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Microfinancing

Unity in Tennessee

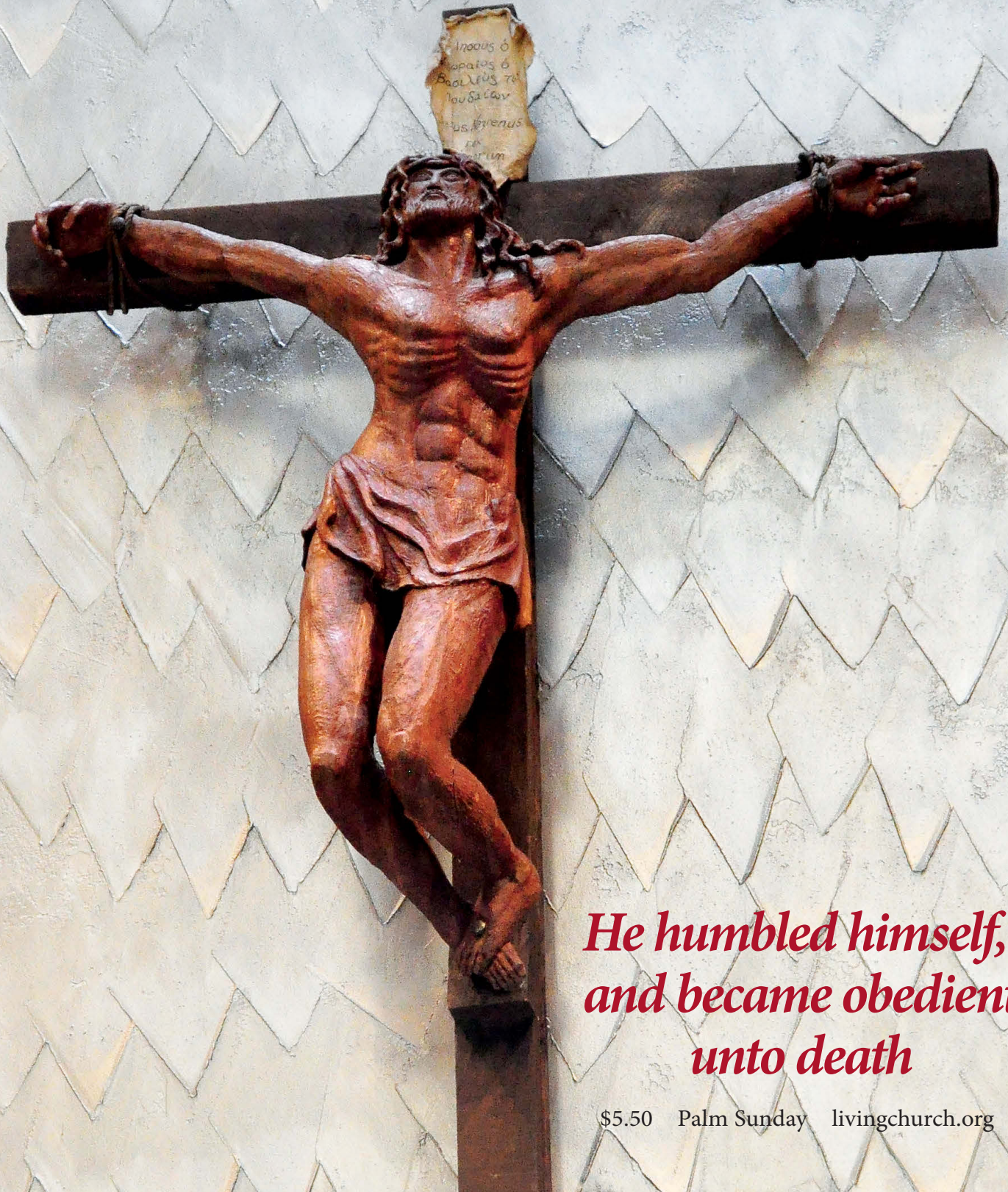
THE LIVING CHURCH

March 25, 2018

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ON THE COVER

“The depth of this hoped-for victory corresponds to the depth of hate hurled at Jesus when he refuses to be co-opted by praise” (see “Passion,” p. 26).

Crucifix at St. Paul’s Church, Seattle
Joe Mabel photo/flickr

THE LIVING CHURCH

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LIVING CHURCH Partners

We are grateful to Saint Francis Foundation, Salina [p. 27], and the Church of the Good Shepherd, Maitland, and the Diocese of Indianapolis [p. 28], whose generous support helped make this issue possible.

They Gather Money Little by Little

Episcopal Relief & Development's Savings with Education program shows how community-led microfinancing can build savings and support education, agriculture, and empowerment.

By Kirk Petersen

Maritza Gonzales Martínez is a housewife with five children in Ojo de Agua, which is in the western interior of Honduras. “I never thought I could save, so I never tried until I joined my community savings group,” she said.

Now she meets regularly with a group called *Fe y Esperanza* (Faith and Hope), “and I have had the benefit of applying [for] and receiving loans, of saving regularly, and of earning profit from the interest” collected on the group's loans.

“Most of my savings goes to pay for school fees and supplies,” she said. “I thank God that two of my children are going to college and I have savings to help them.”

Fe y Esperanza is part of Savings with Education (SwE), a microfinance program established by Episcopal Relief & Development, in partnership with the Diocese of Honduras and the diocese's Anglican Agency of Development, known as Aanglidesh.

Microfinance is not a new concept, but the typical model has involved financial institutions or nonprofit groups making small loans to support entrepreneurs in impoverished areas. The loans often are accompanied by education on how to run a small business.

In recent years, some microfinance organizations have added a personal savings component to their operations, and in 2011, Episcopal Relief & Development set out on that path. It introduced SwE, through which local groups would make loans from pools of money that had been saved by members.

“A group of 15 to 25 women come together every week to save an amount of money that they have determined is feasible for them, and once that pool of funds is large enough, then they can



Tammi Mott/Episcopal Relief & Development photo

Members of the Courage savings group in Angola are proud of the money they have saved little by little, reveling in the promise of Proverbs 13:11.

loan to each other,” Kellie McDaniel, senior program officer of Episcopal Relief & Development, told TLC. “And interest that they generate on those loans is distributed equally among the savings group members at the end of the year.”

The weekly savings goals range from 25 cents to \$5. While those amounts would be considered insignificant in developed economies, more than 700 million people around the world live below the World Bank's poverty line of \$1.90 per day. Loan amounts range from about \$20 to \$100 or more, money that buys seeds for agriculture, pays laborers in busy times, and pays to transport wares or purchase them for resale.

Episcopal Relief & Development worked with its existing church partners to launch SwE in 2011 in Brazil, Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and

Colombia. “Some of the partners were skeptical at first. And by some, I mean almost all,” McDaniel said with a laugh. But the program took hold quickly, and in 2012, 63 local groups had launched. Now that the program has existed for a few years, “a large part of the story is how passionate the partners implementing this program are about it,” she said.

The program expanded into Africa in 2014, and SwE now has more than 1,300 savings groups, with 31,000 members, in 17 countries. The groups collectively have saved more than \$5.5 million since 2012, and the pace of growth has accelerated. In 2017, the program added 10,000 new members and 400 new groups, saving \$2.2 million in 2017 alone.

Kasseche is a community in Uíge Province, a landlocked area of northern Angola. It is now the home of a bois-



Mike Smith/Episcopal Relief & Development photo

Savers in Tang'Kelo Ber Cosalo take a weekly collection in the Nyanza region of Kenya. The group's name means "being cautious bears fruit."

terous bunch of savers called the Courage Group. Most members are women, but there are four men. They started in 2015 with a personal target for each member of saving 250 kwanza per week — about \$1.18. Like all SwE programs, they established their own rules, which include fines of 50 kwanza for missing a meeting or missing a savings target.

The group soon began making loans. One member borrowed money to buy land to clear and plant manioc, which produces a tuber that is a major food source throughout the developing world. Another bought dry and canned goods to resell, while two took loans for healthcare.

Courage was still going strong in 2017, having increased its weekly savings target from 250 to 500 kwanza. By the end of the program year members had accumulated 338,000 kwanza in savings and earnings — about \$1,590. Each year the group decides how much of the earnings to distribute to the members.

The economic benefits of the program are obvious, but there are more subtle benefits as well. "One of the things we are tryin g to do is increase decision-making ability and empower women," McDaniel said. The program can "help shift the perception of the role a woman can have in the community."

"Our vision is to reach the most vulnerable people in the community, and oftentimes those are women," she said.

Pittsburgh Leads in Reconciliation

After years of conflict, the Anglican and Episcopal dioceses of Pittsburgh have taken a giant step toward resolving most of their remaining property disputes. Control of church buildings has been a matter of dispute since 2008, when bishop Robert Duncan and a majority of the congregations in the Pittsburgh diocese voted to leave the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal diocese and nine congregations of the Anglican diocese announced on Feb. 28 "a distinctively Christian compromise resolution" in which the Anglican congregations will retain the ownership and use of their church buildings, while paying an annual assessment to the Episcopal diocese. The assessment will be 3.25 percent of operating revenues for the first 20 years, and 1.75 percent thereafter.

The agreement establishes Pittsburgh as the clear leader in reconciliation efforts among the five dioceses that voted a decade ago to leave the Episcopal Church. The other dioceses that voted to secede are Fort Worth, Quincy, San Joaquin, and South Carolina.

In Pittsburgh, litigation after the 2008 secession established that there were two categories of churches among those leaving: about a dozen churches that held legal title to the church property, and a larger group whose property was "held or administered by the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh ... for the beneficial use of the parishes."

A Pennsylvania court ruled in October 2009 that properties occupied by the larger group must be turned over to the Episcopal diocese. When the state Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal in 2011, the Anglican diocese chose not to pursue the matter further. That led to nearly seven years of continued disputes over the churches that held title to their property.

Because there is finally an agreement after years of conflict, all parties are wary of straying beyond the carefully negotiated executive summary of the agreement.

Kristen Parise, communications director of the Anglican diocese, confirmed that a small number of similar

title-holding churches declined to join the agreement, but would not identify the churches or say how many there were. She said that information would need to come from Bishop James Hobby, who did not respond to a request to identify the churches.

The communications director of the Episcopal diocese, Rich Creehan, declined to provide information beyond the executive summary and letter released Feb. 28. When asked for a copy of the entire agreement, he said that would remain confidential.

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that three churches declined to join the agreement but was unable to identify them. In an extensive search of online court records, TLC was unable to find a list of churches in the category that held clear title to their buildings.

The Rev. Jonathan Millard, a member of the Anglican negotiating team, also declined to identify the three holdout churches, but did provide some information about the process. Millard is rector of Church of the Ascension in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh, which is one of the parties to the agreement.

"This wasn't just about money and buildings," he told TLC. "It was more like trying to find a way through a divorce."

"There was a lot of honesty and humility in the room. It was palpable," he said.

"The intent going into it was to try to find a creative solution to our differences," said the Rev. Kris Opat, part of the Episcopal negotiating team. "It was more coming from a gospel standpoint. It was more important to try to find a way for us all to move forward, as opposed to [trying to] win."

He said that for years "there was this narrative ... [of] 'the big bad evil Episcopal Church.' A lot of my energy went into trying to disabuse anyone of that idea. We definitely have differences, we disagree on a number of very important points, but at the end of the day I still consider them Christians." He added that he wants the Anglicans "to

(Continued on next page)

Pittsburgh

(Continued from previous page)

be able to pursue what God's called them to do as best as they can."

Millard said that when the negotiating teams made opening statements in the first mediation session in September 2017, "the tone of those statements was such that I think it cut through the fear and anxiety."

There are some potential landmines in the agreement and sticking to it will require good faith on the part of all parties.

The biggest issue is that the nine Anglican churches have agreed to pay part of their revenues to the Episcopal diocese, in perpetuity. The assessment will decline after 20 years from 3.25 percent to 1.75 percent, but there is no end date for the reduced assessment. This recognizes that despite the formal ownership of the titles, "the Episcopal Diocese has beneficial (that is, trust beneficiary) rights" in the church buildings, according to the agreement.

At the same time, the nine churches also will be expected to pay an annual assessment to their Anglican diocese. Parise said she did not know the amount of the expected Anglican assessment, nor whether the Episcopal assessment would be considered part of, or in addition to, the Anglican assessment.

Future leaders of the nine churches undoubtedly will chafe at the dual assessment, especially during any time of budget pressure. As a practical matter, many churches in most dio-

ceses fall short of the expected assessment, which varies from diocese to diocese.

The nine churches have agreed not to sell or lease their church properties without consent of the Episcopal diocese, and have agreed that "the Episcopal diocese may make use of the Parish historic church buildings to meet pastoral needs consistent with the shared history" of the parties.

The Anglican diocese is not technically a party to the agreement — only the nine churches. Hobby was not involved in the negotiations, but as bishop diocesan, he presumably could have vetoed the agreement. He instead endorsed it as "quite remarkable, given the litigious culture in which we live."

Hobby was elected Anglican Bishop of Pittsburgh in 2016, which undoubtedly helped pave the way for the agreement. His predecessor, Bishop Duncan, was a national leader and spokesman for what became the Anglican Church in North America. After being expelled by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, he was named the first archbishop of the ACNA, while continuing to serve as the Anglican Bishop of Pittsburgh. Duncan retired as archbishop in 2014 and as head of the Pittsburgh diocese in 2016.

Millard noted that since the split "there were many changes in leadership. There was a new presiding bishop, there was a new Episcopal Bishop of Pittsburgh, and there was a new Anglican Bishop of Pittsburgh." He added, "when you change all of the key headline players, that has to make a difference."

Hobby has made strides toward a

closer relationship with the Episcopal diocese, which has been headed by Bishop Dorsey McConnell since 2012. When the Episcopal Church's leadership spent three days in Pittsburgh for a February 2017 revival, Hobby attended a portion of the event.

There have been few similar signs of reconciliation among the other dioceses that seceded from the Episcopal Church.

Most recently, in mid-February the Anglican diocese in South Carolina petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court in a bid to overturn an adverse ruling by the state Supreme Court. The Anglican diocese claims ownership of the name Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, a claim that was affirmed in a separate lawsuit. The Episcopal diocese uses the name Episcopal Church in South Carolina.

In Fort Worth, both dioceses identify themselves as the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth.

The tiny remainder of the already-small Episcopal Diocese of Quincy was absorbed by the Diocese of Chicago. Two property lawsuits have outlived the diocese.

San Joaquin is the smallest of the four remaining Episcopal dioceses and has struggled the hardest financially. In October 2017, the Episcopal Church forgave \$5.8 million in loans that had been made over the years to the diocese. After a decade of being led by three successive provisional bishops, the third one (Bishop David Rice) was elected bishop diocesan in March 2017.

Kirk Petersen

ANALYSIS

GAFCON's Dilemma

The consecration of the Rt. Rev. Elizabeth Awut Ngor on Dec. 31, 2016, as assistant bishop of the Diocese of Rumbek, South Sudan, has stirred conflict within the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON).

GAFCON had set a voluntary moratorium on consecrating women as bishops. There are implications for GAFCON's holdover member provinces. There are questions, too, about communication.

A hard-hitting letter to the GAFCON

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scripture readings.

Primates by Bishop Jack Iker of the Diocese of Fort Worth, and the Rev. Christopher Culpepper, president of the diocese's standing committee, has expressed "our deepest concerns" about the consecration. It questioned why GAFCON said nothing despite knowing about the consecration for more than a year and disputed explanations offered by the GAFCON leadership.

Rumors began to circulate in 2017 about the consecration of a woman in South Sudan. Time marched on without formal confirmation. Attempts to obtain information from the South Sudan provincial office or the chief consecrator, Archbishop Daniel Deng, proved fruitless. Likewise, nothing was forthcoming from the Anglican Communion Office, which keeps a master list of bishops.

Eventually a photograph from a bishops' meeting in South Sudan showed Ngor wearing purple. Archbishop Deng, by then recently retired, confirmed news of the consecration in a radio interview. "It was in my dream to ordain a woman as bishop in the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan before I leave."

Regarding communication: Where does responsibility rest for sharing news of a consecration, especially when it is a mold-breaking event? In normal times it falls to the relevant province.

Why didn't the Province of South Sudan say anything? At this stage no one knows for sure, but South Sudan is engulfed in civil war. Several of its bishops are out of the country and resident with their people in refugee camps. With its provincial systems under great stress or even non-operative, a communication breakdown is a plausible reason.

Bishop Iker, as well as questioning why GAFCON did not make known the consecration, said it sent mixed messages in its explanations. Bishop Iker points out GAFCON said the consecration was a "wartime contingency" but also reported Archbishop Deng's expressed wish to consecrate a woman before he retired. "Indeed it is difficult to maintain that both sentiments can be true," the letter said.

Regarding GAFCON's role: Press

officer Andrew Goss disputes theories about a conspiracy of silence. "GAFCON knew that South Sudan's news would become public knowledge, but it was South Sudan's news to break, not ours."

He added: "In hindsight, perhaps GAFCON could have encouraged the South Sudanese Provincial office to make a statement proactively, but, because the situation in South Sudan is so messy and the pressures so huge, we waited."

A statement from the Rt. Rev. Peter Jensen, GAFCON's general secretary, confirmed that a GAFCON moratorium on women in the episcopate has been in place since 2014. A report by a theological task force on women in the episcopate was heard at last year's meeting of the GAFCON Primates Council. Archbishop Deng was present.

Jensen's statement presents the South Sudan consecration as "an anomaly" and a personal decision by Deng. It was, the statement said, "an extraordinary action taken in the midst of civil unrest in a part of his country where most of the men were engaged in armed conflict."

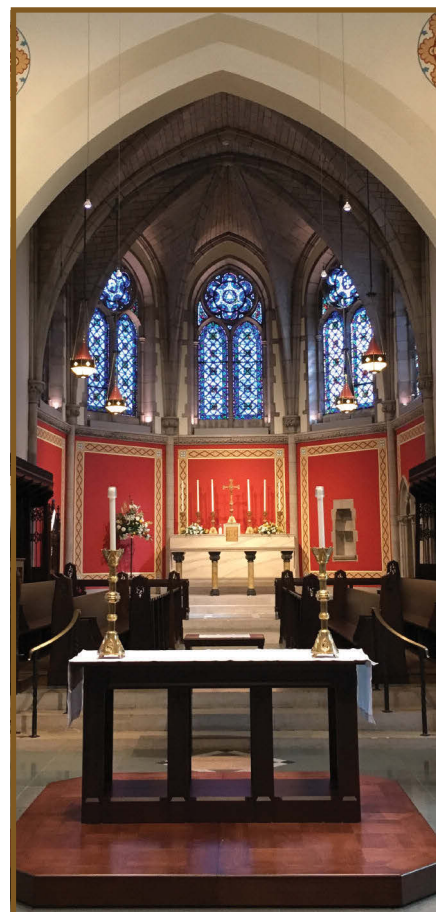
Indeed, many will recall that Anglicanism's first ordination of a woman to the priesthood — the Rev. Li Tim-Oi in Macau by the Bishop of Hong Kong in 1944 — was in response to a messy war.

The statement concludes, "Our hope is that the newly elected Primate of South Sudan will join us in these discussions as we seek to find a common mind, looking to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Whatever the circumstances, GAFCON has a woman serving as a bishop in a member province. The question arises: are other East African provinces that have ordained women as priests likely to follow suit in the episcopate?

One issue at stake is the nature of GAFCON. Is it a loose movement for renewal or are decisions of its Primates' Council binding on member churches? Another issue: since the canonical consecration of a bishop is permanent, it is hard to see how South Sudan could backtrack.

John Martin



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POSTCARD FROM LONDON

A Memory Ministry Grows in Wembley

The Rev. Steve Morris left a career in advertising and marketing to respond to a call to ordained ministry in the Church of England. Having served a customary four-year curacy, he moved to Wembley in northwest London, where his work as vicar of St. Cuthbert's has radically changed his understanding of ministry.

"As a theological student in Oxford, I was told that to make a church grow you simply needed to recruit a lively worship band and spend two days preparing your main Sunday sermon," he said.

St. Cuthbert's had a mainly eclectic congregation when he became its vicar 18 months ago. Most worshipers traveled some distance to worship and few locals attended. Very soon after Morris arrived, there was a noticeable exodus of these commuters. The congregation dwindled to about 10.

He had little choice but to undertake a radical rethinking. His response was an intense effort to understand the surrounding community. "My question was this: where is this community hurting?" He found a neighborhood where the majority of residents were Hindus and hardly good prospects to become Anglicans.

It emerged that the majority of neighbors were elderly, many of them single occupants of large houses. No surprise, then, there was a high incidence of loneliness with many reporting they hardly spoke to anyone from one week to another. Digging further, Morris found there was a high incidence of dementia.

Dementia is a group of symptoms that commonly involves problems with memory, thinking, problem-solving, language, and perception. The symptoms are caused by different diseases that affect the brain. It's a growing problem in the United Kingdom and fills people with foreboding for the future as aging sets in.

The parish decided it should address the dementia issue. Morris called the Alzheimer's Association, a national charity, and found it had crafted a concept called Memory Cafés. At first St. Cuthbert's focused only on people with dementia. Very quickly, however, it decided to widen the scope to include any elderly neighbors.

"Our Memory Café has radically transformed how I understand and practice ministry," Morris said. Starting the ministry was simple. "All we needed was two sets of quiz questions and light refreshments." He gathered a group of volunteer helpers, the only stipulation being they should be "bubbly and welcoming."

The St. Cuthbert's Memory Café runs for two hours every Thursday, 51 weeks in the year. Morris stresses the importance of maintaining a regular meeting time. Ten locals showed up for the inaugural meeting. Now attendance can be as high as 150. The menu offers quizzes, chair-based exercises, community singing, and crafts. Offering singing helped create a choir. A side benefit for the community is that Morris has become alert to scams that fleece older folk. "I find out about a new kind of

scam just about every week," he said.

The project has borne significant fruit in terms of neighbors connecting to the worship of the parish. Morris said half of those who have visited Memory Café are now regular worshippers.

The Rt. Rev. Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden, has called it "Messy Church for Oldies." One important principle Morris emphasizes is the need to treat people with dementia as people, not to see them as medical cases.

"It's an entirely no-frills operation: no complicated catering, no rides or pick-ups. People come with their [caregivers], so there is no need for complicated people protection procedures," Morris said. "There's no heavy religious content. We begin with a simple prayer and I let it be known the vicar is available to pray with guests."

With a high proportion of Hindu neighbors, are there issues about praying with people of other faiths? "Not a problem," Steve said. He makes it clear he offers prayer in the name of Christ and people happily accept this.

"We don't charge," he said. "The project ticks many boxes for mostly small grants: mental health, community-building. Because costings are so precise, it is easy to isolate items out and build grant applications." It appeals to corporate responsibilities departments on businesses: there is an active link with Lloyd's Bank."

Morris now believes every parish should offer a Memory Café.

John Martin

Four Newark Nominees

In the search for its 11th bishop, the Diocese of Newark has nominated a slate of two women serving as priests in Texas and two men serving as priests in and near the nation's capital.

These are the nominees:

- The Rev. Canon John Harmon, rector of Trinity Church, Washington, D.C.
- The Rev. Carlye Hughes, rector of Trinity Church, Fort Worth
- The Rev. Lisa Hunt, rector of St. Stephen's Church, Houston
- The Rev. Canon Scott Slater, canon to the ordinary, Diocese of Maryland

The diocese will elect the bishop May 19. A service of ordination and consecration is scheduled for Sept. 22.

Lexington Calls Bishop Van Koevering

The Diocese of Lexington's 122nd annual convention voted Feb. 24 to call the Rt. Rev. Mark Van Koevering as bishop provisional.

"What impresses me the most about Bishop Van Koevering is his ability to articulate how important his relationship with Jesus Christ truly is and, based on that, how he lives with an expectation of God to act," said the Rev. Matthew Young, president of the standing committee. "The Diocese of Lexington should very much benefit from Bishop Van Koevering's honesty, integrity, and maturity."

Bishop Van Koevering's ecclesiastical authority began immediately at the close of convention, and he will be resident in the diocese in April. He succeeds the Rt. Rev. Bruce Caldwell, who has resigned as bishop provisional because of health challenges.

Bishop Hollerith to Retire

The Rt. Rev. Herman Hollerith IV, Bishop of Southern Virginia since February 2009, has announced his plans to retire in December.

The 126th Annual Council of the Diocese of Southern Virginia convened in Williamsburg on Feb. 16-17. Much work was accomplished by Council, but the big news was Bishop

Hollerith's announcement, during his address, that he will retire at the end of this year.

A gap of six to eight months between his retirement and the consecration of his successor will be filled by the Rt. Rev. James Magness, who serves as assisting bishop.

Manx Bishop Stays in Parliament

By a narrow vote, the Bishop of Sodor and Man has retained his place as an ex-officio member of Tynwald's Legislative Council. Tynwald (the parliament of the Isle of Man, or Manx) voted 18-14 to continue a tradition that dates from the beginning of parliamentary rule.

Opponents forced a vote despite a report from a government select committee recommending that the bishop retain his seat. Opponents claimed the arrangement is anachronistic and the bishop should stay out of politics, focusing on the work of the diocese.

One member, Bill Shimmins, said it was "time to move on from the medieval era" and "a question of democratic principle versus a questionable historical tradition."

The Rt. Rev. Peter Eagles, who took office last September, said he "never felt threatened" by the debate. The

diocesan bishop has been a member of the upper house of the Isle of Man's parliament since democracy was established there.

"The role is acknowledgment of how seriously Tynwald takes the spiritual nature of the island's identity, and its moral and ethical responsibility in caring for its people," Bishop Eagles added. The vote emphasized "that it is a great privilege and a great responsibility."

Sodor and Man — based in the Isle of Man's capital, Douglas — is the smallest diocese in the Church of England, comprising 45 churches and 27 parishes. The church traces its origins to early Irish missions but was disrupted by Norse invasions. At various times it was under the jurisdiction of Norway and Ireland. In 1542 it was transferred to Canterbury. The first Book of Common Prayer in Manx Gaelic was published in 1610.

John Martin

Wiring Spires as Hotspots

An agreement between the U.K. government and the church will see remote parish church buildings pressed to serve as sites for Wi-Fi transmitters, mobile masts, and satellite relay stations. Nearly two-thirds of the Church of England's buildings

(Continued on next page)

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Spires

(Continued from previous page)

(65%) are to be found in rural areas, and often their spires are the highest local landmark.

Many rural parishes struggle to maintain church buildings. As well as extending the reach of the Internet, the arrangement will provide much-needed cash to keep church buildings in good repair.

“Churches are central features and valued assets for local communities up and down the country,” said Matt Hancock, MP, the government minister in charge of the project. “This agreement with the Church of England will mean that even a 15th-century building can help make Britain fit for the future, improving people’s lives by boosting connectivity in some of our hardest-to-reach areas.”

Trial projects in the eastern dioceses of Chelmsford and Norwich claim success. The Rt. Rev. Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford, said the project had significantly improved access to broadband services in rural Essex.

“We know that rural churches in particular have always served as a hub for their communities. Encouraging churches to improve connectivity will help tackle two of the biggest issues rural areas face: isolation and sustainability,” he said.

John Martin

New CEEP Director

The Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes has called Joseph R. Swimmer as its new executive director. Swimmer, major gift officer at Washington National Cathedral, begins his new work April 1.

He has been renewing Washington National Cathedral’s congregation while securing funding for earthquake repair. Baptized and formed in the faith in Oklahoma, Swimmer is an active citizen and leader in the Cherokee Nation. He is a graduate of Stanford University and its law school.

Swimmer succeeds Cynthia Cannon McWhirter, who has served as the consortium’s executive director since 1999.

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St. John's Church photos

A cooking class at St. John's Church helps residents of La Porte, Texas, learn about healthy eating.

Faith, Friendship, and Better Health

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Two years ago, Arthur Johns of Charlotte, North Carolina, was paying a heavy price for indulging in his mother-in-law's deep-fried dinners and rich desserts. At 6-foot-2 and 476 pounds, the 51-year-old relied on blood-pressure pills and insulin shots to keep him alive.

"The Dick Gregory Diet, SlimFast: everything you could think of doing, I tried it, but nothing stuck," Johns said. "The one thing I never did was to pray about it, to ask God to direct me to stay consistent, to work out, to change my eating habits, and have the sense to rest."

Today he's 200 pounds lighter and insulin-free. His blood pressure is under control, too. He's done it with a

three-pronged approach: improved diet, more activity, and an acclaimed church-based program that uses faith and friends to keep him on track.

"You have other people who practice the same things, share the same beliefs, and want to bring people back to God," Johns said. "And you all realize you can't do it if you're unhealthy, out-of-shape, or out-of-breath."

His church, Ben Salem Presbyterian, is one of 85 Mecklenburg County churches enrolled in a county-funded initiative called Village HeartBEAT. It uses friendly competition to drive down heart disease risk factors among Hispanics and African Americans. Strong results earned Village HeartBEAT a \$25,000 Healthiest Cities award in January. Last year, more than

half of its participants lost weight, reduced blood sugar levels, and lowered blood pressure, said Melicia Whitt-Glover, program evaluator and CEO of Gramercy Research.

The success of Charlotte's faith-based approach is being noticed. It's now part of a prototype that the World Council of Churches is developing for use among faith communities worldwide. It's also part of a burgeoning movement in the United States to make disease prevention a larger part of church life.

"There is great potential in mobilizing church communities into a global movement that promotes healthy lifestyles and disease prevention," said Dr. Mwai Makoka, program executive for health and healing at the

(Continued on next page)

Faith, Friendship, and Better Health

(Continued from previous page)

WCC, via email after visiting Charlotte to observe Village HeartBEAT in February. “Health talks and health activities should be part and parcel of the life of churches.”

Behavioral changes are essential, experts say, for thwarting common killers such as heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Cultivating change is never easy. It’s especially difficult when culturally cherished foods lead to clogged arteries and medical institutions are not well-trusted to intervene. But promising research shows that churches can make life-improving and life-saving gains when other types of institutions fail.

The needs are urgent in America, where 37 percent of adults are at heightened risk for disease due to obesity, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hispanics are almost twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to be diagnosed with diabetes. African-Americans experience higher rates of obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes than whites, according to an October report from the American Heart Association. They also die more frequently from heart attacks and strokes.

“We need to find ways to create a culture of health in the African-American community and prioritize a healthy lifestyle to prevent heart disease,” said Dr. Mercedes Carnethon, associate professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine, in a statement.

Such cultures of health can take root in churches, according to AHA reports and academic studies. In 10 studies, 70 percent of interventions among African-Americans in faith-based settings resulted in weight loss, according to a 2014 research survey in the journal *Obesity Reviews*.

“We have to meet people where they are,” said Kelsie Lancaster, a New York University nutritionist and the lead author of the *Obesity Reviews* article. “It’s worth putting more funds in to try to scale it up” and expand



A dance class, part of health-related programming at St. John’s, La Porte

successful faith-based programs.

But in many religious traditions, health ministries still struggle to gain traction. The Episcopal Church is no exception. It has no national staff dedicated to physical health ministries. Episcopal Health Ministries, a volunteer group to support health programs in congregations, shut down last April for an indefinite term to seek a new structure and funding model. EHM did not respond to requests for comment.

What’s more, Episcopal congregations have not traditionally focused on health, according to Scott Stoner, co-founder of Living Compass, a wellness ministry that provides training and other types of support for individuals and congregations.

To focus on health and wellness ministries “is something that’s relatively new in the Episcopal Church,” Stoner said. “In some ways, we’re filling a vacuum.”

Recently more health ministries have been emerging. But figuring out how to meet local needs remains a work in progress.

In La Porte, Texas, a hardscrabble

city of 33,000 southeast of Houston, St. John’s Church launched the Living Compass Wellness Center last year after a survey found city residents would appreciate new supports for healthy living. Now cooking demonstrations teach kids and parents how to prepare nutritious meals. A fitness program introduces adults to yoga, dance, and tai chi, among other activities to encourage movement. All programs are either low-cost or free.

Six months in, the center’s after-school program is well-attended, in part because it builds on a 20-year tradition of offering free afterschool care at St. John’s. But new types of programming have been slower to resonate. Sometimes the church offers a health-related class and no one shows up.

Health-related programming “isn’t deeply reaching into the community because, contrary to our experience of data-gathering, the uptake on the offerings does not quite parallel the request,” said the Rev. Viktoria Gotting, rector of St. John’s. But she expects participation to increase with time.

“We are getting started in a depressed, depleted, marginalized refinery Port of

Houston community where this kind of thing represents a cultural shift,” Gotting said. “We expect it will take a while, and we’ve just not been at it long enough.”

Other churches’ initiatives often build on a parish nursing model. Nurses, who often belong to the congregation, provide basic health services such as blood-pressure screenings in a parish setting. Among their goals is to detect health conditions that had previously gone undetected.

It is not always a tough sell. When St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church in Berkeley, California, first offered blood-pressure screenings in 2013, the parish’s volunteer health ministry set up sidewalk tables to raise awareness of the opportunity. Since then, word has spread. Now cancer workshops are packed. Blood pressure and cholesterol screenings are offered regularly. Those who need to become more active have social supports, including a walking group.

“A lot of people don’t like to have a whole lot of information about their personal lives written down,” said Omowale Fowles, president of the health ministry at St. Paul. “In having the church sanction this in a positive way, it does encourage those who would be less likely to want to go [for screening]. They go simply because the church or the pastor says, *This is a good thing.*”

In the Roman Catholic Diocese of Fresno, a new push is underway to drive down risk factors among Hispanics. Earlier this year, a new bilingual coordinator was hired to lead the campaign. And for the first time in about 10 years, the diocese convened a parish nursing training conference in March to equip churchgoers with nursing backgrounds.

The focus is on reaching out to families, including farmworkers, who are underserved by America’s healthcare system. Many are at heightened disease risk because of culturally conditioned, high-cholesterol diets. Learning to eat differently while still honoring cultural heritage can be part of their parish lives, said Roxanna Stevens, co-coordinator of health ministries for the diocese.

But, she adds, people need to hear



Martial arts classes at St. John’s Church help youth improve their fitness, focus, and coordination.

the message from those of their culture for it to engender lasting change.

This became clear when a California health-outreach program asked if it might achieve better results in a parish setting. A Hispanic nun led the program at a local parish, and women were the first to embrace it. Then their husbands started joining them at nutrition classes.

“Everybody in that community started looking at eating differently and exploring different ways to exercise,” Stevens said. “We discovered that the only way for that to work is to have [a leader] from the Hispanic community who is well-respected.”

In Charlotte, health ministries have caught fire with \$200,000 in help from Mecklenburg County, which creates resources such as free gym access and training for parishioners to lead health workshops. Participating churches assemble teams of 10, plus four alternates. They benchmark their biometric risk factors (blood pressure, cholesterol, and weight readings) and try to make the biggest gains for their team in 16 weeks. Clergy and fellow parishioners cheer them, strive to improve their own numbers, and take part in community fitness events. This year’s tally of 85 participating churches is up from 28 last year.

Johns said he benefits from being part of an accountability group and having friends constantly encourage him.

“You have somebody behind you saying, *Did you work out today? What did you eat? Did you drink water?*” Johns said. “Every Sunday, when my minister sees me, he says, *Man, you lost more weight! You look awesome! That’s a good feeling.*”

Such encouraging dynamics are by design. At Rockwell African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Charlotte, Pastor Jordan Boyd says positive reinforcement makes the difference. Parishioners hear from the pulpit how honoring the body honors the Creator. In testimonies, they hear brothers and sisters tell how they feel better after shedding pounds. For Lent this year, everyone is giving up the one food they find most appetizing. If they stumble, Boyd does not frame their setback as sin.

“The old-school thought of the church was that sin was the driving force to make people change,” Boyd said. “But now I’ve seen that same kind of message drive people into a depression where they just throw their hands up and say *to heck with it.* So now we keep saying, *You can do it! You fall down, no problem. Get back up. Keep trying.*” □



A 2014 active shooter exercise held in Monterey, California.

Steven L. Shepard/Presidio of Monterey Public Affairs photo

Mending the Fabric of America

Christian love can help us overcome our resigned isolation, find healing, and perhaps prevent the shootings that terrorize our country and haunt our memories.

By Todd Sorensen

When a mother reported that there was an incident at Columbine High School, and I walked out of my office to see helicopters hovering over the school, I feared it was bad. Nobody was prepared for what happened on April 20, 1999. I tried calling the sheriff's office

to see what I could do, but it was in panic mode. Four days later, we gathered all our children and youth at the altar rail, surrounded them, and laid hands on them in prayer. It was one small step toward healing. There was no guide for what to do next.

In the aftermath, we learned how a community can come together. Our suburban area lacks any civic center,

so we gathered at the park adjacent to the school. We continued to gather for prayer and mutual support on the anniversary for several years after the event. We have been forever changed to be a bit kinder and more connected.

But we have also been changed, having to become more aware of what occurs around us. This is not an easy endeavor in our strangely connected

society. Especially in suburbia, we tend to live in our technological castles, with a driveway for a moat and a garage door for a drawbridge. Most people cannot name all of their immediate neighbors, but we connect online. One can have 600 Facebook friends and none in the neighborhood. We have lost the era of extended families living in proximity, of neighborhoods functioning as a form of family.

Without those societal webs, it is so easy for individuals to fall through the cracks. Since Columbine, there have been 25 school shootings with fatalities and 208 school shootings overall. I recently spoke with our local public safety officer, who remarked that his son, on patrol duty for the last two years, has witnessed a further unraveling of the fabric of society in just that time: less civility on the roads, marked by more road rage, impatience, and rudeness.

What can faithful Christians do?

Pray: First, keep praying for the victims and their families, and for all responders and those who follow up. We funded help for county workers who were providing support to the victims' families but had no support system for their own grief. Their grief does not fade with the headlines.

Remember: St. Anna's Church in New Orleans lists all victims of violence in the city going back many years. Perhaps we could use a poster that, like *The New York Times* (bit.ly/GunsByDots), documents gunshot victims through growing clusters of dots. I would place the title "Lord, Have Mercy" at the top, and "Please, No More" at the bottom. Colorado produced a license plate with a columbine flower and the words *Respect Life*. I remember every time I drive my car. There are various means to help us remember and keep strong in prayer. Be creative.

Triage: There's been much talk about gun control. For the life of me, I cannot see any reason a person needs a rapid-fire rifle. I think control of automatic weapons may be a much-needed bandage. Most bandages protect a wound while it heals but do not heal the wound. Or consider home-security



Pixabay/FunkyFocus art

Especially in suburbia, we tend to live in our technological castles. Most people cannot name all of their immediate neighbors, but we connect online.

cameras. They provide some feeling of security, but they do not address underlying issues of safety in our society.

Love: Prayer, remembrance, and triage help us cope and help us find our bearings amid violent tragedy. But they do not reach the hearts of those who treat other people as less than human. God created us to be in healthy, life-giving relationship. Perhaps the call of Christ hearkens back to the first followers of the Way and the observation of outsiders: "See those Christians, how they love."

After Columbine, it seemed that everyone here was greeting one another — friend and stranger alike — with a genuine, eye-to-eye, "How are you doing?" This continued for many years, but we appear to have returned to the retreat of our privacy in public. How much would our culture benefit if we greet each other with a sincere inquiry about our neighbor's well-being?

Perhaps in Christ we need to reweave

the social fabric, to advocate and create means of helping neighbors connect face-to-face (not just on Nextdoor.com). Alan Roxborough's "Moving Back into the Neighborhood" workshop is one such option. We are learning from this concept to emerge from our castles and meet face-to-face with our immediate neighbors up and down the street, come to know them, and learn what is on their hearts. It's not about recruiting members; it's about forging meaningful connections.

It was the love of Christians for all that has been the glue for many peoples throughout history. "This is modern America," some may say. Against such resignation we find our gauntlet: to help change our society one neighborhood at a time, in order to keep one more person from falling through the cracks.

The Rev. Todd Sorensen is rector of St. Gregory's Church in Littleton, Colorado, a position he has held since 1990.



Mike and Coke LaFontaine help lead Dakota hymns on Christmas Eve.

Matthew Townsend photos

From Hopelessness to Hope

Matthew Townsend concludes his report from South Dakota's Sisseton Mission.

The historical trauma from forced assimilation has made relations between native Christians and those who follow the traditional Dakota religion — which has seen a resurgence in recent years — more tense. Flute said people who do not attend church are likely to cite the abuses of the past as reasons to avoid Christianity.

“For my part, I’ve been around a lot of the traditionalists,” Sylvana Flute of Gethsemane Church in Sisseton. She participated in the protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock, and there she participated in prayer walks and smudging, she said. “I take part in those, but I also pray to God and Jesus as we’re walking.”

Flute grew up at St. John’s Church and recalls seeing a busy Ladies Aid (now Episcopal Church Women) group and a thriving church. “We don’t have that anymore,” she said. “We just lost a lot of things.” Flute left the church for a while but ended up returning by way of Gethsemane. She credits the Rev. Charley Chan’s accessible preaching. “He explained things,” she said. “It’s not like some pastors or preachers who go right off

the Bible. Fr. Chan applies it to daily life.”

A consistent concern among many Episcopalians in the Sisseton Mission: efforts to blend Episcopal liturgy with traditional Dakotan worship. While they may seem well-meaning efforts, Flute said seeing Christians use a chanunpa pipe or traditionalists using Christian prayers in Dakota is just confusing. Chan said such efforts have often left both groups feeling hurt.

She added that younger people sometimes accuse indigenous Christians of practicing a colonial religion. “I hear the word colonized a lot,” she said. “*Oh, you’re the colonized Indian.* Especially from the younger generation, coming from Standing Rock.”

Flute said this accusation is also confusing. “We can’t go back to what we were. We can’t,” she said. And while a thirst exists to return to the land, few natives, Christian or traditionalist, are doing that. Grace Frazier said only the nearby Hutterite colony qualified.

For Dakota Episcopalians, returning to tradition means returning to the tradition of the great-grandparents who founded the churches and are buried in the

churched. It means going to church.

"I've returned to church and returned to my Christian beliefs, how I was raised," Mike LaFontaine said. "We're all Dakota. To say you're traditional — I don't know what that means anymore. We were raised as Dakotas. We hunted, fished, gathered, prepared for winter by canning foods, learned to survive winter without much money, but also sharing and helping others.

"I remember as a child, a lot of people would come to my mother's house and need a little help with something. She was always giving; they would try to pay, but she wouldn't accept even a quarter for some sugar or some coffee. To me, that's being Dakota. That's also being traditional."

LaFontaine, like other Episcopalians among the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (SWO), expresses a respectful attitude to his friends, family, and fellow tribal members who pursue traditional Dakota worship. "As long as it's helping him to stay on a certain path," he said. "If it helps others, power to them."

Bonnie Bellonger, wife of Norbit Bellonger and treasurer at St. Mary's, Old Agency, takes a similar tack. "I have a grandson that's into that. He's a sun dancer," she told TLC. "I keep asking him questions; why do you do this, why do you do that. I don't understand their way of doing those things, but I'm just there to support him."

The growth of traditional worship — combined with old wounds from the church's role in boarding schools, scores of people battling addiction, and modern distractions like video games — has put the primarily native churches of the Sisseton Mission in a difficult position. Elder parishioners spoke of going to full churches as children because that was the tradition on the reservation; everyone attended.

Valorie Auguston said she remembered going to Ladies Aid meetings on Thursday to find the church's women making quilts together. "They'd all be sitting around, sewing. They'd be laughing and talking in Dakota," she said. "Usually, it was about their husbands and the crazy things they did."

Now a grandmother raising her grandchildren after her daughter suffered a fatal heart attack, Auguston described the church of her youth as place to come and learn about God, to play together, to sing together.

Donna O'Riley of Enemy Swim mentioned the same memories. "I can still close my eyes and remember how this was," she told TLC. "I could see all the women there, over there in the little kitchen, cooking. And the stove was in the middle, burning. And you had the men sitting on the other side. Everybody would sit there, talk, and they'd laugh, and it was just full all the time."

She said she was thankful to her grandparents for being involved in the church. Her grandfather turned away from drinking and toward God when she was very young.

"He joined the church, and he and my grandmother were very active in the church. That's how I remember



A young member of the Sisseton Mission

them: going to church," she said. "The whole life of everybody was the church. Maybe somebody had a radio, but otherwise nobody had anything. So, we all had about the same thing. Everybody shared, everybody made sure we all got to church."

O'Riley said the elders' great-grandparents all started the churches, but now, "it's whittled down to nothing."

"I don't really know what happened that people won't come anymore," she said. "We've tried different things, we've asked people why they don't come to church. Nobody wants to say they belong to this church. What they do say, when they pass away, is that they all want to be buried here."

This is a consistent refrain among the native congregations of the mission: funerals are packed to the rafters. They are often held in community centers because hundreds may show for a wake and funeral. Flute said that many on the reservation wish to be buried in the Christian cemeteries because their relatives are there. In a sense, a large number of SWO Dakotas are Episcopalians, but this is only apparent at funerals. Chan said with laughter, "I say they're born Dakota, live traditional, and die Episcopalian."

Most churches in the Sisseton Mission are composed of a few extended families. This brings large turnouts for funerals and Christmas, but it does not translate into healthy numbers on Sunday: attendance might range from a half-dozen to 30, depending on the church and the day. Churches are primarily composed

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From Hopelessness to Hope

(Continued from previous page)

of elders and their grandchildren, not unlike Episcopal congregations throughout America. Those between ages 30 and 60 are more conspicuously absent, though younger people are entering leadership. Rachele Crawford and Jaime White Thunder were named co-chairs of the Sisseton Mission last year. Both are under 30 and are the youngest co-chairs ever. Younger families, like that of Sam Crawford and Sylvana Flute, also attend; and the niece and nephew of the Bellongers have started bringing their children to church in Old Agency. They presented children for baptism on Christmas Eve — two of several baptized that Christmas within the mission.

Just outside of the reservation, St. Mary's Church in Webster finds itself struggling to grow. St. Mary's is not part of the Niobrara Convocation. While it has been a mixed church, over the years, its leadership historically has been and currently is white. Unlike the native congregations within the mission, the church is not composed of families: among its five stalwart worshippers are three different families. Monte and Fran Rougemont, Stanley Lorenz, James Kurkowski, and Marcia Lefman all worship at St. Mary's, keep the doors open, and replace the lightbulbs when they have gone out. White and gray hairs are common among them. All others who attend, including Dakota children who were baptized at Christmas, are from different families altogether.

St. Mary's was taken into the Sisseton Mission when Chan first arrived in the Dakotas.

"We wouldn't even be a part of the Sisseton Mission if it wasn't for Fr. Chan," Monte Rougemont, senior warden, told TLC. "Fr. Chan is the one that went to bat for St. Mary's and said, 'We need to bring them into the Sisseton Mission so they have priest coverage.'"

Having coverage from Chan, the Rev. George E. Parmeter, and the the Rev. Conrad Ciesel, and the Rev. Deacon Bitsey Ciesel, however, does not equate to having a full-time priest living in the community; all live at least 40 miles away. The last time a full-time Episcopal priest lived in Webster was 1982, Rougemont said.

"We love each one of those men and the sacrifices that they give to come out and to serve us and to worship here and to provide the Eucharist." On the flip side, though, St. Mary's finds itself struggling to connect with the town, and in spite of sound maintenance and weekly worship, the building has a reputation for being empty. "We have more people that come to us and say, 'Oh you're still open.'"

James Kurkowski shared a story of replacing an exterior light at the church. "The first week that was on, I had no less than three different people say, 'Gee I didn't even know that church was open.'"

As with the reservation, some people who attended



Fr. Chan

through high school and have stayed in town just stopped going to church, Fran Rougemont said. Some have joined a nearby nondenominational church, which specializes in helping people who suffer from common rural problems like addiction and incarceration.

"This parish is shrinking, more and more and more," said Lefman, who is married to Kurkowski. "It doesn't seem like there's anything being done, diocese-wise, to change that."

St. Mary's leadership said they have struggled to find resources within the diocese and the wider church to help a rural church of five dedicated people. Monte Rougemont said a recent diocesan retreat seemed to promise training for lay readers in mission fields like Webster. Instead, parishioners found themselves in a spiritual workshop. "The meeting was fine, especially if you were familiar with [Alcoholics Anonymous]. Because almost all of the conversation that day was very much a structured AA meeting."

The parish has tried a few things, included a three-month study group. Advertising was limited, however, and newcomers did not show. The parish has found that programs made for elsewhere have not scaled up.

"This is something I wish the national church would address," Parmeter said of St. Mary's situation. "In the rural areas, we do have a different situation than what you find in the urban and suburban."

Chan said canons that serve the church well on the

East Coast tend to break down west of Chicago. Parmeter agreed. “You go west of Chicago, and it’s like the ‘dark continent of Africa.’ You don’t really know what’s there, and the rules that exist in the populated areas don’t apply, and oftentimes don’t work,” he said. “And so we as congregations and clergy have been forced to become more creative and more adaptive than you would expect in many places in order to comply with the expectations of the church at large.”

Monte Rougemont said the local nondenominational church has grown precisely because it does not need to worry about numbers and other common concerns within the Episcopal Church. “I don’t think they’re worried about numbers whatsoever. I think they came into existence by saying, ‘There are people in this community that are falling between the cracks. There are people in this community that are not getting their needs met. There are people in this community that have problems. What is it that we can do to minister to these people?’ It had nothing to do with statistics and recordkeeping or that kind of stuff. I think, maybe, we’ve lost our way on some of those kinds of things.”

Rougemont added that the election of Gene Robinson — and former Bishop Creighton Robertson’s vote in support of Robinson — also made life difficult for Episcopalians working in conservative communities like Webster.

Nevertheless, St. Mary’s challenges extend beyond Episcopal Church structures and politics. As members of a church on the edge of a reservation, parishioners have long enjoyed friendships and tight relationships with Dakotas both inside and outside of the church. Fran Rougemont mentioned two Dakota families that had recently attended church but then suddenly stopped. St. Mary’s leadership had been a part of their lives, feeling like family: going to children’s sporting events, socializing together, sharing warm hugs. Yet, as Chan pointed out, natives and whites place different limitations on relationships with people who are not family, meaning that St. Mary’s members may be unlikely to hear why those two families stopped attending church. That void has left parishioners feeling some grief and confusion.

Another challenge for St. Mary’s: being a crisis-free church in a mission and a diocese in which social problems outside and inside the church can be pressing.

“Native American congregations have very strong, legitimate problems. There are more issues than we could possibly address,” Monte Rougemont said. “So, a priest or a bishop comes to St. Mary’s and says, ‘I like coming here because there’s no crisis, no problem. This is easy.’”

Rougemont said this can create a sense that St. Mary’s — with its five exhausted members in a shrinking rural town and enough of an endowment to keep the bills paid but not to hire a priest — is toward the end of the line. “I want to be understood that we don’t

advocate taking one hour of resource or one dollar of resource from anything that is addressing meth addiction and suicide or abuse,” he said. “Those are really important issues. We don’t face some of those issues here. I don’t want anybody to think that we’re saying we want some of that.”

St. Mary’s is eager to do something — it just is not clear what that something is.

“Right now, we could run an ad in the paper,” Rougemont said. “But what would we advertise? We don’t have a Bible study, we don’t have a young people’s group, we don’t have a Sunday school, we don’t have a Bible school. What kinds of things can we say to this community that you’re missing out on that you could find joy and help here at St. Mary’s? What is it that St. Mary’s, the Episcopal Church here in Webster, has to offer the people here?”

Unsure of the answer, St. Mary’s handful of faithful are still coming.

“We’re just lucky that the five of us here do feel like *I’m here for a reason, I’m here for God*,” Lefman said. “I’m not here for anybody else. I’m here to thank him for everything.”

“If You Catch on to One”

Back on the reservation, members of the Sisseton Mission also wonder how their churches might grow. They feel needed in the community. Mike and Coke LaFontaine both sing in Dakota, and are called on to sing and pray at funerals and other events frequently.

“Though there’s only a few of us that attend regularly, we have church every Sunday,” Mike said. “Whether we have just a few in the church or 20 or 30 that will be attending, we’re still needed in the community.”

While church attendance is light, he said, many in the tribe seek help from the church when families cannot make ends meet or a loved one has died. “They want St. Mary’s help, and also the Episcopal Church to help when they’re in mourning, when they’re grieving,” he said.

To the LaFontaines, this means more than an opportunity to sing. It is a chance to share Scripture with people who may need it. As lay readers, he said, they try to explain readings in ways that are accessible to everyone.

“Whether people like it or not, they’re going to hear Scripture,” he said. “If we plant one seed, at least that one will receive the Word of God and accept it.”

Norbit Bellonger agreed. “We’ve got a granddaughter, she’s eight now. But she comes to church, and Coke and Mike — she learns from them,” he said. “She asks questions. Why? Why did they say that? So, we’ve got to explain it. And now she’s learning how to sing. She learned from these guys.”

“When we sing our hymns in Dakota, you can hear her,” Mike said. “She has a love for singing.”

Bellonger said that the LaFontaines were seeds themselves at one point. They taught themselves how to sing

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Jaime White Thunder (left) talks with Jamie German at St. John's, Brown's Valley.

(Continued from previous page)

in Dakota. "They didn't learn from the minister. I can witness to that, because I've seen it. And I've been here quite a few years.

"They teach the little ones. Even one. That's all it takes: if you catch on to one."

Even for children less involved, Bonnie Bellonger said, there is benefit. "They're playing in church and they're still listening, and they're catching on."

Bruce DuMarce Sr. said that at 59 he is among those who are holding onto the church. He turned away from it in his teens and 20s but returned "because I remembered what it was like." He brings his son to church now; he exposes him to the traditional Dakota religion as well.

"I want him to have all the tools to make his own choice when he gets older," DuMarce said. "Right now, he's in the middle. He's into dancing. He's into singing Dakota songs.

"He's not into the religion part of it yet, because he doesn't understand that yet. But at least this way, he's got them both and he can make up his own mind."

Sam Crawford said he hopes the church will be there for his grandchildren. "For my part, I hope I can instill my beliefs, in the way I stand firm with the church and support it," he said. He also hopes his children feel comfortable with their Dakota ways, a part of their culture. Yet, church is also part of their tradition. "I want

them to know where they come from, that they continue to support the church."

At 29, Jamie White Thunder was among the Sisseton Mission's children not too long ago. The mission co-chair, a role she shares with Rachele Crawford, meets with the churches to help resolve conflicts and discuss new ideas for ministry, fundraising, and projects. They are also engaged, as are other parishioners, with trying to raise funds to host a future Niobrara Convocation meeting. White Thunder spends her time outside the church raising her six-year-old daughter Nadia and taking care of her grandmother. Crawford also has a full plate: she has a young son and is attending college, commuting a long distance so she can remain close to her family.

On Sundays, White Thunder attends St. John's in Brown's Valley, and she brings Nadia with her.

Not many of White Thunder's peers attend church. "I don't think they think church is cool," she said. "They don't want to come. I grew up in the church, so I like coming. Church, to me, is a feeling of home: it's a home where we pray and sing."

White Thunder is glad to see her daughter in church. She thinks Nadia will be an acolyte soon. Nadia already knows how to sing some songs and the Doxology in Dakota, she said.

"When I was little, the church used to be full of peo-

ple. But as we got older, they started disappearing,” she said. “I hope her generation will be the next to come and fill up the church again.”

“Just a Glimpse”

It is easy to think that life on the Lake Traverse Reservation is nothing but hopelessness. Parishioners asked me to not lose sight of the good: advancements in education, new tribal projects, faithfulness within the church, the joy of baptisms, the dignity of Dakota funerals, the people who turn to recovery, and family members who look after each other no matter what the cost.

I enjoyed many hours in conversation with Fr. Chan, who first invited me to the reservation, but I have chosen to limit his remarks and contributions because I believe that the story of the Sisseton Mission lies among its members, not its clergy. Chan was adamant in spite of the hopelessness that exists on the reservation, and the pain that is perceived by the outside world, that hope and joy are abundant and visible: in the way that Jaime White Thunder and Rachelle Crawford look after the families while taking on greater responsibility in the church; in the way that hospitality is a rule rather than an exception; in the humor that is ingrained into daily life; and in the fact that faithful people continue to preach hope in Christ Jesus.

“All these drugs, abuse, depression, all this stuff — if you just look at it, yes, it’s all negative. But if you cut through all the madness, you will find beautiful people here. The humbleness. The simplicity — in a positive sense, not being naïve. And the way they treat each other with generosity. People are nice people here, good people, but they are trapped in a very negative environment,” Chan told me. He said that people worry a great deal about protecting the natural environment but overlook the atmosphere of injustice that a people like the Dakota must endure. “How about getting rid of all that pollution and let these people live a normal life?” For his part, Chan helped start a scholarship fund to help students pay for college tuition, which has helped the mission’s youth pursue studies on and off the reservation. Parishioners have raised money for the fund by selling bratwursts and quilts.

Indeed, the people are generous and good. My wife and I were hosted by Jamie German, a member of the tribe and an Episcopalian, during our stay in September. We shared meals, our interior lives, our woes, and our hopes. Jamie helped us understand everything that seemed mysterious and was deeply patient with ceaseless questions. By the end of our stay, we mutually confessed that we suffered great trepidation about the month of December — strangers in her house, and us living with a stranger — but we praised God for working it all out in the end.

There is something, as Coke LaFontaine put it when I met with the congregation in Old Agency, to Indian values. “Nothing against Wasi’chus,” he said, using Dakota slang for white people. “When we go to hospi-

tals, we stay there if we have someone sick or soon to pass. We stay with them 24/7. “We’ve done it with our grandmothers, and I’m sure our grandmothers did that with their relatives. It’s just passed on to us. We care for them until they’re gone.” LaFontaine said that he feels sorry for those left to suffer alone. That just isn’t the Dakota way.

I spoke with Fr. Les Campbell days before he died; his health had been failing for some time, but he was eager to speak with me about the life of the church — and of the Dakota way. His love of the church was clear as he spoke of holiday gatherings, St. James’ Good Friday cross walk, his world travels, and the sudden healing of a sick child. He said he greatly admired the Dakota approach to funerals. “When a person dies, the relatives go into mourning — and, in order to heal themselves, they sew blankets, they make potholders, they make everything just by hand. A year later, they have a giveaway — they give everything away,” Campbell said. Even when a family has nothing to give, they find a way to give.

This culture has brought people back to the reservation. A number of people I spoke with had left the reservation for places like Minneapolis, such as Coke LaFontaine and Valorie Augustson. Mike LaFontaine served in the Marines. But they came home — to a place where everybody knows each other, and the expectation is they’ll look after each other. The problems are real, but a layer of profound relationship exists in ways that are not easy to spot in other parts of America. And as people returned, so have some traditions: ECW has started sewing quilts again at St. James’.

For all of these reasons, Bishop John Tarrant suggested I ask readers to approach with a mind toward further exploration.

“It really is a story that can only be fully embraced when one comes out and listens,” he said. “The most divisive aspect of our culture is that we talk more than we listen. To fully appreciate Indian ministry, you really need to come out and listen. People will be surprised that if they come out, Natives will talk.

“It’s like a painting. You can paint a sunset, but it’s not the sunset. You need to experience the sunset. You can paint a scene of the prairie, but it’s not a prairie. Until you come and sit on a prairie and you listen and you smell and you’re present, you don’t fully understand.”

Tarrant said, “You might need to say that this [article] is a glimpse — this doesn’t explain anything. It’s just a glimpse.”

Those interested in making donations may send checks to: Sisseton Mission, 716 7th Ave W., Sisseton, SD 57262. Checks should include a memo for specific needs, such as propane and utility bills, and the Sisseton Mission scholarship fund. Large donations (more than \$1,000) should be sent through the Diocese of South Dakota via Bishop John Tarrant: jtarrant@episcopalchurchsd.org or 605.494.2020.

Polyphony of Life in the Diocese of Tennessee

By Clint Wilson

Recognizing the continuing theological diversity of this Church, and in the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee, in regard to same-sex marriage and the blessing of same-sex unions, and out of respect for the deeply held beliefs across the range of opinion, we, members of the 186th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee, respectfully request that as you, the Bishop and Deputies of the 79th General Convention, prayerfully consider the reauthorization of “Liturgical Resources I” for the next Triennium, you take in account the exclusion, competing convictions, and loss of community experienced by members of this Diocese under the current terms of authorization for the texts.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing from a German prison during World War II, used the phrase “polyphony of life” as a defiant cry against the narrow ideology surrounding him. Bonhoeffer believed the Church could be the Church by singing the same song in its polyphonic character and community, trusting in a unity rooted in Christ that was complex, diverse, and costly. Only a textured and hard-won unity reflects the song Christ cried out on the cross, the song sung by angels and archangels; the song also sung by Burundian Anglicans and American Episcopalians.

This is how we are trying to sing in the Diocese of Tennessee. In one sense, our resolution sings out the reality that we no longer know what to do, but we know this: we will respect the authority of our bishop and will not seek to go around him, for to do so means we cease to be *Episcopal*.

We decided to acknowledge the “exclusion, competing convictions, and loss of community” experienced by Christians across the theological spectrum in our diocese, and to admonish General Convention to keep all of us in mind as it discerns further legislation. The resolution says we are committed to honoring our bishop and his theologically principled push for humble unity.

On the General Resolutions Committee, we were of one mind that we must model a better way and refuse to fracture along the same fault lines of surrounding institutions, both ecclesial and secular.

The Episcopal Church is rooted in a big-tent ecclesiology. We must cherish and protect this with a fierce commitment and a true inclusivity, one that places all the baptized together under the cross, where we see each other as fellow pilgrims, where we sing the same song. We will model a better way.

We also wanted to recognize that the current canonical arrangement does not make everyone happy, and we trust that we have at this point arrived at our real work. As Wendell Berry writes in his essay “Poetry and Marriage: The Use of Old Forms”:

It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.

In his lecture “Why the Episcopal Church Needs World Anglicanism,” Presiding Bishop Michael Curry recalled these words of Martin Luther King Jr.: “We shall either learn to live together as brothers and sisters, or we will perish together as fools.” Curry added, “The choices are chaos ... or community.”

Following the lead of Bishop Curry, we in the Diocese of Tennessee have sought to choose community. We hope and pray to be a diocese that learns to listen before we legislate — because as King noted, legislating without changing hearts can lead to “arms that are together, but hearts that are apart.”

We must learn to live together and sing together. We are the church that must live now as we will live in the “life of the world to come,” determined by the eschatological reality that we are and will ultimately be a people “gathered from every tongue, tribe and nation, before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). We must become who we are, the body of Christ. God willing, we will not perish as fools, unless it is for the foolishness of the cross. In the polyphony of life, our rhythm may sometimes falter, our tense suspensions take too long to resolve. But we will still sing the same song — the song of Christ, in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

The Rev. Clint Wilson is associate rector for Christian faith and formation at St. George’s Church in Nashville.

Challenging the Consensus

Review by Stephen Platten

It is now more than 50 years since the publication of Joachim Jeremias's classic *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. Hence the publication of Brant Pitre's scholarly study is more than timely. Timely as it may be, its conclusions run against the overall scholarly consensus. Pitre argues for the historicity of the key passages that he examines; he also challenges the assumption that Jesus' declarations about his self-identity are interpolations of redactors or of the early Church. He questions the argument that Jesus never intended to found a community, that is, the Church.

His research is detailed throughout. He begins by analyzing the problems relating to Jesus and the Last Supper. These problems include historical plausibility and Jesus' self-understanding and eschatological teaching, particularly in relation to the Last Supper. He is rigorous in setting this within the background of first-century Judaism, and in this he gives due honor to the scholarship of both W.D. Davies and E.P. Sanders. Indeed, he uses Sanders's investigative methodology throughout. Sanders's method includes contextual plausibility within the Judaism of the time, coherence with other evidence about Jesus, and finally the plausibility of conclusions in relation to early Christianity. While accepting the basis of Sanders's methodology, he questions a number of its conclusions.

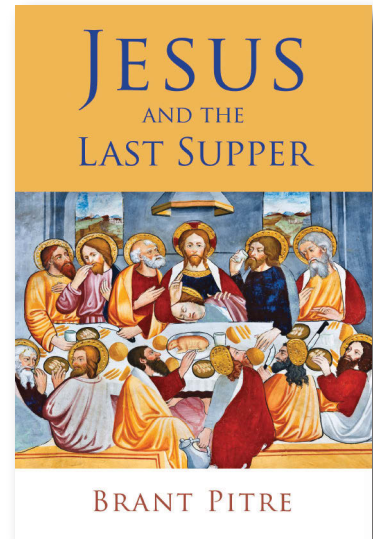
The overall analysis argues that Jesus sees himself as within the Israelite prophetic tradition. Jesus is the *new Moses*, the bread of life, and the *new manna*. Jewish expectations of a new

prophet, after the pattern of Moses, is the starting point for Jesus' understanding of the meaning of the Last Supper. In this, Pitre argues that Jesus' understanding of the eating of his body and the drinking of his blood is meant eschatologically: this then transcends the problem of the heretical drinking of blood within Judaism. In a section on the *new manna* there is a close analysis of the much-discussed Greek word *epiousios* within the Lord's Prayer, often translated as *daily* ("daily bread"). Again, an eschatological understanding is preferred.

Following these two chapters, Pitre moves to the issues raised by the differences of dating of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels and in John, focusing on the notion of a *new Passover*. He argues that the Supper was a Passover meal. Of the four chronological hypotheses he examines, he opts for a version of the *Passover hypothesis*. His analysis of the *words of institution* suggests that Jesus saw his death as a redemptive sacrifice and himself as the eschatological Passover Lamb effecting this.

Pitre's book is not for the faint-hearted. Throughout its 600 pages, his references to earlier scholarship are meticulous; on more than one occasion almost an entire page is a catalogue of footnotes. On this level alone the book is a tour de force.

One is left with two immediate questions. Even with such detail and care, can we assume that this individual thesis can overturn almost a century of biblical scholarship on both Jesus' self-understanding and on issues of historicity. It might be more realistic to assume that (rather in the pattern of J.A.T. Robinson's eccentric monograph



Jesus and the Last Supper

By Brant Pitre

Eerdmans. Pp. xiv + 590. \$40

The Priority of John), Pitre shows how we cannot be certain of earlier arguments and how, frequently, they are based on flimsy evidence: there has undoubtedly been a shift away from over-skeptical attitudes to historicity.

With advances in liturgical scholarship, it is regrettable that this remarkable analysis makes no real reference to how an integral study of the biblical and liturgical evidence should be understood. This is particularly important in understanding just how the Eucharist in the Early Church developed from its apostolic origins.

The Rt. Rev. Stephen Platten is chaplain of St. Martin-within-Ludgate, London.

Anglicanism's Revered Stylist

Review by Richard Kew

The martyr's death of Thomas Cranmer was in many respects the defining moment of his life. He had preached his last sermon in St. Mary Magdalen's Church, Oxford, on March 21, 1556, then was taken around the corner to the spot where Ridley and Latimer had been burned several months earlier. At the command of Queen Mary I, Henry VIII's Roman Catholic daughter, the Church of England had been returned to allegiance to Rome, and its erstwhile Archbishop of Canterbury was condemned as a traitor and heretic. As Leslie Williams puts it, "At his death Cranmer had no reason to believe his life's work would ever rise out of his body's ashes" (p. 152).

As he died, Cranmer appeared an utter failure, yet while Mary's name remains tainted, Cranmer's is still revered. Mary's unexpected death brought her sister to the throne, sealing the Elizabethan Settlement that drew heavily upon Cranmer's work and legacy. What he created shapes the way Anglicans believe, how we worship, and even the English language. Until recently Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer has shaped the

daily worship and rites of passage for generations, and while liturgical revision has been taking place in the last 50 years, Cranmer's work hovers prominently in the background.

Leslie Winfield Williams's perception and careful research bring Cranmer to life. Having digested the facts, environment, and circumstance of his life, she then paints a remarkable portrait of the man, his successes, and his failures. She reaches beyond ecclesiastical scholarship and introduces us afresh to this extraordinarily attractive figure. She enables her readers, however much Cranmer knowledge they might have, to meet the individual whose wit and wisdom set the trajectory and shaped the genius of Anglican Christianity.

The man to whom Leslie Williams introduces us is somewhat different than I had expected. Through all my previous reading I had developed the image of a strong personality, thrusting, canny, and self-assured. Yet Cranmer's prevailing characteristic seems to have been meekness. An assertive Type A personality would not have survived Henry VIII's personal tyranny. He had a brilliant mind, but Williams describes him as "a mild and unargumentative personality." Never prone to reach quick conclusions, he read, listened, and entered dialogue while digesting a whole array of viewpoints. Even when he reached conclusions, he held his views tentatively; thus his wavering when asked to recant his Reformed positions while on trial for his life.

Cranmer grew up in the quiet Nottinghamshire town of Aslockton and was educated at Cambridge. Unexpected circumstances brought him to the King's attention, leading to his being caught him up in Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn. As Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas More fell out of favor, Cranmer was drawn away from his scholarly life and eventually appointed as Henry VIII's ambassador to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor near Nuremberg.

The Old English Rule of Saint Benedict, with Related Old English

By **Saint Æthelwold** of Winchester.
Translated and introduced by **Jacob Riyeff**.
Cistercian Publications. Pp. 204. \$29.95

If translations are labors of love and care, then translations of translations are even more so. In this volume, Jacob Riyeff painstakingly reconstructs the translation of the Rule of St. Benedict by the 10th-century English monastic reformer, Æthelwold of Winchester. Part of the resurgence in Old English religious texts associated, most famously, with Alfred the Great's translation of the Pastoral Rule by Gregory the Great, Æthelwold had close ties to the court of King Edgar.

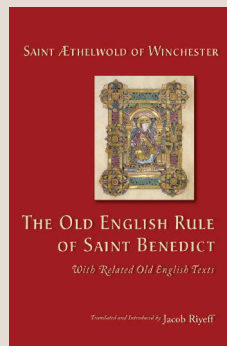
In 964, he would replace the secular canons of his cathedral church at Winchester with a community of monks under the rule. Æthelwold would be the teacher of Wulfstan, who would go on to write Æthelwold's *vita*, and the gorgeous Benedictional commissioned by him attests to the confidence and artistry of the school established at Winchester.

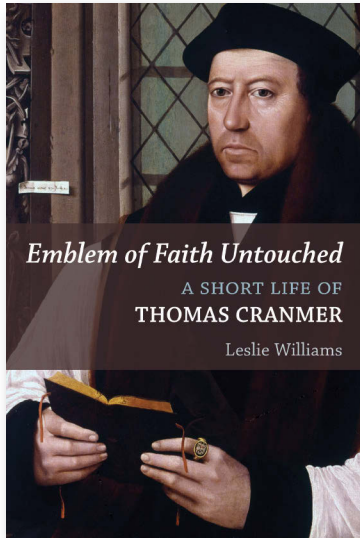
Scholars of monastic reform are

increasingly alert to the importance of local context in influencing the progress of change: monastic communities, inherently conservative societies, did not automatically adopt the Benedictine Rule without significant ecclesiastical and political pressure. Nor did early medieval thinkers slavishly copy and mindlessly apply the rule (even when there was a pure manuscript of the rule available; often there was not).

In Jacob Riyeff's impressive translation of Æthelwold's work, he shows how Æthelwold editorialized, paraphrased, underscored, and emphasized particular aspects of the rule within his translation, incorporating segments of the commentary on the rule by the Carolingian author Smaragdus of St. Mihiel. While this is scholarly work of the highest quality, Riyeff's translation is approachable and easy to use by the generally educated reader, and should prove fascinating to anyone with an interest not only in Benedict's Rule, but in how the rule has been read and interpreted across centuries.

Hannah W. Matis
Virginia Theological Seminary





Emblem of Faith Untouched

A Short Life of Thomas Cranmer

By Leslie Williams

Eerdmans. Pp. 208. \$18

When Archbishop William Wareham died, the King summoned Cranmer home. This was a call from which Cranmer shrank, not least because while in Germany he had married, something contrary to canon law back in England. In January 1533, “After lollygagging on his way home from the Continent, upon arrival in England Cranmer could no longer escape the inevitable” (p. 35). Anne Boleyn was now pregnant and Cranmer had a vital role to play.

For the next 20 years, Cranmer rode a precarious switchback, first dodging Henry VIII’s unpredictability, then leading the refashioning of the English Church from an independent Catholicism to an ecclesial entity with a more Protestant flavor during the reign of Edward VI. This was when Cranmer’s liturgical genius came to the fore, his two prayer books being the pillars of his enduring legacy.

In writing this life, Williams has sidestepped the temptation to smooth the rough edges of those times. English life was in a constant churn. Uncertainty hung in the air, with

strong personalities competing for dominance. Within the church two parties became bitterly opposed to one another, and their vitriol passed into many facets of social and political life. A revolution in everything but name was taking place. Mary acceded to the throne in 1553, and Cranmer was thrown from this bucking bronco.

As Williams tells Cranmer’s story, she traces the evolution of his theology and how it influenced his actions. His approach to Scripture and its place in the Church matured, and shaped his later action, just as the prayer books of 1549 and then 1552 illustrate his views of the Eucharist. What in 1549 was called the Mass became the Administration of the Lord’s Supper. Whatever our sacramental theology, it is hard to question this desire to apply the touchstone of Scripture to all facets of the Church’s life.

If his understanding of scriptural authority is relatively easy to grasp, it is Cranmer’s insistence on Royal Supremacy that baffles moderns. In his final Oxford sermon, Cranmer exhorted his congregation “to obey your king or queen willingly, without murmur or grudge — not for fear of God. Know that they are God’s ministers appointed by him to rule and govern you.” This conviction may be one key reason he never fell afoul of Henry, but the same conviction brought confusion when Mary ascended the throne.

This book is the work of a scholar who knows her subject and tells his story well. For her, Cranmer is not merely a historical figure but someone from whose life there is much to be gathered as we face contemporary challenges. “In the end, Cranmer held fast to the authority of the Bible, the early Church traditions, and his personal belief in Jesus Christ,” she writes (p. 153). “He stands at the stake, his hand in the flames; and over 450 years later he remains the symbol of a faith worth dying for.”

The Rev. Richard Kew is priest associate at St. George’s Church, Nashville.

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Liturgy of the Palms: Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16 • Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29

Liturgy of the Word: Isa. 50:4-9a • Ps. 31:9-16 • Phil. 2:5-11

Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 [40-47]

Passion

The Liturgy of the Palms and the Passion reading form a single dramatic story in which the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is presented against the backdrop of his eventual betrayal, Passion, and death. Those who cry, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” play their part in a horrible reversal. Looking to Jesus as he rides on the colt, the crowds feel a deep and ancient yearning for vindication. “Give us success!” tells the truth hidden in their burning hearts (Ps. 118:25).

The depth of this hoped-for victory corresponds to the depth of hate hurled at Jesus when he refuses to be co-opted by praise. Instead, he “succeeds” by doing the will of his Father, emptying himself, taking the form of a slave, humbling himself to death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). He becomes nothing, a nobody, a non-person, a victim exposed to human ridicule and the appetite of beasts. This is humanity’s final *no* to the anointed one of God. It is finished.

“Therefore God also highly exalted him and has given him the name that is above every name” (Phil. 2:9). The descent of Jesus into death on the hard wood of the cross — that is, a descent into hell — exposes the full significance of saying *the Word became flesh*. He took upon himself the beauty and brutality of human history. To do this, his death had to touch betrayal, abandonment, abuse, ridicule, agony, and horror. And yet, as the sinless Son of the Father, he bore this undeserved pain and death as a willing self-oblation of which his outstretched arms are a sign. The innocent Son of the Father dies at the hands of depraved human beings. This *no* to Christ the Lord did not, does not, and will not revoke God’s great *yes* to humanity given in Jesus Christ. God has exalted him, and raises, in love, his betrayers and tor-

mentors to create a holy Church.

On this solemn day, we feel what has been done to Jesus and what is being done to Jesus even now. The abuse of the least of these is an abuse of the Son of the Father. We have sometimes felt this abuse. We have sometimes been its perpetrators. All have sinned. All have sinned against the gift of God. All have sinned in some measure in this way, in these words, in this torrent of emotion: They put their hands on him, spat in his face, blindfold him, struck him, beat him, mocked him, crowned him with thorns, hung him on a tree, derided him, and taunted him. Still, Jesus did not withhold his love. He is the Father’s love revealed, the everlasting desire for the consummation of all things in God. To do this, Jesus went to hell for us that he might draw all things to heaven.

There is a small glimpse of hope in the space between his death and his resurrection. There are women who looked on from a distance, who followed him and provided for him in Galilee. We can be these women; we can feel their love. Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus. He took the body down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb (Mark 15:46). Jesus said, “This is my body.” We may hold him, we may weep, and we must wait. Even his dead body asks, “Do you love me?”

Look It Up

Read the Apostles Creed.

Think About It

He descended into hell.

Acts 10:34-43 or Isa. 25:6-9 • Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24
 1 Cor. 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43 • John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8

Proclaim

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not an explanation; it is not a proof spanning ten pages or 800 pages. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is a proclamation, an announcement, a decree that providence ordained and fulfilled in the New Adam, Jesus Christ, and then poured, by the power of the Spirit, into all believers in every nation who fear God and do what is acceptable to him (Acts 10:35). On this most solemn day, the chosen witnesses of the resurrection, the whole body of the Church, will not and must not attenuate its central claim or otherwise subject it to scrutiny in the hope of satisfying the cultured despisers of religion. This is the Church's life, its very being, the blood of its body, the marrow of its bone. *Alleluia. Christ is risen.*

Life begins at this moment, the moment when Christ is known and loved as the one who has conquered death. He is the brightness of a new life, a sacred flame, the Paschal lamb, the one who liberates from the gloom of sin, the destroyer of death and hell, the restorer of innocence, joy to those who mourn, the Morning Star that knows no setting (*Exsultet*). He became what we are, so that we might become what he is. We are sons and daughters of the resurrection, members of Christ's risen body. This announcement from God came to a group of frightened disciples as pure joy and pure gift. Even now, the resurrection is announced in the Church and takes root in receptive souls as a deep truth beyond all knowing. And yet, like Job, the Church says, *I know that my redeemer lives, I know that he stands upon the earth.* This knowing is inspired, given, and sustained by God. The Lord gives, and this one thing the Lord will not take away: the eternal life of the risen Son imputed to the Church and infused as its soul.

“Early on the first day of the week; while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the

stone had been removed from the tomb” (John 20:1). She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple. After hearing her report, Simon and the other disciple rushed to the tomb. They found it open and empty. They saw, and, in a manner, they believed. “On this holy mountain,” the prophet said, “the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever” (Isa. 25:6-8).

The prophet's promise is revealed in the empty space where Jesus was. The God for whom all ages waited has appeared and has saved from the grip of sin and death. “This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23).

We who know the risen Lord know him because his Spirit has been poured into us; we know him because he has called us by name, we know him because we eat and drink his new life in the Eucharist.

We know him as chosen witnesses. We did not choose him; he chose us. He went before us to our home and communities; he revealed himself and made the Church the sign of his risen life. *Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. He is going ahead of you, to meet you where you are.*

Look It Up

Read Psalm 118.

Think About It

Glad songs of victory.



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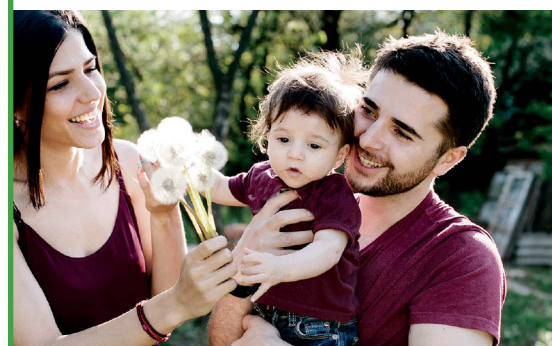
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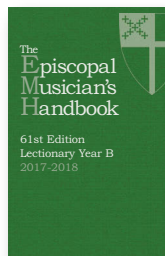
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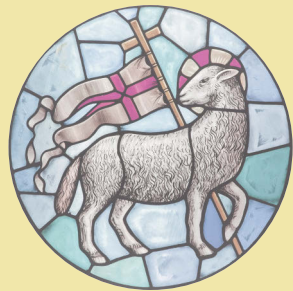
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