said. “We do, though, serve the same Lord.”

*The Rev. Tom Sramek, Jr., is co-rector of Good Samaritan Church, San Jose, California, and writes at [bloggingpriest.blogspot.com](http://bloggingpriest.blogspot.com).*

## East Meets West in Consecration

The May 9 consecration of the Rt. Rev. Peter Eaton as Bishop Coadjutor of Southeast Florida included bishops from the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, the Moravian Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

“We believe that this is the first time in history that bishops of these four full-communication partner churches have joined together in the ordination of an Episcopal bishop,” Bishop Eaton told TLC. “The presence of an Old Catholic bishop and a Mar Thoma bishop especially brings together these two historic successions, one Western and one Eastern.”

An estimated 1,400 people gathered at Miami’s Trinity Cathedral and a nearby Hilton Hotel.

Prelates representing the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople and the

(Continued on next page)

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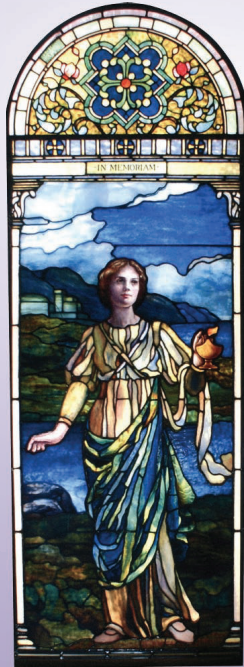
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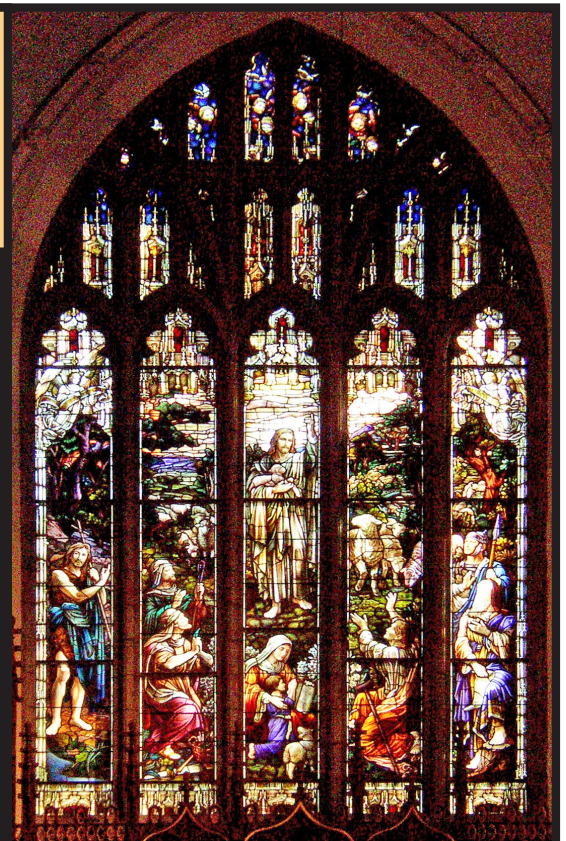
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# Southeast Florida

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Patriarch of Jerusalem were vested in black, joined in the procession, and spoke briefly. Other guests represented Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and evangelical Protestant Christians, Jews, and Mormons.

The Rt. Rev. Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely, called Eaton “a loving and faithful pastor” in his sermon. They studied together at Cambridge University and were ordained to the priesthood together in 1987.

Medieval scholar Marcia Colish, 77, of Guilford, Connecticut — who once babysat Eaton — told the *Miami Herald* he was a “bright and lively child who had a great love for the church.”

At the offering, Eaton announced that donations would go to the poor rather than his discretionary fund. He joked about enforcing generosity.

“Kate and I have written a check for \$1,000 and we expect you to do the same,” he said. “I plan to count



Barbara Lawless/Diocese of Southeast Florida photo

The Rt. Rev. Peter Eaton receives the crozier from the Rt. Rev. Leo Frade.

the collection myself. ... Some of you came in two cars. Give me one. I'll sell it and we'll give it to the poor.”

Bishop Peter Eaton will become the fourth Bishop of Southeast Florida when Bishop Leo Frade retires in 2016. The diocese, created by General Convention in 1969, claims 33,667 baptized members in 79 congregations stretching almost 200

miles along the Atlantic Ocean from Jensen Beach in the north to Key West in the south.

Bishop Eaton said he and his wife were “deeply moved” by the diversity of the congregation, adding: “This says something about the importance of relationships in the Anglican Communion.”

*Bob Libby in Miami*



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## Church of Ireland: Marriage Unchanged

An overwhelming vote for same-sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland has drawn a careful response from Church of Ireland bishops. The vote announced at Dublin Castle found 1,201,607 for and 734,300 against. Turnout in the majority-Catholic nation was 61 percent.

The people of the republic “have of course acted fully within their rights,” said a statement from the Church of Ireland’s archbishops and bishops. “The Church of Ireland, however, defines marriage as between a man and a woman, and the result of this referendum does not alter this.”

The bishops added: “The church has often existed, in history, with different views from those adopted by the state, and has sought to live with both conviction and good relationships with the civil authorities and communities in which it is set. Marriage services taking place in a Church of Ireland church, or conducted by a minister of the Church of Ireland may — in compliance with church teaching, liturgy and canon law — continue to celebrate only marriage between a man and a woman.”

The vote prompted Diarmuid Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, to say the church needed to ask whether it has drifted away from young people.

He told RTÉ Ireland: “I think, really, that the church needs to do a reality check, a reality check right across the board, to look at the things it’s doing well, to look at the areas where we really have to start and say, ‘Look, have we drifted away completely from young people?’”

He said he could appreciate how gay men and lesbian women believe “this is something which is enriching the way they live.” It was, he said, “very clear that if this referendum is an affirmation of the views of young people, then the church has a huge

(Continued on next page)



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## Church of Ireland: Marriage Unchanged

(Continued from previous page)

task in front of it to find the language to be able to talk to and to get its message across to young people, not just on this issue, but in general. We won't begin again with a sense of renewal by simply denying."

Martin added: "We tend to think in black and white but most of us live in the area of grey, and if the church has a harsh teaching, it seems to be condemning those who are not in line with it. The church's teaching, if it isn't expressed in terms of love — then it's got it wrong."

*John Martin in London*

## Working for Peace in Burundi

Clouds of fear hover over the east African nation of Burundi following a failed coup on May 13. Churches,

however, are working to counter the purveyors of violence, and Christian agencies have moved swiftly to assess the needs of the swelling numbers of displaced persons.

The crisis in Burundi began in late April when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced plans to run for a third term in elections scheduled for June. Burundi's constitution limits presidents to two terms. With Nkurunziza's announcement people took to the streets in protest and there were violent clashes with the police.

The issue came to a head when army officers tried to stage a coup to displace Nkurunziza while he was attending a meeting in neighbouring Tanzania. Major General Godefroid Niyombare told reporters the president had been dismissed. But he and his accomplices failed to take control of the national radio station, vital in the circumstances. The president

returned, dismissed several cabinet members, and regained control. Niyombare is on the run.

Human-rights groups say at least 20 people have been killed and more than 100,000 have fled to neighbouring countries, including Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania. There are fears of a "severe humanitarian crisis" and cholera outbreaks due to shortages of clean drinking water.

The Rt. Rev. Jean Nduwayo, a senior Anglican bishop of the Diocese of Gitega, said his church wanted "respect of the constitution, and the Arusha Peace Agreement, and to promote the political dialogue between politicians and all partners in the electoral process."

The Rt. Rev. Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham, who has long-standing links with Burundi, told TLC that Burundi is "one of the poorest, neediest nations on earth." Calling for prayers



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for Burundi, he added: "The deep unrest in Burundi is tragic for a nation seeking to rebuild itself after civil war ended in 2005. I know church leaders and churches are seeking to work for peace, nonviolence, and a way through for the whole nation."

Church sources who did not want to be named told TLC that many journalists had been rounded up or had gone into hiding. Privately owned radio stations were burnt down or put out of commission.

Some Christian leaders were said to have access to the airwaves, using the government radio station and remaining Christian stations to broadcast messages opposing violence, and presenting apolitical programmes emphasising the sacredness of life, the need for compassion, and community engagement.

James Robinson, Burundi country manager for Christian Aid, said: "Many people have stayed indoors, not moving because of the threat of gunfire, wondering what will happen next. People are scared to leave their homes. After two weeks of protesting, supplies are also an issue with goods such as petrol and water becoming scarce."

The worst fears, however, are that if the political crisis cannot be resolved, old ethnic tensions could resurface. A peace accord brokered in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2005 brought an end to a 12-year civil war between Hutu rebels and the mainly Tutsi army.

"The situation is so unstable and volatile that every day appears to be a flashpoint," Carina Tertsakian, Human Rights Watch's senior Burundi researcher, told news agencies. "The demonstrators are not backing down and the government is intensifying its crackdown."

*John Martin*

## Quakes Kill Anglicans at Worship

Anglican worshipers are among an estimated 10,000 people killed in earthquakes that have twice struck the mountain kingdom of Nepal within two weeks. Many Christians

were meeting for worship on April 25, the Saturday when the first quake hit, because Sunday is a working day in Nepal.

More than 25 worshipers perished in one incident. And reports confirm a further 17 deaths, including a vicar. The first quake, 7.8 in magnitude, left nearly 8,000 dead and devastated the region around the capital, Kathmandu, while the second on May 11 measured 7.3 and hit the area around Mt. Everest.

The Rev. Lewis Lew, Dean of Nepal, which is overseen by the Diocese of Singapore, has issued a confirmation of a tragic scene.

"Pastor Laxman Tamang and 17 of his members from Choke Church were called home to be with the Lord on 25 April, when the quake struck the village of Choke in Dhading district," he said.

"Pastor Laxman pastors a 340-member church. He loved the Lord, and had spent more than half his life in the ministry. Under his leadership Choke Church became part of the Anglican Church of Nepal 15 years ago."

Ram Prasad Shrestha, leader of the Nepal National Mission Commission, said a church with 100 members was meeting on the fourth floor of a seven-story building in Sokedhara, central Kathmandu, when the quake hit. The entire building collapsed killing 25 believers and injuring many others.

"We have missionaries in the affected areas," he said. "Almost 90 percent of the people of Kathmandu Valley are sleeping on the street and open space, but very few have got tents."

Prasad and his family were caught in the devastation. "We slept for two days in the open field," he wrote for CMS. Many families like his had to find whatever shelter they could to sleep at night.

The Most Rev. Glenn Davies, Archbishop of Sydney — whose relief agency Anglican Aid immediately launched an appeal for funds — described the scale of the Nepal tragedy as staggering. "Nepal has suf-

(Continued on next page)



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## Quakes Kill Anglicans

(Continued from previous page)

ferred a heavy death toll, as well as overwhelming property damage. Traumatized survivors are still being terrified by aftershocks," he said.

Nepal, with a population of nearly 30 million, is predominately Hindu. Freedom of worship was promulgated in 2007 and Christians number just 4.5 percent, with churches reporting growth in numbers.

By one of the quirks of Anglicanism, Nepal is one of six deaneries of the Diocese of Singapore. The others are Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. For many years these outposts were little more than single chaplaincies, but in the last two decades Singapore has put its hand to mission work and appointed deans to lead the work.

*John Martin*

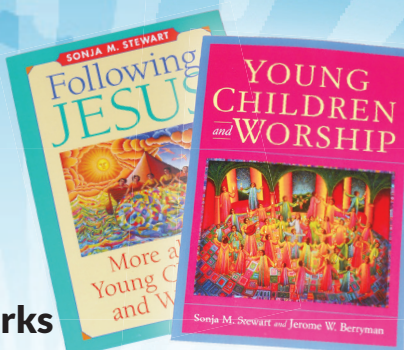
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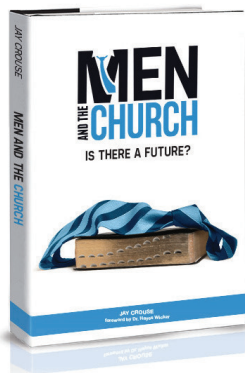
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## Columbarium Rights Threatened by Law

A previously unenforced Wisconsin state law that makes no distinction between a mausoleum and a columbarium has halted columbaria projects in three communities.

The Rt. Rev. Steven A. Miller, Bishop of Milwaukee, and the Very Rev. Kevin Carroll, dean of the Cathedral Church of All Saints, have asked Episcopalians to help preserve churches' burial rights.

Most states distinguish between a columbarium, which contains only cinerary urns, and a mausoleum, which contains above-ground tombs and by state law can be constructed only at a cemetery.

The current Wisconsin law went into effect in 1933. Churches continued to build columbaria until 2013, when the common council in Cedarburg, a small town about 25 miles northwest of Milwaukee, refused to renew a use permit for a \$50,000 out-

(Continued on page 38)



# 6 Tools to Grow Your Church

By Victoria Heard

**W**hat are the common characteristics of growing churches? What are indicators of decline? Kirk Hadaway is the Episcopal Church's chief statistician and researcher, and he has just published *New FACTs on Episcopal Church Growth and Decline* ([bit.ly/Hadaway2014](http://bit.ly/Hadaway2014)). This update to an earlier report ([bit.ly/Hadaway2005](http://bit.ly/Hadaway2005)) is based on a 70 percent return rate from a balanced sample in 2014. The new document is a gold mine of data for those who want to grow their churches.

Hadaway notes dozens of factors that affect growth and decline. I have picked six that I think are essential for churches to practice or, at least, to consider carefully. One extraordinary factor may grow a church, but growing churches usually attend to several factors. The factors I chose are not geographically specific, nor do they depend on the leadership of the rector, which is always a substantial factor. Throughout, I assume a robust proclamation of a Nicene Christian faith ought to be part of a growing church.

## 1. A kingdom road map.

"Churches that are clear about why they exist and what they should be doing are most likely to be growing congregations," says Hadaway. Put another way, churches need to be *purpose-driven*, with a hat off and full bow to Rick Warren. There is no substitute for a real and articulated mission that connects directly to proclaiming Christ and his resurrection. The priest and the leadership of the parish have somewhere to go and something to say. They say it, do it, and go.

That mission is irreducibly spiritual. A church with a God-inspired mission does not involve warm gooey fellowship with candles and endless inclusion of every idea. St. Paul was clear: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Christ Jesus and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul also was grateful for the focused gifts of the Church in Philippi to the poor of Jerusalem.

Hadaway tracks that churches with clear purposes are likely to grow. The goal is clearly laid out in public and is

(Continued on next page)

## 6 Tools to Grow Your Church

(Continued from previous page)

easy to trace by the use of leaders' time, the use of facilities, and most of all the priorities of the budget. Money is a good acid test. The vestry of a church with a clear road map to mission will not argue about how to spend an undesignated bequest. It will immediately apply the money to the front edge of its mission.

Give a parish a clear goal to create a difference in a neighborhood for young people, as one of our new Hispanic parishes is doing in the Diocese of Dallas. The leaders found a way (with almost no money) to create an after-school boxing program. Their teens are now winning competitions and staying free of the gangs that beleaguer that part of town. Hadaway says that 35 percent of growing churches agree to the statement: "Our congregation has a clear mission and strong purpose."

### 2. The children go up front.

The mission goes up front: so do the children. An all-adult cast in the sanctuary is a sign of decline. Of course, adults are more reverent and reliable, and they are usually better readers. Still, when the unconscious message is that "children need not apply" families with children will go elsewhere. Hadaway documents that when children are involved and visible in worship parishes have more children and are more likely to grow.

Twenty years ago, I remember having to stop my bored acolytes from making paper airplanes behind my long-winded assistant's back. They showed up, though, to carry the cross and serve (and play rock-paper-scissors during the sermon). They are now on the vestries of parishes, and one young woman is a priest. Hadaway is succinct: "among churches that never involve children [in worship], only 11% were growing and 74% were declining." That does not mean that a parish can make young Christians by liturgy alone.

### 3. Sunday school still works.

Parishes that field Sunday schools grow. Yes, Sunday schools were 19th-century outreach programs to teach poor factory children how to read. Still, an excellent Sunday school remains a good way to grow a church. For every priest or warden who has tried to recruit teachers in August's heat, take heart!

Ancient rabbis, medieval monks, early modern Jesuits and reformers, and early Methodists all focused on the education of children. They all taught content and biblical narrative. In comparison, an Episcopal Sunday school is often flaccid and inadequately biblical or theologically detailed.

Sunday schools need *content* and lots and lots of exposure to the big narratives of the Scriptures. To be familiar with and articulate about both Testaments re-

quires more than lectionary-based curricula. Children need the Creeds to shape their worldview and should learn about basic Christian faith practices like how to forgive, pray, and tithe. Only in this way will they learn how to live as Christians in a complex world that is increasingly ignorant of basic Christian concepts. If we do not teach them the words of Christ, the world will not.

Sunday school is part of the larger process of catechesis in a post-Christian world. Hadaway has the numbers to prove it: more than one in three Episcopal churches that make Sunday school a "specialty" will grow. Alternatively, your church can join the 96 percent of parishes in decline that say that Sunday school is "not an emphasis." Churches without noisy, learning children are preparing for the grave.

### 4. A culture of learning for adults.

The new *bon mot* is that American adults are "spiritual but not religious." It is not just the children who need to know Christ and the Scriptures. Hadaway says congregations that offer extensive adult learning are the statistical winners. "One of the strongest correlatives of growth comes from the place that a congregation places on adult religious formation."

Growing congregations usually have more than three educational options for adults on Sunday morning and at other times in the week. Lifelong learning as a focus is essential if we want to move adults to growth as followers of Christ. A hurting world does not need worshipers with a thin Christian veneer covering their otherwise worldly habits and thoughts.

Some priests are snobs about prepackaged curricula. I used to be such a snob and wrote my own. Still, many churches do very well with videos and discussion groups or programs like Disciple, Education for Ministry, and Alpha. What are the best programs to offer? Ones that feed both members and seekers: marriage enrichment, money management with a dose of Christian stewardship, and basic surveys of the Bible. Forgiveness, family, and money classes should be on most parishes' menu. Twice a year at least, in endless loop, there needs to be a short course on basic Christian belief. It is important to have both 100-level courses and, eventually, 300-400 level courses.

The numbers are clear: 36 percent of Episcopal parishes grow when adult religious education is a focus; 4 percent of churches grow when adult education is not a parish focus. So: teach or fold.

### 5. Hospitality that counts.

A successful planter who used to be in business commented on the indifference of churches to new people, in contrast to the focus that any business lavishes on potential customers. "The Church is not a business," he





## There is an 800 percent church-growth difference between “no contact” and multiple personal contacts.

says, “because if it were, it would be bankrupt.”

The best way to check your church’s capacity to grow is to count something. Start by counting the numbers of “contacts” your parish has for newcomers. New and growing churches have specific ways to reach, welcome, and follow up with visitors. It is not just that visitors are handed bulletins with a smile, it is (1) that they are invited to coffee hour, and (2) that at the coffee hour, parishioners are trained and scheduled to greet them, answer questions, and (3) invite them to future events or classes. Then, (4) there should be at least three to five further follow-up contacts in the first week, a phone call, a welcome note, and email.

Hadaway says that the more “warm and multiple” ways a church has to contact visitors, the more likely it is to grow. There is an 800 percent church-growth difference between “no contact” and multiple personal contacts. If we do not welcome them, the angels go elsewhere (Heb. 13:2).

Hadaway connects growth to social media savvy, especially in order to reach younger generations. A basic attractive website is essential, with the church’s name, location, service times, and contact information, and a capacity to add and change a calendar of events. Facebook and digital newsletters are critical, as are mailed paper notices for special events. Facebook and Twitter may not be sufficient, but they better the odds that the gospel will be seen and noticed.

### 6. Add a service, stir up the sound.

A strong predictor of growth for a church is to have more than one service on Sunday morning. A single service’s numbers tend to plateau when the sanctuary space is three-quarters full. Newcomers think that there is “no space for us.” A single service has to pick a single musical and liturgical style. Many areas have some people who like “traditional” and others who like “contemporary.” A church that can welcome people to worship God

in both ways can welcome more people to experience Christ’s love. Adding a service is the single easiest way to grow a church, as one can add a different musical idiom, style of worship, or time slot without disturbing the faithful who are already attending. It has to be done with forethought, excellence, and a willingness to experiment within the framework of the Book of Common Prayer.

Regions vary, but nationally, families with children often prefer services before 10 a.m., while singles of all ages are drawn by later services. Most Hispanic services seem fullest after 11 a.m. In some places, Saturday or Sunday evening services work. Off-Sunday morning hours attract more unchurched people. Try a new service for a season. If it works, add it to the schedule. If not, try a different time or kind of service. Willingness to try but fail is essential to growth.

Regarding services, I end with a final recommendation: if you want to grow your parish, buy drums! If the very thought of drums makes you cringe, try a string bass or something else that keeps a beat. When you add a new service, use drums and music with choruses and rhythm. (This is something one of my choir directors sneered at as “cowboy music.” She is a wonderful classical musician, but her preferences can hinder the gospel’s hearing.)

We do not need to ditch all hymns, but can we sing them with strong rhythm and beat? Since 1549, Anglicans have stressed that worship must be “in the language of the people.” That common language includes music and, for most Americans today, music with a strong beat.

Hadaway points out that growing churches have at least one service for which the worship is described as “vibrant.” Growing churches describe their worship as “fun and joyful.” He reports that more than 40 percent of growing churches use percussion instruments most or all of the time. The next time you sit next to a loud stereo in traffic, consider the implications for an effective 21st-century proclamation of the gospel. Both polyphony and hymns were booed and banned when they were the new musical cutting edge in their generations.

Hadaway records decline in nearly 80 percent of churches that said their services were “reverent” — which means “dying.” Personally, I prefer Bach and silence, but I know I am in the minority. I am done beating that drum.

If you want your church to grow, this is a six-pack of growing church characteristics backed up by data. Define how you do kingdom work and focus on it. Buy the drums, put the kids up front often. Teach children and adults as if their lives depend on it, and welcome people and worship God in multiple ways. And, yes, use Facebook.

*The Rev. Victoria Heard is canon of church planting and congregational development for the Diocese of Dallas. This essay first appeared on TLC’s weblog, Covenant.*

# Yearning for Transformation

By Susan Brown Snook and Scott Gunn

If you were at General Convention 2012, you probably vividly remember the moment when the legislation to create the Task Force for Reimagining the Church (TREC) passed the House of Deputies unanimously. We all stood and joined our voices on “Sing a New Church into Being.” Full of hope, we were looking toward a reborn Episcopal Church.

But each of us probably had different ideas about what that new church would look like. Somewhere in our hearts, we all knew that just restructuring our ways of organizing ourselves would not be enough. We needed a reawakening. We needed to rededicate ourselves to evangelism and mission. We needed to come to a new understanding of how to reach new people and new ages and ethnic groups. We needed to leave tired conflicts and structures behind, and find better ways to answer God’s call in the 21st century.

Given all these hopes and needs, it was inevitable that TREC could not meet them all. TREC’s prologue was inspiring and right on target, calling us to follow Jesus into the neighborhood, traveling lightly. Terrific! But there have been mixed reactions to TREC’s specific recommendations. And some things were missing:

- A concrete, achievable proposal for church planting, congregational revitalization, and evangelism
- A vision for what the churchwide structure is supposed to accomplish
- A mission statement for our staff, including its size and composition
- A vision for how we should spend our money and what kind of headquarters building we need, if any
- A way to structure ourselves in order to help heal

factional rivalries and bring us together on the same team

Well and good. Those things may be missing, but it was probably unrealistic to expect TREC to do everything — and there are many people ready to take up the call and work on these priorities that remain before us.

We and our coauthors (Tom Ferguson, Frank Logue, Brendan O’Sullivan-Hale, Steve Pankey, and Adam Trambley) believe that if the Episcopal Church does nothing different, the institutional church as we know it will cease to exist in two or perhaps three decades. Many (if not most) of our congregations are teetering on the edge of non-viability. Our churchwide structures have blossomed even as our numbers have shrunk and our ability to collaborate is easier than ever. But there is a new way, and that way is at the center of the Memorial to the Church. “We can lose our life for Jesus’ sake so that we might save it.”

If we cling to our institutional bulwarks, whether at the congregational, diocesan, or churchwide level, we will slowly sink into oblivion. But if we decide that the only reason we even have an institutional church is to proclaim the Good News, to make disciples, and to be the body of Christ, we have a vibrant future. Placing Jesus at the center gives us license to lose our fears and to gain unimagined, Spirit-led creativity. That is what our Memorial (an old-fashioned Episcopal term for an open letter to the church) is about.

The first followers of Jesus were scattered into the countryside by the persecution in Jerusalem. You can read the whole gripping story in the eighth chapter of Acts. Leaving behind the comfort of temple worship and their familiar city, they went into new places and



proclaimed the gospel. That crisis — leaving Jerusalem — precipitated the evangelism and disciple-making that led to the spread of Christianity throughout the world. Crisis is opportunity. The Holy Spirit is a powerful, animating presence when we step out of the way.

On the one hand the Memorial is just words, including a bunch of familiar words. But it is more than that. It is a call for us to anchor ourselves and all we do in the church within ancient practices of discipleship, evangelism, and service. It is a call for General Convention to become serious about letting go so that we might live. We want the Episcopal Church to be strong and vibrant — not just because we love it but because we think the Anglican witness to Jesus Christ has a lot to offer the world.

Will General Convention have the courage to leave behind the comfort of our cherished habits and the familiarity of our treasured places? We cannot be sure if we're ready, but we can be sure that if we listen to the voice of our Savior and Lord, we will hear him telling us to "be not afraid." What if we could set aside personal agendas and seek to follow the person of Jesus Christ? What if we could be brave and take exciting risks for the sake of the gospel? What if we decided that we love each other more than we love fighting with each other? What if we voted as if we believed that God can raise the dead and that with God all things are possible?

*The Rev. Susan Brown Snook is both planter and rector of Church of the Nativity, Scottsdale, Arizona, and the Rev. Canon Scott Gunn is executive director of Forward Movement.*

# A Memorial to the Church

Several priests and other General Convention deputies — Susan Brown Snook, Tom Ferguson, Scott Gunn, Frank Logue, Brendan O'Sullivan-Hale, Steve Pankey, and Adam Trambley — have issued a "Memorial to the Church." These are their proposals.

*Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did. So there was great joy in that city. Acts 8:4-6,8*

In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the newly formed church of disciples of the risen Savior found itself in a new situation. No longer could Christians depend on traditional ways of following Jesus and traditional places in which to do it. Driven out of their comfortable existence praying in the Temple in Jerusalem and waiting for the kingdom to come, they found themselves in new and unexpected neighborhoods, developing new ways of proclaiming the Word. Yet they found that the crowds were eager to hear the Good News of Christ and welcomed it with joy. The very loss of the old ways of being the church gave them opportunities to expand and multiply the reach of Christ's loving embrace.

Our beloved Episcopal Church is in a similar situation. We must find new ways of proclaiming the gospel in varied and ever changing neighborhoods. Old ways of being the church no longer apply. We can no longer settle for complacency and comfort. We can no longer claim to dominate the political and social landscape. We can no longer wait inside our sanctuaries to welcome those who want to become Episcopalian.

We have a choice before us. We can continue, valiantly and tragically, to try to save all the rights and privileges we have previously enjoyed. We can continue to watch our church dwindle until it someday becomes an endowed museum to the faith of our forebears. We can continue business as usual until we lose our common life entirely.

Or we can lose our life for Jesus' sake so that we might save it.

We, the undersigned, hold dear the Episcopal Church

(Continued on next page)

## Yearning for Transformation

(Continued from previous page)

and believe passionately in the gift this church offers. Washed in the waters of Baptism and nourished from the deep springs of word and sacrament, we experience the power of God's presence as we open the Scriptures and celebrate the Eucharist. We stand in awe of the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the power of the triune God to love, to forgive, to make whole. We know the joy of serving God through serving others. We long for a world with every unjust structure toppled. We love this church enough to yearn for it to be transformed.

We recognize the importance of this present moment. We join the Task Force for Reimagining the Church in calling for the church to follow Jesus into the neighborhood, traveling lightly. Our deepest hopes and aspirations are not dependent upon any particular act of this Convention. Many essential steps are found in the daily walk of discipleship undertaken by congregations and individuals throughout the church, and we commend the work of many who are helping the church adopt these discipleship practices. This Convention, however, has the opportunity to act on a number of matters that can support God's faithful people, our parishes and missions, and our dioceses in living out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

Specifically, we call upon the people of the Episcopal Church to:

- Recommit to reading scripture, praying daily, gathering weekly for corporate worship, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom, knowing that engaging in these practices brings personal and corporate transformation;
- Share the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed, including learning how to tell the story of how Jesus makes a difference in our lives, even and especially to those who have not experienced true transformation;
- Pray and fast for the Holy Spirit to add day by day to those who come within the reach of Christ's saving embrace;
- Encounter Jesus Christ through loving service to those in need and through seeking justice and peace among all people.

And we call upon those bishops and deputies gathered for Convention to the following actions as specific ways we may enter this time of transition in a spirit of exploration, discovering the gifts that the Holy Spirit has for us in this moment:

- Engage creatively, openly, and prayerfully in reading the signs of the times and discerning the particular ways God is speaking to the Episcopal

*We recognize  
the importance  
of this present  
moment.*

Church now;

- Pray, read the scriptures, and listen deeply for the Holy Spirit's guidance in electing a new Presiding Bishop and other leaders, in entering into creative initiatives for the spread of the kingdom, and in restructuring the church for mission;
- Fund evangelism initiatives extravagantly: training laborers to go into the harvest to revitalize existing congregations and plant new ones; forming networks and educational offerings to train and deploy church planters and revitalizers who will follow Jesus into all kinds of neighborhoods; and creating training opportunities for bilingual and bi-cultural ministry;
- Release our hold on buildings, structures, comfortable habits, egos, and conflicts that do not serve the church well;
- Remove obstacles embedded in current structures, however formerly useful or well-meaning, that hinder new and creative mission and evangelism initiatives;
- Refocus our energies from building up a large, centralized, expensive, hierarchical church-wide structure, to networking and supporting mission at the local level, where we all may learn how to follow Jesus into all of our neighborhoods.

Like those early followers of Christ, we find ourselves being scattered out of familiar and comfortable places and ways of being the church. Rather than be ruled by memory and consumed by fear, we can embrace this crisis, trusting that the Lord of Life will give us everything we need to spread the Gospel, proclaim the kingdom, and share the love of God. May God grant great joy in every city and neighborhood into which we go.

# STAINED GLASS AND COLUMBARIA

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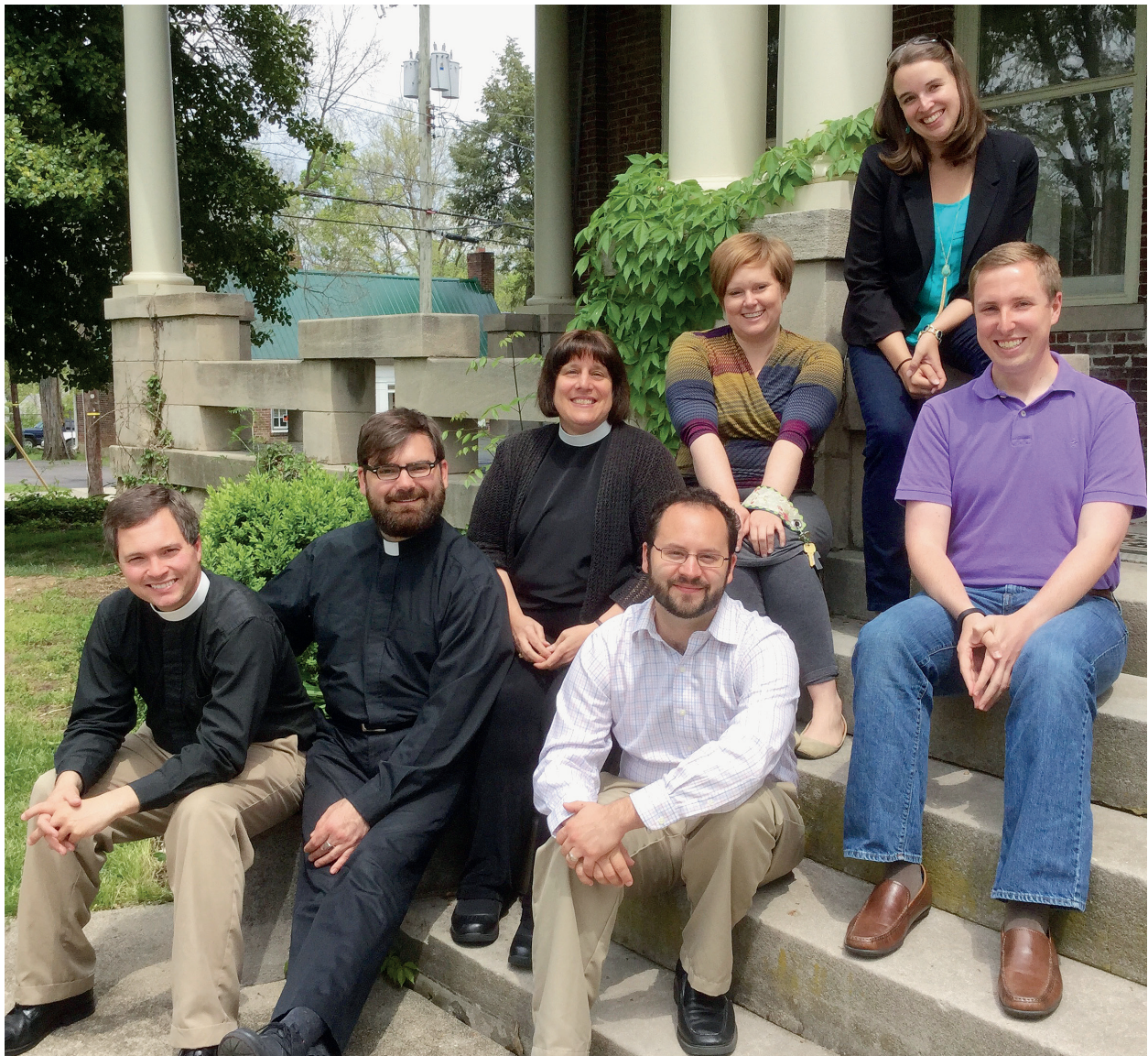
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Kay Collier-McLaughlin photo

Current network members on the steps of Mission House in Lexington. Front row: T.J. Tetzlaff (white shirt) and the Rev. Marshall Jolly. Back row, the Rev. Joe Mitchell, the Rev. Peter Hellman, the Rev. Rebecca Myers, the Rev. Amanda Musterman, and the Rev. Chana Tetzlaff.

# Graduates, Parishes Learn Together

By Grace Sears

**I**t's a churchwide challenge: How can a diocese lift up small congregations that need effective leadership in order to thrive? Average Sunday attendance is lower than 100 in 69 percent of Episcopal congregations ("Episcopal Domestic Fast Facts Trends: 2009-2013" by the Episcopal Church's Office of Research). With tight budgets, parishes and missions at this level struggle to find and support the clergy they need. To hold such parishes together,

a bishop may deploy deacons, semi-retired clergy, or interim priests, but those solutions are temporary. What more can a bishop do?

Meanwhile, third-year seminarians realize they need pastoral experience in a congregation to become effective priests. Traditionally experience comes through assisting at a large parish under the guidance of the rector. However, if there are more graduates than positions in one's home diocese, the prospects are discouraging. Graduating seminarians typically have families to support and student loans

to pay off. Many have left a previous career to seek ordination, but cannot be ordained without a position in the church. What can they do?

Suppose the pressing needs of small churches, graduating seminarians, and diocesan bishops could be addressed simultaneously. The Diocese of Lexington is doing that, through its Network for Developing Pastoral Leadership and Sustaining Healthy Congregations. "It is one of the really good models for the church," said Kay Collier-McLaughlin, who helped develop the program.

Here's how it works. The diocese recruits seminarians without job commitments before they graduate, matches them quickly with a small church, and nurtures their pastoral skills for three years. Under the leadership of the Rt. Rev. W. Douglas Hahn, network directors Collier-McLaughlin and the Rev. Canon Elise Johnstone bring several candidates to Lexington to interview with vestries of small



Hahn

churches seeking a priest. If a vestry, a candidate, and the bishop agree on a match, the candidate receives a three-year contract at the entry-level salary with benefits. The contract comes with conditions to boost the chances for success for both the recruits and the congregations that hire them.

The diocese offers these incentives for the seminarians:

The diocese offers these incentives for the seminarians:

- Full ministerial responsibility for a parish or mission — especially attractive to second-career priests
- A clear path to ordination
- An experienced mentor through all three years
- Supervision by members of the bishop's staff with special expertise
- Bonding with other priests in the network
- A support team trained by the diocese
- An offer to finance student debt
- Continuing education — applying concepts learned in seminary to pastoral situations

As part of their contract, seminarians commit to having a ministry feedback committee, a mentor, and monthly meetings for continuing education.

According to T.J. Tetzlaff, a current member of the network, the monthly meetings are “a huge benefit for newly ordained folks.” New priests in small churches elsewhere often feel isolated from other diocesan clergy, but network priests in the Diocese of Lexington have regular, substantive conver-

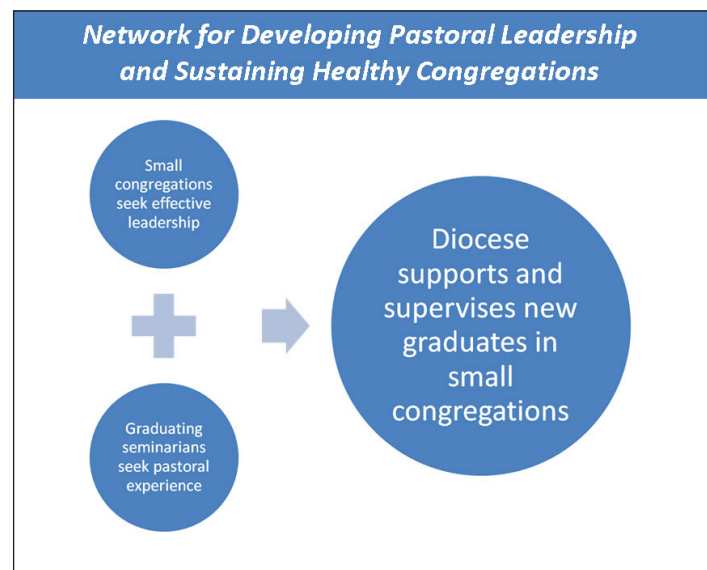
sations with their peers and access to experienced clergy.

Network meetings typically start with checking in: members discuss how they are faring. Next, one member presents a case study. Group discussion offers encouragement, perspective, possibly a framework or history to help understand the issue, and options for constructive action. Continuing education is then available through a workshop, a video, or a presentation. The Eucharist concludes the day. Twice a year, network members preach a sermon for their peers.

One of the most valuable aspects of the network, according to Anna Haug, is its effect on congregations that participate. A lay leader in the Church of Our Saviour, Madison County, Haug has not only taken part in confidential interviews with recruits on walkabout but also in a feedback committee with a network priest. She says the benefits for congregations become more evident over time:

- The diocese covers recruitment expenses, decreases the wait for new clergy, and adds value by providing supervision and continuing education throughout the priest's tenure.
- The ministry feedback committee allows congregational leaders to become tutors, rather than critics, and initiates conversations with the priest on aspects of ministry.
- Congregants expect the priest's departure. They may grieve, but they are not in conflict. They have grown spiritually through the energy and faith of the newly ordained priest, and feel invested in the priest's success.

Haug's church moved from mission status to parish status under the leadership of one of the first network priests, the Rev. Richard Burden. Her husband, the Rev. Phillip Haug, has



served as a mentor to new priests.

When the Rt. Rev. Stacy Sauls initiated the program in 2009, no one knew if it would work. As Collier-McLaughlin describes it, diocesan leaders “started flying the plane while [they] were still building it,” and not all the original elements were retained. Annual assessment has improved the original model. To see where the recruits have come from and where they now minister, see the list posted on [diolx.org/network](http://diolx.org/network). The diocesan page includes testimonials from former network members.

The Network for Pastoral Development energizes the diocese by bringing in new talent from a half-dozen seminaries and regions outside the Southeast to work with homegrown ordinands. As Bishop Hahn initiates the formal ministry of newly ordained priests, he also raises up the spiritual gifts and opportunities that rural and small-town churches possess. Established priests tapped to mentor the new ordinands gain opportunities to share their hard-won wisdom. And in providing fresh leadership for small churches, they are given something far more valuable than a financial subsidy: fresh vision and hope.

*Grace Sears is a longtime leader of Daughters of the King and a TLC board member.*



Augustine Literacy Project photo

Betsey Savage, director of Burlington Chapter and member of Church of the Holy Comforter, with a student from Watts Elementary in Durham.

# 'What Do You Most Need?'

Congregations work with public schools for the sake of students.

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Children at Boston's Blackstone Innovation School need a lot more help than their thinly stretched teachers can provide. Only 3 percent of students in this K-5 school are proficient in science; 68 percent are not solving simple science problems. A mere 17 percent show proficiency in English.

Teachers do not have time for one-on-one tutoring, and until a few years ago the science books in children's hands were half a century old. Fixes to these stumbling blocks would

have to come from outside.

"On a basic level, we're just trying to get people to come to school," says assistant principal Allyson Hart.

For the extra help, Blackstone children rely on a nearby neighbor, St. Stephen's Church, and its supporting network of 55 suburban Episcopal congregations. This 10-year-old partnership with Blackstone is filling gaps and marks an example of a growing trend: networks of parishes teaming up to support elementary public education.

With its partners, St. Stephen's operates low-cost summer and after-

school programs with tutoring and enrichment activities that cost \$1.2 million to deliver. Volunteers staff a school library that's been revitalized by 10,000 new titles, donated through the St. Stephen's partnership.

"Year-round support for our youth is what's going to make a difference in their lives and in the neighborhood," says Liz Steinhauser, priest associate and director of youth programs at St. Stephen's. "A better school is going to make a better neighborhood. And that's going to be good for everybody."

Around the country, education-fo-



“There is a deep and abiding spiritual underpinning for what we do.”

—Debbie McCarthy

cused parish networks are expanding as congregations heed a call to help at-risk children succeed and work together to improve their effectiveness.

Since its inception in 2012, Boston-based All Our Children has grown into a national network of about 40 congregations (including St. Stephen’s) with local public school partnerships. Headquartered at Trinity Church in the City of Boston, the organization uses grant funding from Trinity Wall Street to bring together Episcopalians engaged in this type of mission. The hope is for them to inform and inspire one another.

“As people discover that there are congregations already doing this, that gives encouragement to the individual person in their home congregation who says, *We really should be doing something about education, shouldn’t we?*” says Lallie Lloyd, director of All Our Children.

Some networks have a special focus. The Augustine Literacy Project, based at Church of the Holy Family in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, trains volunteers in the Orton-Gillingham method of teaching children to read. It has 14 chapters in three states, including seven housed at Episcopal congregations. At these sites, adults spend two weeks learning the tutoring skills they need to help students — including those with a language-based learning disability such as dyslexia — learn the skill of reading.

Twenty years ago, Holy Family trained fewer than 10 tutors a year. Now the church trains nearly 100 a year and is honing its process for replicating chapters as interest continues to climb.

Tutors experience their reward in watching young people overcome personal challenges, which can be myriad. Debbie McCarthy, executive director of the Augustine Literacy Project, still keeps in touch with 24-year-old Tyrell. She started tutoring him when he was 9, when Tyrell had

a father in prison, a drug-addicted mother, and five younger siblings. Adversity did not win. Tyrell learned to read, finished high school, served in AmeriCorps, and enrolled in community college.

“A lot of people have described tutoring as being the light in the world for these children, who are living in a kind of darkness because they can’t read,” McCarthy says. “There is a deep and abiding spiritual underpinning for what we do. And that may help to explain our success and longevity.”

Other networks are organized by geography. In Richmond, Virginia, the Micah Association consists of 130 faith communities, including 14 Episcopal congregations, that send as many as 1,800 volunteers to serve in 23 Richmond elementary schools. Its origins trace to St. Paul’s Church downtown, where members opted 15

years ago to consolidate mission outreach efforts in one location: a nearby public school where effects of poverty loom large.

These networks continue to expand, observers say, because awareness of the education crisis in low-income communities is growing, as is recognition that congregations are ideally positioned to make a difference.

Episcopal institutions seldom have vast experience in working with public schools, Lloyd says. They’ve instead run excellent private schools, which some disadvantaged youth attend on scholarships. Now she finds Episcopalians would like to do more for public education but are not sure where to begin. That’s where networking comes in.

Religious organizations can be great partners for public schools, ad-

(Continued on next page)



Bob Hykes, a parishioner at Holy Comforter in Burlington, North Carolina, created a vegetable garden outside a first-grade classroom.

Photo courtesy of Beth Glidewell

# 'What Do You Most Need?'

(Continued from previous page)

vocates say, because they have so much to offer. Church buildings, often located near schools, are perfectly situated to host afterschool programs or volunteer training. Mission budgets can help low-income children stock their backpacks. Church members retired from their jobs make fine volunteers, whether they're listening to children read

**"Public education is a genuine expression of gospel commitment."**

—The Rev. Ben Campbell

aloud or preparing materials for a lab experiment.

"Public school is the only institution in society that has to take everybody," says the Rev. Ben Campbell, a Diocese of Richmond priest who helped found the Micah Association. "That's a gospel commitment. That is Jesus' commitment. In that sense, public education is a genuine expression of gospel commitment. Churches understand that, but most other people don't."

Episcopal congregations are particularly well-suited to the task of establishing school partnerships, Campbell says.

"There's something about who the Episcopal Church is in this city," he says. "Partly because we're not so doctrinally bound as many of the other churches, and because we've taken some initiatives in race relations that others have not, something has enabled us to be a convener."

Through parish networks, volunteers are learning how to build the trust that undergirds strong school partnerships. Listening to peers, they hear resounding themes: do not approach a school with a strict agenda. Ask administrators what they need and offer to do it. Follow the rules,

do not proselytize, and go with the flow when the unexpected happens.

Taking that approach has allowed a working relationship to blossom in Burlington, North Carolina, between the Church of the Holy Comforter and Harvey R. Newlin Elementary School, in which most students receive subsidized lunches.

The partnership launched three years ago with two Augustine Project tutors. Now 18 tutors from the Holy Comforter chapter work with Newlin students. And church volunteers help in many other areas, from classroom support to discreetly distributing food for low-income kids to eat during the weekend.

"The Augustine Project really provided the credibility piece for that particular school," says Betsey Savage, director of the Burlington Chapter of the Augustine Literacy Project. "Having people come in, work with the school and say, *What is it that you most need?* really does provide a platform on which we can provide a lot of other kinds of things."

In the Diocese of Rochester, at least four congregations have partnerships with schools, but they have worked largely independent of one another. That's changing, however. In 2014, laypeople and clergy with experience in school outreach formed Rachel Rejoices, a group to encourage school partnerships across the diocese. At the fall convention, delegates resolved that every congregation would become involved with prayers, volunteers, and donations.

Networks also give congregations a forum for solving challenges and figuring out how to bypass obstacles when they arise. When a school volunteer from Trinity in Boston recently witnessed a new principal yelling at a child, she asked her peers at Trinity and All Our Children for guidance on what steps to take.

"What are we going to do about that?" Lloyd recalled the volunteer asking. "The consensus in the room

was that we can just bear witness to it, bring it back here and take it in your heart. Because, to be honest, if we do anything, he can tell us we aren't welcome back in the building."

The effectiveness of parish-school partnerships is difficult to measure since there are many variables in a child's experience. But administrators and volunteers believe they are helping create a positive environment for learning.

Volunteers who listen to children read at Newlin Elementary in Burlington call themselves "Lucky Listeners," and they appreciate how the principal adorns hallways with signs that read LOVE WINS. In Boston, Blackstone administrators say volunteers help in the crucial area of motivation.

"When kids are engaged and you give them more of what they're excited about, that naturally leads to kids wanting to come to school," says Hart, the assistant principal at Blackstone. "Our kids are more excited about learning, and they [at St. Stephen's] can contribute to that."
















Partnerships are affecting congregations, too. As St. Stephen's has deepened its relationship with Blackstone, the average Sunday attendance has grown from about 15 to about 100 today. Much of that growth, Steinhauer says, is due to the energy and service opportunity that come with the Blackstone partnership.

But, she adds, the congregation has become much more than those who attend worship. It now includes all the kids and parents who come to St. Stephen's after-school and summer programs. The community keeps growing around a common mission to see its children thrive.

"Our experience is that in being outward-focused we have strengthened ourselves," Steinhauer says. "We weren't doing it to build the church. We were doing it because it would make the neighborhood better, and the neighborhood had these needs. But it has built the church."

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# Is Evangelism Presumptuous?

Lesslie Newbigin's work explains election in a multicultural world.

By R. Leigh Spruill

A debate erupts when an outreach funding committee discusses whether to help a missionary organization share the gospel with non-Christians. A few committee members question whether it is presumptuous for Christians in our day to tell people of other religions or persuasions of the “superiority” of Christ.

This illustration is not imagined. It has occurred in two parishes I have served and raises another question: how might congregations gain confidence that, despite our limited capacity to know all truth, we may nevertheless proclaim the lordship of Christ as true for all humankind — that is, to affirm the uniqueness of the gospel with universal intention? We can begin by recalling that from the undeserved election of Abraham, the overarching purpose for the people of God has been to bless the entire world.

Rightly discerning the nature and implications of the biblical doctrine of election is of central importance for contemporary churches that may question how or why to share the gospel with non-Christians. The doctrine expresses the seemingly paradoxical truth that God's universal purpose for all peoples is communicated through the unique calling of just one people. God's way of working out the restoration of all humanity and the entire cosmos (see Col.

1:19-20) finds its center in a particular people called forth from particular historical events.

For reasons of God's own choosing, the Church is this particular community. While the Church cannot answer why it was chosen as opposed to some other form of human community, it can answer the *purpose* for its election. It is so that God's own nature and redemptive love might be offered and known to all. That God chooses to be revealed in the world through the lived testimony of a particular family of people is the scriptural pattern from the calling of Abraham (Gen. 12), to the prophets (Isa. 60:3), to the announced reign of God in Jesus of Nazareth (Mark 1:15), to the Great Commission (Matt. 28), and the life of the early Church (Acts 2). While one is certainly free to disbelieve the biblical revelation, Scripture witnesses to the God whose nature and purposes are not disclosed as objectively discernible truths equally available to all. Rather, they are made known through a called people's public testimony to God's self-communication in specific events of history.

Thus, election is foundational to our self-understanding as the Church. We are not simply a voluntary association that shares an experience or insight about God that is unique but is no more or less true than other people's religious experiences and insights. We belong to the historic person of Christ, who is the

link between the unique and the universal. To embody this link is to fulfill our apostolic mission for the sake of the whole world. The Church is the community constituted by God in Christ for this sole purpose. The doctrine of election helps us apprehend how this is so.

Election is a recurring subject in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin, one of the leading missionary theologians of the 20th century. Few Christian leaders of the last century have been more perceptive of the Church's modern social situation or more prescient about the pressing challenges of missional engagement in a post-Christian culture. Throughout his long and very distinguished vocation that included almost four decades as a missionary and bishop in India, influential leadership roles in the worldwide ecumenical movement, and voluminous published lectures, essays, and books, Newbigin stressed that before the Church can engage culture effectively it must first grasp its own missionary identity originating in the call of Abraham to be God's people for the sake of the world.

Newbigin consistently argues that the doctrine of election derives from a fundamental insight about human nature: we are created for personal relationships that are the contexts for human knowing and flourishing. We come to know God through contact and shared life with others. For Newbigin, the very integrity of the

Church is at stake. If knowledge of God is removed from the particularities of history and our relatedness to others, our identity and destiny are ours alone to work out, a presupposition flatly contradicting the message of the gospel: “From its very beginning the Bible sees human life in terms of relationships. ... In order to receive God’s saving revelation we have to open the door to the neighbor whom he sends as his appointed messenger” (*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 82).

One of Newbigin’s most important scholarly contributions is his unsparingly incisive examination of the harbored assumptions Western people inevitably employ in interpreting what can be known of reality. These assumed ways of discerning what is true have traveled a long way from their Enlightenment roots, but they privilege “objective” scientific method and critical reasoning over against “subjective” claims to divine or spiritual truth. Newbigin’s writings counter that “true” knowledge cannot be deduced from the position of a detached and neutral perspective. Such a position about objective truth does not exist since this perspective begins from a subjective presupposition: the personal commitment that what can be known as true is limited to scientific inquiry and deductive reasoning.

Newbigin’s concern is to affirm the Christian perspective that “real” truth is revealed from a personally communicating God whose nature is not confined to philosophical reasoning and scientific observation. In his early work, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (1953), he writes: “God’s saving purpose is executed through the calling of a particular people, one tribe among all the tribes of the earth. The thread which binds the whole Bible story together is emphatically not the history of an idea but the history of a people.”

Acknowledging that the idea of divine election is “as offensive to our human reason as it is central to the Bible” (*A Faith for this One World?*), Newbigin recognized in much late 20th-century Western Christian theology and ministry a great discomfort with the Church’s historic professed possession of a special revelation and unique status before God. In the face of hostile attitudes toward any claims to privileged truth, liberal Protestantism especially has tended to stress the universal purposes of God and to deemphasize the particular plan of election, resulting in a stunted sense of missional identity. For example, many of us favor outreach projects aimed at helping the poor and needy (as critically important as these are) over the call to share the Good News with those who have not heard it. One reason is that we are not clear why the latter is important. Another is that the Church may not have equipped us.

The implications of Newbigin’s work on the doctrine of election for contemporary missions are significant, especially in a global situation where daily exposure to international news confronts us with atrocities committed against religious minorities in the Middle East and Africa by Islamic terrorist armies. Is this a logical end of what happens when one religious group purports to be the exclusive owner of special revelation from God and decides to act out of that unique status in relation to others? Of course, the missing element in militant Islam is Jesus Christ, whose way was not of the sword but the cross. And Christianity itself is distorted whenever it seeks to engage the world from a perspective other than the cross.

Newbigin is keen to stress that the doctrine of election ought not be interpreted by Christians as an earned

Rightly understood,  
the doctrine of  
election is a scandal  
primarily because  
we do not deserve it.

privilege conferring favored status in the eyes of God *vis à vis* other peoples. The Church is not the exclusive beneficiary of God’s loving self-revelation in Christ but his elected trustee. Through generous self-conscious evangelism, the Church bears a gracious gift rather than a presumptuous demand. We point to the cross whereby all of us are enemies of God and all of us are forgiven; hence there is no place for pride and no excuse for imposing our religion on others.

Rightly understood, the doctrine of election is a scandal primarily because we do not deserve it. “[God] might have chosen others. In the nature of the case, he must choose someone. In the mystery of his will, he has chosen us, the weak and foolish and insignificant. That ought to leave in us no room for pride, but equally it ought to leave no room for disobedience” (*A Faith for this One World?*). The very essence of the Church is expressed through our humble embrace of election, our acceptance of being chosen as God’s light for the sake of the whole world. And therein is found the key to the end of all humankind.

*The Rev. R. Leigh Spruill is rector of St. George’s Church, Nashville.*



CULTURES

# Common Prayer

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Richard Hill is a documentary and street photographer, a vocation born of love for the people and places that influence his life. He aims to show the lovely and the derelict, the dignity and the irony, the pain and the joy of everyday life, and the people and moments that are easily forgotten, missed, and dismissed. Richard's work has been displayed at the Columbus Museum of Art and the Justus Sundermann Gallery, and recognized in various online photography forums and galleries. He lives with his wife and three children in East Dallas.

IMAGE





## Creation, Covenant, and Marriage

### Why the Episcopal Church's Task Force on the Study of Marriage is wrong.

The Episcopal Church has frequently talked about having a genuine dialogue on marriage and sexuality. But we have not been especially good at it. Grandstanding, vote-casting, and poisonous rhetoric are our preferred modes of engagement. We avoid each other and theological debate, and so we avoid the hard work of living in communion together.

TLC is hoping to jumpstart just such a conversation. This will disappoint some readers. It will delight others, perhaps too much. But we are in a period of discernment, not unlike other times in history, when the Church's public teaching has been sharpened or revealed more fully.

After reading this installment of *Sic et non*, we hope you will agree. And if this exchange piques your interest, do follow up on the larger conversation hosted online by *The Anglican Theological Review*, *Fully Alive*, and the *Covenant* weblog.—Eds.

By John Bauerschmidt, Zachary Guiliano, Wesley Hill, and Jordan Hylden

At its General Convention this summer, the Episcopal Church will consider a resolution to amend the church's canons to allow same-sex couples to marry. The denomination's official Task Force on the Study of Marriage has proposed ([bit.ly/1HJ2QkT](http://bit.ly/1HJ2QkT)) replacing canonical language drawn from the famed "Dearly beloved" opening exhortation of the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer, which asserts that "the union of husband and wife" is intended, when it is God's will, "for the procreation of children." By excising the requirement

that Christian marriage be a "a lifelong union between a man and a woman," along with the Augustinian tradition's second good of marriage, offspring, from the list of "purposes for which it was instituted by God," marriage would be defined as open to same-sex couples whose sexual unions are not biologically fruitful.

Though the U.S. Supreme Court is at present considering whether the constitution requires that same-sex couples be allowed to marry in civil law, the Court is not obligated to take into consideration the anthropology of Genesis 1-2 as it is received by the New Testament. But any church worthy of the name is indeed obligated to do so. We believe that the task force has failed to do justice to this necessary task, their proposed canonical revisions being a sweeping and unjustified redefinition of the Christian doctrine of marriage at odds with received biblical teaching. Such a redefinition would obscure the nature of marriage as a mysterious icon of the union between "Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:32), present in creation itself.

As such, we contend that the proposal of the task force should be rejected. The rationale for its work, laid out in an extensive accompanying report, is marred by serious historical, methodological, and theological flaws. If acted upon, the proposals will present new problems not only for our partners in the Anglican Communion and in other churches, but also for moderate and conservative Episcopalians committed to preserving the traditional teaching of the Book of Common Prayer, either by itself or alongside a rite of blessings for same-sex unions.

Why is this issue such a watershed? Precisely because marriage is a divine reality before it is a human reality, a created social form that bears witness to the covenanted union between Christ and the Church. When we speak of



marriage, we speak of the nuptial “mystery” of “Christ and the Church.” And, the tradition has affirmed, the two natural goods of marriage — *fides* and *proles*, faithful union and fruitful procreation — are at the same time also *sacramentum*, an embodied sign of the lasting union between Christ and his Church.

This longstanding tradition runs through St. Augustine of Hippo, whose treatment of sexual ethics is paradigmatic as (to quote Michael Banner) “an envisioning of the world in the light of what is the case in Jesus Christ,” guided by our two-testament Holy Scriptures. Augustine came to his threefold account of the goods of marriage by way of strenuous wrestling with the first three chapters of Genesis, the affirmation by Jesus of marriage’s created goodness in Matthew 19, and the claim of Ephesians 5 that marriage is a figure of Christ and the Church. The Augustinian insight that *fides* and *proles* are at the same time *sacramentum* proves itself, in Ephraim Radner’s words, “remarkably synthetic and coherent of Scriptural and ecclesial realities over the centuries,” enabling us to read Genesis, Matthew, and Ephesians on marriage as a coherent whole within our two-testament Scriptures.

How does the Augustinian tradition do this? Robert Song in his recent book *Covenant and Calling* points us first to Genesis 1-2, in which the creation of man and woman in God’s image is best understood as “related closely to God’s blessing and God’s command to be fruitful, to fill the earth and subdue it.” To be created male and female is to be empowered to be fruitful and multiply, and so to fill the earth and have dominion over it as God’s image-bearers or vice-regents in the world. Marriage is thus a creation good, given along with human nature and God’s creative calling for us. The Augustinian tradition’s first two goods, *fides* and *proles*, arise from theological exegesis of biblical texts that stand as foundational for Christian anthropology. And by laying its foundations in Genesis, the Augustinian marriage tradition represents a considered turn away from gnostic temptations to locate the good of marriage in someplace other than the fruitful one-flesh union of male and female in this finite world of bodies and time.

How are *fides* and *proles* tied together with the third good, *sacramentum*? Recall the puzzling saying of Jesus: “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore ... being children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36). In the face of death, God’s gift of life must be passed along from generation to generation. This is the heart of what marriage is for, and if there is no more death, marriage’s procreative rationale becomes moot. But as long as we live in this finite world of bodies and time, as Radner points out, marriage is like a little red flag that we wave of faithful love and continuing life in the face of suf-

fering, sin’s sharp divisions, and death. In marriage, particularly in the pain of childbirth and the toil of childrearing and supporting a family, we give ourselves away in faithful, covenant love for the sake of new life. In this divinely created pathway we are following also in the way of Jesus Christ, the one who suffered in love in this fallen and finite world for the sake of new life, the seed that died and bore much fruit (John 12:24). *Fides* and *proles* are in this way *sacramental*, signifying the creative “self-giving love that is God’s” by a suffering procreative love that “creates new bodies and new bodies again” in the face of struggle and death.

This traditional Augustinian vision assumes that the world in which we live is Scripture’s world, a sacramental universe that bears the marks of Christ, even if it is not, for the most part, the world that modern Western people see. For some time now there has been a veritable cottage industry of scholarship dedicated to tracing out the genealogy of modernity as a process of theological reduction: *nominalism*, whereby a word like *marriage* is merely a name we give to a constructed human activity rather than a created social form given by God; *voluntarism*, whereby right and wrong are internal to the human will rather than tied to an objective created moral order; *social contractarian individualism*, whereby politics concerns free individuals contracting with one another for maximum benefit, rather than the common good of the *polis* under God.

It is clear to us, though we expect not clear to its authors, that the task force report is a deeply modern document in these and other senses. The very idea that marriage is a social form with ends (or purposes, *teloi*) given by God is not grasped at all, as the task force tells us that such ends run afoul of Kant’s categorical imperative never to treat persons as means rather than ends. By this argument, we are told that the marriage vows are what really count, as they represent the moral “commitment” that the two make to one another, and that the “Dearly beloved” exhortation in which the ends of marriage are described is extraneous to this deeper reality. Marriage is simply not envisioned as a created form in which we participate in a Christ-figured reality. This may be seen as well in the report’s assertion that pastoral and moral theology can stand aside from doctrine, as if the Church’s beliefs about Jesus of Nazareth can be cordoned off from her communal Christ-shaped witness.

In fact, the Christian tradition’s understanding of marriage is part of a deeply biblical conception of human nature as a reality created in and destined for Christ, borne out of long wrestling with the whole of canonical Scripture. Alasdair MacIntyre suggested in *After Virtue* that the modern world is full of odd surviving bits and pieces of various traditions that were at one time understood from within as coherent intelligible wholes, but which are now viewed with incomprehension. We believe that for the authors of the task force, as for many today in the modern affluent

(Continued on next page)

Scripture’s  
world:  
a sacramental  
universe  
that bears  
the marks  
of Christ

### Creation, Covenant, and Marriage

(Continued from previous page)

West, marriage has become in large part just such an unintelligible fragment. The Augustinian tradition represents a rich proposal for seeing marriage whole again, as a theological construal of all of Scripture that re-centers marriage in Christ within the created world; but it is a tradition in danger of being squandered in our church.

We cannot too strongly urge the need for more and better work in the field of the Christian theology of marriage, in service of the resolution of differences, not simply the achievement of short-term political victories. We are worried that the General Convention will be tempted to substitute a fulsome tradition for a watered-down replacement in its hurry to solemnize gay marriage.

If the Episcopal Church is to have a second task force, let it be one that is made up of members of more varied persuasion. If it is to reformulate its theology of marriage, let the alternative be richer, more grounded in Scripture, tradition, and reason, not less so. As the task force report put it: “The Church does not have the excuse of ... fatigue or lack of energy, and it is incumbent upon it to do the best it can in its careful consideration of the theology of marriage.” But, finally, if the church will move ahead to solemnize same-sex marriages without further consultation or consideration, indeed, without a clear rationale, let it consider what sort of future it is offering to traditionalists.

The construction of space for disagreement is especially necessary in a time of discernment such as we are undoubtedly in. As Augustine noted regarding moments of division in the Church’s public teaching, we face an opportunity as much as a crisis: an opportunity for drawing on the deep wells of Scripture, for the renewal of the Church’s teaching on marriage and of our common culture. Perhaps true prophets are now in our midst, pressing the Church to revise its historic doctrine and discipline as intrinsically unjust. But it has often been the case, since the time of ancient Israel, that true prophets can be distinguished from false only in retrospect. And prophets have called God’s people *back* to the tradition, just as often as they have announced new things. There must be some way forward that allows the voices of the prophets to be heard and discerned in our common life in charity and peace.

*The Rt. Rev. John Bauerschmidt is Bishop of Tennessee. Zachary Guiliano is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Cambridge and a Gates Cambridge Scholar (2012-15). Wesley Hill is assistant professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania. The Rev. Jordan Hylden is a doctoral candidate in theology and ethics at Duke University Divinity School and a 2014 Episcopal Church Foundation Fellow. A longer version of this essay was published by The Anglican Theological Review and may be found online at [bit.ly/1HJ2JWL](http://bit.ly/1HJ2JWL).*



## Can We Be Witnesses to Christ’s Love?

A response to “Marriage in Creation and Covenant”

By Scott Gunn

I am grateful for the opportunity to join with others in responding to “Marriage in Creation and Covenant: A Response to the Task Force on the Study of Marriage.” John Bauerschmidt and his coauthors have offered a substantive and careful response (called here MCC, “Marriage in Creation and Covenant”) to the task force. I find that MCC is right in its criticism of much of the task force’s report. Use of sources is problematic throughout the report, and it often restates *a priori* claims without a persuasive argument.

However, I find myself differing from MCC in ways that echo responses offered by Kathryn Tanner and Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski in *The Anglican Theological Review*. I agree with Tanner that MCC relies too much on a particular reading of Ephesians 5. Like Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, I see a limited reading of Augustine at work, absent a significant acknowledgment of his cultural context. I encourage readers to study both Tanner and Joslyn-Siemiatkoski carefully. They are much better equipped than I am to deal with these two central points of MCC.

For its part, MCC asserts that changing marriage practices is, of necessity, a change in doctrine. The task force asserts the opposite, claiming that the changes now contemplated by the Episcopal Church are strictly disciplinary, not doctrinal. This question gets at the heart of the matter. Is permitting same-sex marriage a change only in the discipline of marriage, or does it require a change in

doctrine? It seems to me that a further question must be addressed. If there is a change in doctrine, are there core doctrines and peripheral doctrines? Presumably all agree that core doctrine (e.g., the Incarnation) cannot be changed (except possibly by an ecumenical council of the Church). Certainly General Convention would have no place attempting to change core doctrine.

I am inclined to agree with MCC and others who assert that changing marriage practice to encompass same-sex marriage would represent a change not only in discipline but also in doctrine. I suspect, however, that the same could be said for changes in practice that permitted mixed-race marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Same-sex marriage requires a reappraisal of what many have understood to be the primary purpose of marriage, that is, its procreative function. However, this is not new. We have already had to think about this in cases of infertility and in marriages among elderly people. But this is not the only change. Same-sex marriage requires some consideration of the roles of gender in marriage, and here we run up against readings of Ephesians 5.

Those who read Ephesians as a defense of male headship and a role of diminished authority for women — who read the text as universal and not culturally conditioned — will understandably find the metaphor of Christ and his Church to apply to men and women and to leave little room for same-sex, egalitarian marriages. But it seems to me another reading is possible, and I think it is supported by the doctrine of marriage as articulated in the 1979 prayer book. Page 423 says: “The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.” The first good of marriage is “mutual joy” and the second is “help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity.”

There is, it seems to me, something to be said for seeing marriage as a sacramental rite that shows forth the selflessness and endurance of God’s love, but this does not require the couple to be male and female with a male head of household. If marriage is about selfless, enduring love, then one can read Ephesians 5 and see Christ and the Church in both opposite-sex and same-sex marriages; in fact, it will challenge opposite-sex couples to be mutually selfless and sacrificial, not one way or the other. To be sure, this represents an evolution in doctrine, but I believe that evolution is already present in our prayer book.

These are the issues we have to talk about, and I hope we can scrutinize the issues as a church carefully, with utmost respect and maximum thoughtfulness. We must

not sidestep the conversation by saying merely that revision of our marriage practice is change in doctrine and therefore impossible.

Where do we go from here? The task force was a missed opportunity, and I hope our church will form a new task force to consider this very important question. This new task force must represent a diversity of theological views and experience with same-sex marriage. This new task force must do the work — especially to engage our Anglican Communion sisters and brothers. The failure to do this alone is something for which we must repent as a church, given the last 20 years of strained relations. Cutting ourselves or others off is never the path to reconciliation and unity.

To lay my cards on the table: I believe it is possible to articulate a biblical, covenant-based theology of marriage that would encompass both opposite-sex and same-sex couples. I would like to see our church eventually using one rite, to be found in our prayer book, to marry same-sex and opposite-sex couples. Getting there will take time. In my view, we cannot afford to make same-sex couples wait for the blessing of the church while we get our theological and liturgical act together.

So here’s what I propose: Let us continue to bless (and, in some places, to marry) same-sex couples. To be sure, this is a canonical violation, but we might agree that practice has sometimes preceded canonical change so we could be gracious with compliance on this issue. Let us encourage congregations to seek delegated episcopal pastoral oversight where the will of the community differs from its bishop. So let “conservative” congregations in “liberal” dioceses find a more amenable bishop, and let liberal congregations in conservative dioceses similarly seek acceptable oversight. In other words, let us dwell in a place of ambiguity for a while longer, even as we provide generous pastoral response to those who seek the church’s blessing.

What we need in our church is space for God’s grace. This will mean generosity with one another and it may mean more time. As a person who has been married for well over 20 years, I want as many people as are called to enjoy the fruits of marriage. That is why I hope our church will continue to offer same-sex blessing (and marriage) widely. I wonder if there is a way, for now, to permit gracious conversation within our church and within our Anglican Communion.

I wonder how we might witness to Christ’s love — the same love that animates all marriages — in how we move through this time in our common life.

Lord, have mercy on us all.

*The Rev. Canon Scott Gunn is executive director of Forward Movement.*

# Faith Seeking Understanding

Review by Jake Owensby

On a recent flight back to my home in Louisiana, the passengers directly behind me were engaged in an animated — and loud — theological conversation. They were in gleeful agreement about the heretical folly of those who believe in evolution. Since local puddle jumpers are small aircraft, our proximity made it impossible to tune out my fellow passengers. I resigned myself to a period of involuntary eavesdropping.

What I heard confirmed what Anthony Meredith ably demonstrates in

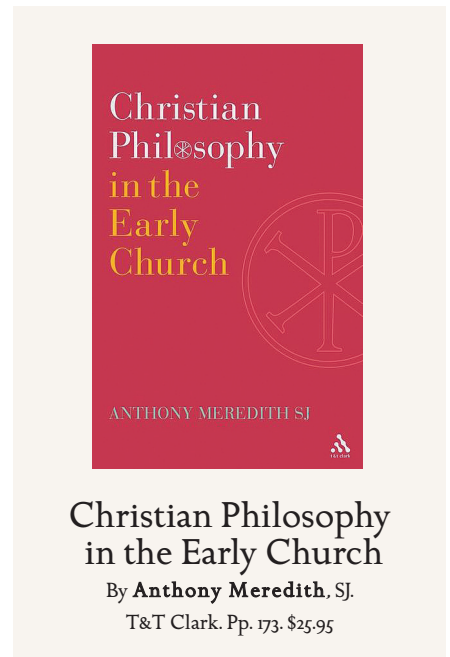
his wonderful book *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church*. Whenever Christians seek to understand our faith for ourselves, to share our faith with those who do not yet share it, or to defend it from its detractors, we will draw upon philosophy in some way.

This is not to imply that Christianity is a philosophy. Neither is it to say that all Christians respect and intentionally draw upon the work of great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. On the contrary, some Christians harbor deep suspicions about philosophy (and natural science and social science). Yet when we employ our God-given intellect, we cannot help but draw intentionally or unintentionally from the sea of ideas in which we swim.

The peculiar challenge for Christian thinkers is to discern which philosophical approach will be most helpful in articulating the revealed gospel and to avoid those incapable of conveying the richness of our faith. To borrow St. Augustine's phrase, the history of the development of Christian thought is the history of faith seeking understanding.

Meredith illustrates this point in his brief, clear, remarkably accessible survey of the development of Christian theology from St. Paul through St. Augustine. His primary aim is historical. He outlines the intersection and the conflicts between philosophy and the faith in the main figures and movements of the Church's first centuries.

Meredith pursues a thesis with continuing relevance for us today. He weaves into his historical reflections a defense of the importance of philosophy for the life of the Faith. He also seeks to offer a formula for determining the correct and the incor-



## Christian Philosophy in the Early Church

By **Anthony Meredith, SJ.**

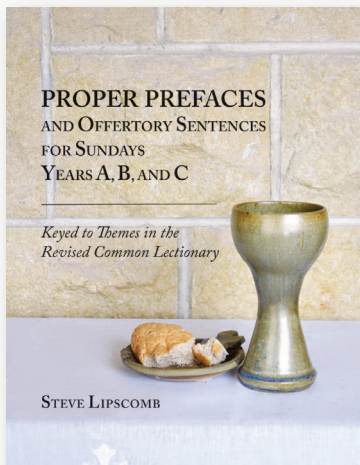
T&T Clark. Pp. 173. \$25.95

rect use of philosophy for the faithful.

In the introductory chapter Meredith provides the intellectual context for the earliest Christian thinkers. He touches briefly on the influence of Jewish thought and practice, the Greek poets, the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Neo-Platonists. With a deft hand he provides just enough information to orient his readers without getting lost in the weeds of technical detail.

Next he turns to St. Paul, the Apostolic Fathers, and the second-century Apologists. Paul himself embodied the early Church's ambivalence toward philosophy. In Athens, Paul quotes Aratus the Stoic in his discussion with the Areopagus. And yet in 1 Corinthians he says, "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1:20). Justin Martyr used philosophy not so much as an authority as a source for illustrations that would be familiar to the cultured, unconverted population of the

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Hellenistic world. Some portray Tertullian as an anti-rationalist. Yet he scatters Stoic language throughout his writings, and he developed theological language used later by Augustine.

Meredith devotes the next chapter to the Alexandrian School, dwelling mostly upon Origen. He does so for good reason, given the aim of this book. Condemned by the Church, Origen offers us the opportunity to ask a key question. Was philosophy as such the source of Origen's errors, or was it his use of philosophy that led him to heresy?

Up to this point Meredith has focused on individual figures. In the fourth chapter he turns to philosophy's influence on the councils. While the orthodox parties routinely charged their opponents with heresy by pointing out their undue dependence on philosophy, Meredith's close reading of Arius and others finds that their errors arose from a narrow dependence upon Scripture alone without considering the valuable lessons of Greek philosophy. The Orthodox party, despite protests to the contrary, frequently drew upon Greek philosophy for the very formulas handed down to us.

Finally, Meredith brings us to St. Augustine, where we witness his internal tension between Plato and Paul. Augustine accepted Plato's view that the human soul is drawn upward toward a vision of God. Yet as Paul wrote in Romans, the soul on its own can never make this ascent. We rise only by the grace of God.

Today's cultured despisers would have it that "Christian thinker" is an oxymoron. Our history and our best thinkers today demonstrate that nothing could be further from the truth. Our history and our personal spiritual practices are best characterized as faith seeking understanding.

*The Rt. Rev. Jake Owensby is Bishop of Western Louisiana.*

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## Columbarium Rights Threatened by Law

(Continued from page 14)

door columbarium proposed by Advent Lutheran Church. In December 2014, after researching the law and consulting with a lawyer, the church authorized site preparation.

City officials promptly issued a stop-work order and threatened to prosecute if construction proceeded. The work stopped after just a few hours.

The Rev. Janis Kinens, pastor of Advent Lutheran Church, told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that her congregation was unlikely to participate in any legal action, and it hoped the legislature would clarify the issue.

Dean Carroll said he learned of the law in December when a reporter from the *Journal Sentinel* called him for comment on the situation in Cedarburg. The timing of the news was especially unfortunate.

All Saints' installed a 104-niche wood and brass columbarium in its narthex about 10 years ago. Since then all the niches have either been filled or reserved, and the cathedral was in the early stages of planning to increase the number of niches to more than 300.

"This issue goes far beyond the scope of municipal ordinances or zoning," Dean Carroll said in a letter he issued with Bishop Miller. "State interference in the burial of our dead is a violation of the First Amendment and the Religious Land Use. It may also be a violation of the Institutionalized Persons Act, a federal law that bars state and local governments from using their zoning codes to discriminate against religious institutions."

*Steve Waring*



Steve Waring photo

Wisconsin law treats a columbarium like this one at Trinity Church in Wauwatosa, the same as a mausoleum.

## Dallas Elects George Sumner

The Diocese of Dallas elected the Very Rev. George R. Sumner as its seventh bishop May 16. Sumner led in both orders from the first ballot and was elected on the fourth ballot.

Sumner is principal and Helliwell Professor of World Mission at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. He was ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts in 1981.

He is author of *The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions* (Eerdmans, 2004), *Being Salt: A Theology of an Ordered*



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*Church* (Wipf & Stock, 2007), and *Daniel: A Commentary* (Brazos, 2012). He is coeditor, with Jeffrey P. Greenman, of *Unwearied Praises: Exploring Christian Faith Through Classic Hymns* (Clements, 2004).

Other nominees were:

- The Rev. Michael W. Michie, 46, rector of St. Andrew's, McKinney, Texas
- The Rev. David G. Read, 49, rector of St. Luke's, San Antonio
- The Rev. R. Leigh Spruill, 51, rector of St. George's, Nashville

## Ft. Worth Elects Bishop Mayer

The Episcopal Church's Diocese of Fort Worth has elected the Rt. Rev. J. Scott Mayer by acclamation. Mayer, Bishop of Northwest Texas since 2009, was the sole nominee to become Fort Worth's next Bishop Provisional.

At General Convention he will confer with the deputations for both Fort Worth and Northwest Texas.

## TLC Wins 5 Honors

Correspondent G. Jeffrey MacDonald has led THE LIVING CHURCH to win multiple journalism awards in recent weeks. The honors include a Wilbur Award from the Religion Communicators Council for magazine articles (all other markets), recognizing MacDonald's series on the immigration crisis along the southern border of the United States. The articles included "Rest for the Weary," "Ecumenical Compassion," "Defend the Sojourner," and "Border Crisis Eases."

RCC presents the Wilbur Awards to promote and encourage excellence in the communication of religious faith and positive values through a variety of secular media. The Wilbur Award, first given in 1949, honors Marvin C. Wilbur, a pioneer in the field of religion-centered public relations.

TLC won four more awards from

the Associated Church Press:

- General Excellence for national/international magazines: Honorable Mention
- Reporting and Writing, news story, magazine: Award of Merit for MacDonald's "Ecumenical Compassion"
- Reporting and Writing: in-depth coverage, magazine/journal: Award of Merit for MacDonald's "Congregations Tackle Border Crisis"
- Reporting and Writing, critical review, all media: Honorable Mention for

"Barbara Ehrenreich's Theophany" by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

Founded in 1916, the Associated Church Press is the oldest interdenominational religious press association in North America. ACP is an international community of communication professionals brought together by faithfulness to their craft and by a common task of reflecting, describing, and supporting the life of faith and the Christian community.



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The Rev. **J. Christopher Ballard** is rector of Trinity-St. John’s, 1142 Broadway, Hewlett, NY 11557.

The Rev. **John Boucher** is priest-in-charge of St. Anne’s, 415 Oakleigh Ave., Appomattox, VA 24522.

The Rev. **Joshua Dan Bowron** is rector of St. Martin’s, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204.

The Rev. **Dan Burner** is rector of St. Mark’s, 179 Main St., Penn Yan, NY 14527.

The Rev. **Catherine E. Carpenter** is rector of Grace, 110 Oswego St., Baldwinsville, NY 13027.

The Rev. **Daniel Cenci** is rector of St. Paul’s, 110 W Main St., Clinton, NC 28328.

The Rev. **Earl Christian** is deacon at St. Cyprian’s, 1242 W. Queen St., Hampton, VA 23669.

The Rev. **Loretta Collins** and the Rev. **Wanda Kloza** are deacons for mission and ministry for the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, 101 Pine St., Harrisburg, PA 17101.

The Rev. Canon **Jan Naylor Cope** is provost of Washington National Cathedral, 3101 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20016.

The Rev. **Mary Frances Curns** is priest-in-charge of All Saints, 59 Summer St., N. Adams, MA 01247.

The Rev. **Albert R. Cutié** is rector of St. Benedict’s, 7801 NW 5th St., Plantation, FL 33324.

The Rev. **William O. “Billy” Daniel** is rector of St. Michael’s, 23 Main St., Geneseo, NY 14454.

The Rev. **Prince Decker** is rector of Epiphany, 3125 Ritchie Rd., Forestville, MD 20747.

The Rev. **Allison DeFoor** is canon to the ordinary for the Diocese of Florida, 325 N Market St., Jacksonville, FL 32202.

The Rev. **Tyler Doherty** is youth director at Cathedral Church of St. Mark, 231 E. 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84101.

The Rev. **Margaret E. Doyle** is rector of St. Alban’s, 429 Cloudland Dr., Hoover, AL 35226.

The Rev. **Tar Drazdowski** is priest-in-charge of Christ Church, 1205 10th St., Sidney, NE 69162, and vicar for mission for the Diocese of Nebraska.

The Rev. **Donny Dunn III** is interim rector of Redeemer, 2341 Winterfield Rd., Midlothian, VA 23113.

The Rev. **Rosa Erickson** is pastor-in-charge of St. Luke’s, 315 N. Cedar St., Lincolnton, NC 28092.

The Rev. **Katharine “Kate” G. Flexer** is rector of St. Michael’s, 225 W. 99th St., New

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The Rev. **Kristen C. Foley** is rector of St. James, 2136 Woodbridge Ave., Edison, NJ 08818.

The Rev. **Arthur Fouts** is priest-in-charge of St. James’, 214 Washington St., Hackensack, NJ 07840.

The Rev. **Robyn Franklin-Vaughn** is rector of St. Barnabas, 14111 Oak Grove Rd., Upper Marlboro, MD 20774.

The Rev. **Dahn Gandell** is rector of Ascension, 2 Riverside St., Rochester, NY 14613.

The Rev. **Keith A. Gentry** is rector of St. Michael’s, 1219 Ratzler Rd., Wayne, NJ 07470.

The Rev. **Steven Godfrey** is transitions officer and minister of congregational development for the Diocese of Iowa, 225 37th St., Des Moines, IA 50312.

The Rev. **Thomas W. Graf** is rector of St. James the Fisherman, 87500 Overseas Hwy., Islamorada, FL 33036.

The Rev. **Katherine Gray** is deacon at St. Andrew’s, 45 Main St., Newport News, VA 23601.

The Rev. **Peter W. Gray** is rector of Nativity, 400 Howard St., Greenwood, MS 38930.

The Rev. **Andrew Grosso** is associate dean for academic affairs and research professor of philosophical theology at Nashotah House Theological Seminary, 2777 Mission Rd., Nashotah, WI 53058.

The Ven. **W. Michael Hamilton** is archdeacon of the Diocese of Massachusetts, 138 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02111.

The Rev. **Marilyn Hasemann** is pastor of Christ Church, 524 N. 5th St., Beatrice, NE 68310, and Peace Lutheran, Plymouth, NE.

The Rev. **Elizabeth Hendrick** is rector of St. Matthew’s, 1520 Oak Rd., Snellville, GA 30078.

The Rev. **Katy Herron-Piazza** is rector of Emmanuel, 285 Lyons Plain Rd., Weston, CT 06883.

The Rev. **Kevin Holsapple** is priest-in-charge of St. John’s, PO Box 751, Brownville Junction, ME 04414, and St. Augustine’s, 1213 Dexter Rd., Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426.

The Rev. **Martha Jenkins** is priest-in-charge of St. James’, 2287 Cartersville Rd., Cartersville, VA 23027.

The Rev. **Rob Spainhour** is rector of Holy Trinity, 38 Grand Ave, Swanton, VT 05488.

The Very Rev. **William L. Stomski** is rector of Trinity, 200 Island Ave., Reno, NV 89501.

The Rev. **Shawn Streepy** is rector of St. Aidan’s, 14301 S. Blackbob Rd., Olathe, KS 66062.

The Rev. **Chris Streeter** is rector of Incarnation, 1957 Five Mile Line Rd., Penfield, NY 14526.

The Rev. **Hilary Brandt Streever** is associate rector of St. James’s, 1205 W. Franklin



St., Richmond, VA 23220.

The Rev. **Charlie Sumners** is priest-in-charge of Grace, 102 E. Live Oak St., Cuero, TX 77954.

The Rev. **Helen Svoboda-Barber** is rector of St. Luke's, 1737 Hillandale Rd., Durham, NC 27705.

The Rev. **Stewart Tabb** is rector of Ascension, 405 Talbot Hall Rd., Norfolk, VA 23505.

The Rev. **Tim True** is rector of St. Paul's, 1550 S 14th Ave., Yuma, AZ 85364.

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First reading and psalm: Ezek. 17:22-24 • Ps. 92:1-4, 11-14

Alternate: 1 Sam. 15:34-16:13 • Ps. 20

## Plant the Seed

Mark tells two stories in what scholars call the parables of the kingdom. They both describe scenes familiar to almost everyone who lived in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago. Mark remarks that Jesus had to explain the meaning of these tiny vignettes, for *disciple* means *learner*.

It would have seemed to those early Christians, whether they lived in urban centers like Rome or Ephesus or in more rural settings, that the kingdom had been announced and subjects recruited beyond the farthest regions of the Roman Empire. The field seemed ripe for harvest. That tiny mustard seed planted in Jerusalem was now in the capital of the most powerful empire the world had known, and was challenging that empire by claiming that Jesus was the genuine king.

Those who read or hear Mark's voice today are beset by three problems. Many of us live in cities, and if we venture into the country we rush by on a journey, perhaps unaware of seed time and harvest in the fields along the highway. We hear the punch lines but, like the disciples, we do not grasp the point. Where is the kingdom announced?

Even if our intimate connection with agriculture is a small patch of grass or a window box, we know that growing things is not all that easy. Grass and other plants have to be watered, fed, given sunlight. Behind these two simple parables is a common understanding that plant growth includes toil, care, and perhaps harvesting, even if only for seeds to replant after winter. Is Jesus suggesting that the kingdom will just grow? Yes and no. He predicts a fruitful harvest. At the Ascension he ordered his followers to go into all the world, to work at telling the world about the Messiah, baptizing, celebrating the Eucharist, loving extravagantly. At Pentecost he sent his Holy Spirit to give strength for this service.

For most of the Church's existence

the kingdom has been announced with enormous success and citizens have been recruited. We've come to expect these signs of success. The Church continues to thrive as proclaimer and recruiter today in Africa and Asia. That may seem cold comfort to us, particularly if we are part of an average congregation of 61 pew-sitters, struggling to pay the bills and a priest. We sing, "Thy kingdom comes and grows for ever, till all thy people own thy sway." But does it? Jesus gave two answers. God will bring the kingdom in his own time. Church farming is not always successful. There will be stony ground. Weeds will choke out good seed.

Is the Church the same thing as the kingdom? The infuriating, mysterious answer is, "It all depends." The Church as God sees her — faithful in announcing that the kingdom is on its way, faithful in making disciples, — is a preview of the kingdom, in which many kingdom elements may be found. The Church as we see her — divided, confused, in error, often corrupt, and neglectful of announcing the kingdom and making disciples — may well be a very discouraging sight.

Yet be assured. God is on his way and uses the Church wherever it is to announce mercy in an unmerciful world. Wherever even a few gather to tell about Jesus, to baptize, to break bread, to care for others, there are the signs of God's reign. We cannot create the reign of God. The seed is God's Word, and God's Word is Jesus. As we obey Jesus, do the things he told his disciples to do, and live in his abiding presence, the seed is planted and the earth brings forth its increase. We do the planting. We do not do the harvesting.

### Look It Up

Read Matt. 13:24-53.

### Think About It

How would you tell a kingdom story today to a city dweller?

## Peace Amid the Perfect Storm

Lake Galilee can be a dangerous environment. Sudden storms come off the Mediterranean Sea, or over the Golan Heights. First-century Jews did not much like the sea. They left that to their neighbors to the north. But at least some of the disciples were fishermen, used to the changes and chances of being on the water. One might have expected Peter, James, and John to calm their friends, to assure them that the ship was lake-worthy and storms soon passed. Jesus slept. He had spent himself teaching thousands and feeding them with a few loaves and fishes. Now he rested and all his friends panicked.

Biblical scholars approach the feeding of thousands and their after-maths — there are two accounts, each with different crowd estimations — as symbols of Christ's mission to Israel and to the wider world. Of course some speculations of biblical scholars may approach the truth and some are wild guesses.

What would an early Christian have made of this story of Jesus sleeping while his friends panicked? What do we make of it as we exchange the Peace with our fellow parishioners? Early Christians had every reason to panic. They were in constant danger. The storm of intermittent, often irrational persecution blew up frequently, like a storm on the Galilean lake. A boat, an ark, symbolized for them the Church. They had all heard the gospel. They had come through the water of baptism. They were fed by the Eucharist. Yet when they felt overwhelmed by sin, persecution, loss, disease, it still felt as if Jesus slept. Mark wants to assure his readers that even in the most desperate moments, when the unexpected becomes painfully real, Jesus is there and he "wakes," calms, and reminds us of the peace that passes all understanding and all expectations.

At least in America, there's no general persecution to threaten Chris-

tians' lives. Christians in some parts of the world today are indeed so threatened. We should remember them when we mutter "peace" to the person we do not much like in the pew in front of us: ours is a "light affliction." Yet we all know that our follies, weaknesses — yes, sins — can blow up in our faces suddenly, like a storm. We know that illness in ourselves or loved ones may well terrify us. Even the Church, our ship, is threatened "by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed."

Together as the Church, we profess our belief, the belief of all on board, in the words of the Creed. Then, immediately we confess just how much all on board sin, fall short, jump overboard, fail God and our neighbor, and neglect the poor and needy. We confess that we are experiencing a perfect storm of remorse and bewilderment, of fear and distress, a feeling that Jesus sleeps, after which in the name and place of Jesus the priest announces that we are forgiven and prays that we may be kept in eternal life, that life given to us when we went through the water of baptism on our way to the Promised Land. Only then may we receive God's peace and turn and share it, a symbol that we intend to "Go into the world to love and serve the Lord."

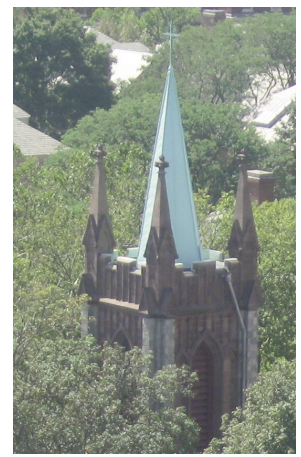
In short, to receive peace and share peace, we must believe, confess, and receive forgiveness. God is ever merciful. He grants us the peace of being restored to him, over and over and over again. He bids us to be "instruments of that peace." And in calling us to be fishers of men, he reminds us that fishermen are supposed to be used to storms.

### Look It Up

Read the Confession and Absolution.

### Think About It

As you hear the Peace, recollect its meaning and pass it intentionally.



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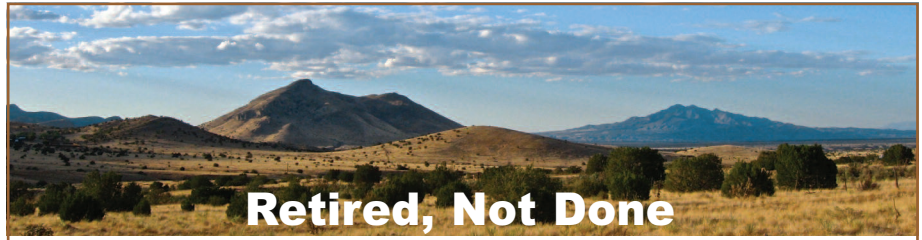
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