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THE LIVING CHURCH

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We are grateful to St. Peter's Church, St. Louis, and the Diocese of Virginia [p. 22], Church of the Transfiguration, Vail [p. 24], Church of the Incarnation, Dallas [p. 25], and Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue [p. 27], whose generous support helped make this issue possible.



ON THE COVER

"Perhaps for anyone who is a Christian, you might think this Christmas about inviting someone to come to church with you and find out a little more about Jesus" (see "Full-court Press for Christmas" p. 4).

Marcin Mazur/Lambeth Palace photo



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Members of the Community of St. Anselm celebrate the radiant launch of #FollowTheStar at Lambeth Palace.

Marcin Mazur/Lambeth Palace photos

Full-court Press for Christmas

The Church of England and partners raise awareness using digital and traditional efforts.

By Zachary Guiliano

Two bright spots in the 2017 Mission Statistics released this autumn by the Church of England's central office were an uptick in Christmas attendance and the broadening digital reach of church communications.

The communications team at Church House expanded its monthly digital outreach in 2017 to over 1.4 million and its focused seasonal campaigns for Christmas and Lent to 4 million. These and other efforts, like redesigns of the church's website, garnered five gold medals at the 2018 Digital Impact Awards, beating established entertainment companies like Warner Bros. and the global beverage conglomerate Diageo, as well as a variety of charities, NGOs, and other nonprofits.

"The Church is now digitally savvy," said the judges, "and explores new technologies — like Amazon's Alexa voice assistant — with ease."

The church seeks to build on those successes. #FollowTheStar is undoubtedly the centerpiece effort, announced Oct. 5 and launched with a splash at Lambeth Palace on Nov. 13. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, obviously enjoyed himself as he pushed a

giant red button, bathing the palace in blue light and giant stars.

"Christmas is going to be all kinds of things to all kinds of people," he said at the event. "For some it's a wonderful time — family, noise, friends, and fun. For others it's isolated, for others there are arguments, it just varies widely. #FollowTheStar is celebrating the fact that at the center of Christmas is Jesus — who brings joy, healing hope and love, whatever situation you are in — and inviting others to share in

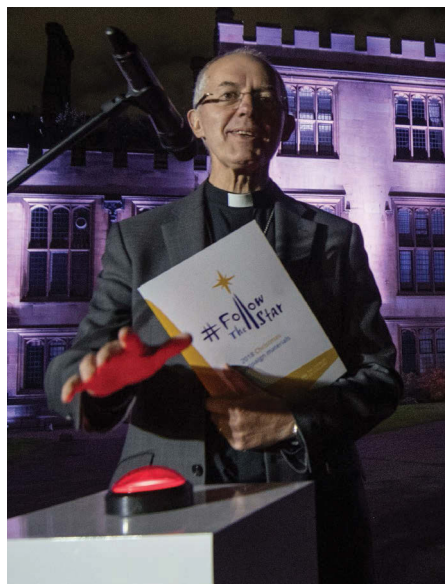
that love. Perhaps for anyone who is a Christian, you might think this Christmas about inviting someone to come to church with you and find out a little more about Jesus. Church and a meal would be even better."

The church has invested in various kinds of branded material supporting #FollowTheStar, including posters, Christmas cards, bookmarks, banners, and much else, paired with a 12 Days of Christmas devotional booklet written by the Archbishop of Canterbury's chaplain, the Rev. Isabelle Harmley. The booklet is available for bulk ordering, but will also be available for free through an email campaign and via Android and iOS apps.

Response has been considerable: at the beginning of December, Church House Publishing's website included a note that "phenomenal demand" for the booklet had already led to depleted stock, but new copies would be available the next week.

The campaign attracted national attention, including coverage on the BBC on several occasions in late November and a mention from MPs of both parties in the House of Commons on Nov. 29.

Various bishops and their communications teams are cooperating with the campaign. The Diocese of St. Albans



Abp. Welby prepares to turn on Lambeth's #FollowTheStar lights.

produced a humorous video featuring a beleaguered rookie vicar organizing a children's Nativity play. Within 48 hours, its tweet (bit.ly/StAlbansStar) had drawn 33,000 impressions and about 3,000 watched the full video.

As part of the campaign, Church House has updated its old tools and provided suggestions to help churches promote Christmas services. A Church Near You, a parish-finding site used by millions each year, especially on Christmas Eve, has been upgraded to take account of #FollowTheStar efforts. Those who update their site pages for Christmas services will see their parish bumped up in searches, which encourages participation for busy vicars looking to fill pews.

Parishes were invited to display stars prominently on or near their buildings for a "night of the stars" on Dec. 21.

Several other efforts have included the production of a variety of Advent calendar resources, focused on families and the visual heritage of the church. One available on the church's site (bit.ly/CofEAdvent2018) involves simple craft activities and prayers for parents and children, with a new one unlocked each day.

A more sophisticated project is aimed at adults. Theologian Jane Williams has published a set of seasonal reflections with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) as *The Art of Advent: A Painting a Day from Advent to Epiphany* as the Archbishop of York's Advent Book 2018. The production quality is high, and it is available for £7.99.

Portions are being released online each day on Abp. John Sentamu's website and social media accounts, and the book has been included in an abbreviated version for free in *A Good Advent*. This app, released by the Bishop of London and SPCK, includes Bishop Sarah Mullaly's booklet on Advent, as well as Williams's reflections, discussion questions, prayers, and biblical readings (including audio) for daily content.

The success of these various ventures will surely receive scrutiny in the coming year, given the commitment of resources and time. But there should be little doubt that the Church of England has awakened to the potential for creative methods of outreach this Christmas.

POSTCARD FROM LONDON

Following the Star

British churches see more interest in Christmas services, even as traditions wane.

By John Martin

Some English migrants to my native Australia celebrate a traditional Christmas-style dinner in July, the coolest month of the year. Out comes roast turkey and all the festive trimmings, followed by plum pudding. July is the closest they come to the winter weather of the Old Country.

Christmas in Australia is loaded with anomalies. As a boy I puzzled over carols like "See Amid the Winter's Snow." The same liturgical calendar operates in the south as the north, so early Christian missionaries to northern Europe could draw seasonal analogies between lengthening days and the coming of the light of Christ. Not so Down Under.

(Continued on next page)

Saint Francis
MINISTRIES

"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

May the blessing of the Christ Child be upon your home and upon every child on earth this Christmas.

Wishing you and your family peace and love during this holy season and into the New Year.

SaintFrancisMinistries.org

Following the Star

(continued from previous page)

Christmas did not fit any kind of seasonal rhythm.

When I came to England over three decades ago, I gradually began to see how the northern Christmas snugly fit the culture, creating opportunities for churches to catch the seasonal mood.

While Sunday worship attendance continues to edge lower, in line with long-term trends, in 2017 national attendance at Christmas services increased by 3.4 percent to 2.68 million. This is the fourth successive annual rise in Christmas congregations.

Christmas tastes are ever-changing. Up until 1963 it never seemed to occur to recording artists to produce special Christmas songs. At Christmas there were schmaltzy carols and easy-listening staples. Now Christmas songs are in hot competition, although they rarely mention the Christ child.

Tesco, the country's largest supermarket chain, reports that less than half of English families eat a traditional Christmas pudding. Research conducted by British Corner Shop, an online supermarket, found that a third of Brits will not hang a Christmas wreath on their door come December 25. One tradition that stands firm is how large numbers of Brits watch the Queen's Christmas Speech on television.

About 25 percent will not sit down to a Christmas dinner complete with traditional veggie sides including roasted potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and parsnips covered in a generous helping of gravy. And just 20 percent will have a real Christmas tree in their home this year.

Despite Brits increasingly hanging loose to Christmas traditions, everywhere carol services are jam-packed. For several years the *Evening Standard* has run a lengthy feature on "The Best 10 Carol Services" in London.

ComRes research says 92 percent of British adults are aware of Advent, and 39 percent expect to do something to celebrate it. Of the options tested, the survey showed that Advent calendars



A moment in starlight at Lambeth Palace

are the most popular way of marking the season, with 30 percent of adults (37% of women and 22% of men) expecting to use one. Twelve percent of respondents expect to attend a church or Carol service during Advent, 7 percent expect to pray, 2 percent expect to read an Advent book, and 3 percent expect to mark Advent in some other way.

Our parish goes to a lot of trouble to stage memorable events. For our carol service, we hire a brass ensemble. We distribute personal invitation cards (conversations with my Hindu dentist about religion prompted me to add him to my list).

What is amazing is that people we see just once a year dig deep into their wallets and give generously. Carol Services are not our only bill of fare. A Christingle that originated in South America is another well-attended event. We offer Christmas Dinner in the church hall. In attendance last year was a local Member of Parliament who is a Muslim. Later in the day there will be a Crib Service for small children and their parents.

For the first time in my memory, the national church has launched a campaign drawing attention to the season. It is encouraging parishes to sign up for #FollowTheStar.

The project comes with the endorsement of Archbishops Justin Welby and John Sentamu. They write, "For many of us, Christmas brings up so many emotions, memories and expectations.

We have one nativity story, but it can seem like we all have very different Christmases."

They observe that plenty of people "can find it a sad and lonely time — nagged by the feeling that your Christmas is not like those 'perfect' ones we see in the media. But just like the unexpected assortment of people who were invited to meet the baby Jesus, #FollowTheStar doesn't ask you to be perfect.

"It says: come just as you are to take the life-changing Christmas journey. Wherever you are this Christmas, you are invited to follow the star and to be with Jesus. You are welcome. You are deeply known and truly loved." #FollowTheStar represents a game-changer by the C of E.

Up until recently there were no serious resources invested in the Christmas season. One bright spot, however, was a low-cost advertising campaign cobbled together by some diocesan communications officers, enticing more worshipers to church during the festive period.

These ads depended on media outlets picking them up as news stories, thus multiplying their influence. One memorable ad zoomed around a church congregation to a jazz-funk version of "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." Captions reveal failings in all of the worshipers — such as drink, jail, and abortion — and the commercial ends with this line: "You don't have to be perfect to go to church this Christmas."

Here Comes St. Nicholas

A center in Michigan helps the life story of a saint be heard above sleigh bells' jingle jangle.

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

When children write to Santa, they address letters to the North Pole. But when time comes to teach them about the real St. Nicholas, who loved children and gave gifts in secret, queries from across the globe lead to an elf-free workshop at the home of Carol Myers in Holland, Mich.

There Myers, age 75 and a member of Grace Episcopal Church, runs the St. Nicholas Center. It is a virtual center: a website for all things related to Nicholas, the fourth-century Bishop of Myra whose generous ways and devotion to Christ created a number of today's beloved Christmas traditions. Displaying gold ornaments, hanging stockings, putting out shoes, and hiding a single orange are among the yuletide customs traced to the saint's life.

Myers does the research, writes the prose, and codes the HTML. When orders arrive for St. Nick cards, kits, or figurines, she scurries to find them in her attic. Then she carries them down two flights of stairs for shipping across the United States and internationally.

The center is a nonprofit ministry that requires attention and energy every day, she said, but it is worth it.

"In this country, it's the church taking back its own," Myers said. "St. Nicholas belongs to the church. And St. Nicholas can speak. It's bringing the sacred back into the holiday and not letting it get too secular."

Established in the early 2000s with help from former Anglican Communion spokesman Jim Rosenthal, the center has become a hub of ecumenical resources. They are used largely among Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglicans who mark saints' days, and in a few Baptist and Reformed settings, Myers said.

Shop sales and donations help cover costs. The site often offers free guidance on how to teach about and celebrate the

real St. Nicholas. He is known as patron saint of sailors and pawnbrokers, yet his resolve to help the needy and defend those wrongly imprisoned resonates especially well today.

"He really is the patron saint of social justice," Myers said.

Myers relates to the craving for deeper insight that drives many of the million-plus who visit the site annually. She knows the challenge of trying to focus kids on Jesus' birth in a culture obsessed with Santa and consumption.

"It all started because, when our children were small, I wanted them to know there was a person of faith behind Santa Claus," Myers said.

Much of the center's work still involves children. For example, St. Augustine's Church in Rhinelander, Wis., has hosted activities using the center's kits and panels for children ages five through 10. Kids would stay busy making paper miter hats and other crafts.

"While children would be coloring their shoe, the story of the real Saint Nicholas was told," said Jackie Cody, a member of St. Augustine's, via email. "Parents enjoyed interpreting the panels for their children. It was a quiet time they could spend together in an otherwise very busy time."

As a one-person operation, the center will need new leadership when Myers eventually steps down.

"I'm at an age where I've got to figure out how to get out of this," Myers said. It would be difficult for someone to step into the organizational model, she said, because she does it as a volunteer ministry.

The center's traveling exhibit and lending library of kits will likely be sold, Myers said, but the website and shop will soon move to a more user-friendly platform. She expects that change will help position the ministry for a long-term future.



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"...for I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."

-Matthew 25.35



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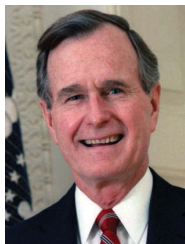
P.B. Honors President George H.W. Bush

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry wrote in tribute to George Herbert Walker Bush, 41st President of the United States, who died late in the evening on Nov. 30.

“With a grateful nation, and many around the world, we of the Episcopal Church give thanks to God, the source of life and love, for the life, the public and private witness of President George Herbert Walker Bush,” Curry said.

“Through his enduring commitment to public service and his steadfast devotion to his family, he lived the way of Jesus through a life shaped by faith, hope and, above all, love. Through his unswerving service to our country and to the human community around the globe, he embodied the noblest ideals of his faith and his country.”

Washington National Cathedral hosted a funeral for Bush on Dec. 5, and he was buried from his longtime home church, St. Martin’s in Houston.



Bush

Sauls Hearing Postponed

The latest hearing in the case of *Stacy F. Sauls v. the Episcopal Church*, filed with the New York Supreme Court in September 2017, has been postponed to Jan. 10.

Bishop Sauls, formerly the chief operating officer of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, was dismissed in April 2016. He filed suit against the church in February 2017 through a circuit court in Mobile, Ala. Mobile County 13th Judicial District Judge Ben Brooks dismissed that case in August 2017.

Sauls appealed the Alabama judge’s ruling, but he also filed a version of the lawsuit in New York.

Migration Ministry Continues in 2019

The Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has announced that Episcopal Migration Ministries, along with the other eight national agencies responsible for resettling refugees in the United States, has been awarded a contract to participate in the Reception and Placement Program for fiscal year 2019.

“We are thankful we will continue to

resettle refugees in the coming year,” said the Rev. Canon Charles K. Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond the Episcopal Church.

“We still face the challenge of transitioning to a much smaller resettlement program; this at a time when there are more than 25.4 million refugees, over half of whom are children. With everyone’s support, we will continue to welcome refugees to a place of safety and welcome.”

Office of Public Affairs

Americas Primates Elect Representatives

Archbishop Julio Murray has been elected as a regional primate on the Anglican Communion’s Primates’ Standing Committee and the Standing Committee of the Anglican



Murray

Consultative Council (ACC).

Archbishop Murray is primate of the Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de Americas (the Anglican Church in the Central America Region).

Presiding Bishop Greg Venables, primate of the Anglican Church of South America, was elected as his deputy. The primates elected their colleagues during a regional Primates’ Meeting of the Anglican Church in the Americas and Caribbean in Toronto.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church asked that he not be considered for the vacancy, saying that his election to the Standing Committee might cause “consternation in parts of the Communion.”

In January 2016 the primates of the Anglican Communion had asked that representatives of the Episcopal Church be excluded from certain decision-making posts within the Communion as a consequence of its decision to celebrate same-sex marriages.

Archbishop Frederick Hiltz of Canada, whose province is considering same-sex marriage, also asked that he not be considered.

Adapted from ACNS

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Diocese of Texas Nominates Three

The Diocese of Texas has nominated three priests from within the diocese in its search for a new suffragan bishop. The nominees are the Rev. Hannah E. Atkins Romero, rector of Trinity Church, Houston; the Rev. Canon Glenice Robinson-Como, canon missionary for outreach and justice ministries at Christ Church Cathedral, Houston; and the Rev. Canon Kathryn (Kai) Ryan, canon to the ordinary and chief operating officer, Diocese of Texas.

Consecration in Haiti Postponed

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry has postponed the consecration of the Bishop Coadjutor of Haiti, which had been scheduled for Jan. 5.

Curry wrote that as of Dec. 5 “a majority of bishops with jurisdiction in the Episcopal Church have not yet consented to the ordination and consecration of the Venerable Joseph Kerwin Delicat as the Bishop Coadjutor of Haiti. In order to help those across the Church in making travel and other plans, please know that I am postponing the previously scheduled ordination and consecration to a date to be determined.”

Bishops and standing committees have until Jan. 3 to give or withhold consent to Delicat’s election.

New Churches Set for Austin, Houston

A vision to establish more church plants in the Diocese of Texas by the end of 2020 now has two additional clergy answering the call.

“The Diocese of Texas has an annual goal of planting three new congregations each year,” said the Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle, Bishop of Texas. “I am so excited and proud to join the staff and others in celebrating the call of the Rev. Brin Bon, who will plant a church

(Continued on next page)

‘An astonishing tour de force’, ... ‘a riveting journey’..., ‘...a brilliant theatrical and inspirational experience’... *Solange DeSantis, Episcopal Journal*

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The Rt. Rev. Daniel Martins, Springfield

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Dudley Ladd, Sr. Warden, Christ Church, Dark Harbor ME

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The Rev. Maryann Mello, Diocese of RI

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Amanda Hobart, St. Alban’s, Washington DC



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Church Plants

(Continued from previous page)

in Austin, and the Rev. Carissa Baldwin-McGinnis, who will plant a church in Houston.”

The Rev. Carissa Baldwin-McGinnis, part-time associate rector at St. Andrew’s, Houston, has started in her new role as church planter, working on establishing a community in Northeast Houston. She will take on the work full time in 2019.

Bon, most recently an associate rector of St. Michael’s, Austin, is now vicar of a church plant in Central-South Austin. Bon has started a blog documenting her progress as a church planter.

*Carol E. Barnwell,
Diocese of Texas*



Baldwin-McGinnis



Bon

W. Tenn. Diocese Chooses Va. Rector

The Rev. Phoebe Roaf was elected on the first ballot as the fourth Bishop of West Tennessee. Roaf, rector of St. Philip’s Church in Richmond, Va., since 2011, won among both clergy and laity by four votes more than the required majority.

She is a graduate of Harvard College, Princeton University, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s William H. Bowen School of Law, and Virginia Theological Seminary.

The other nominees were the Rev. Marian Dulaney Fortner, rector of Trinity Church in Hattiesburg, Miss., and the Rev. Sarah D. Hollar, rector of St. Mark’s Church in Huntersville, N.C.

Bishop of Oklahoma Announces Retirement

The Rt. Rev. Edward J. Konieczny, Bishop of Oklahoma, has announced his in-

attention to retire in January 2021.

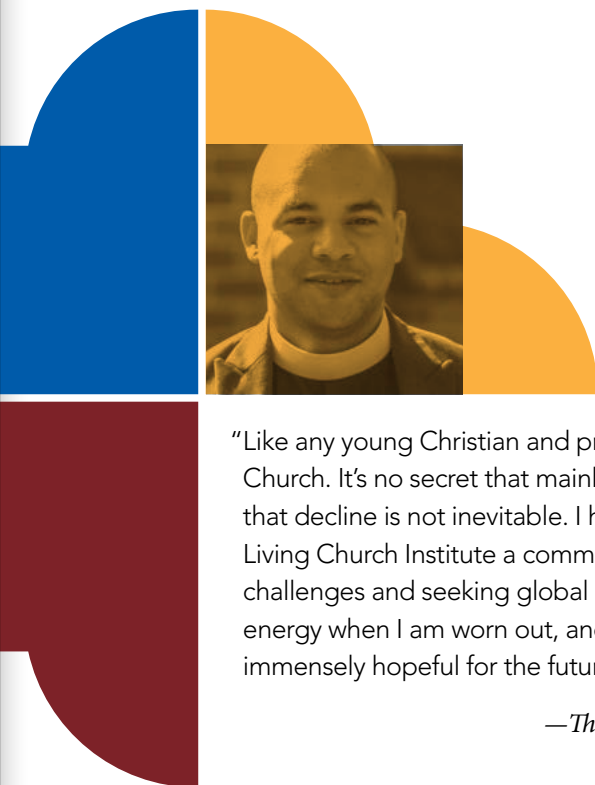


Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has scheduled consecration of a bishop coadjutor for April 18, 2020, Konieczny said. He said the timing would allow for overlap during the transition. In addition, the new bishop would be able to attend the next Lambeth Conference, set for July 2020.

“Given the relationships we share with the larger Anglican Church, I believe it is important for our new bishop to attend this conference,” he said.

St. Louis Provost Advances to Dean

The Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, elected the Very Rev. Kathie Adams-Shepherd to the position of cathedral dean on Nov. 15.

Adams-Shepherd was called in 2016 to be the cathedral’s provost, “a title indicating that neither party was yet ready to make a long-term commitment,” said Jeff Goldone and Mary Karr, wardens of the cathedral. She started in Jan. 2017.

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“Like any young Christian and priest, I have a mixture of hopes and fears for the future of the Church. It’s no secret that mainline churches are in decline. A better kept secret, perhaps, is that decline is not inevitable. I have found in *The Living Church*, its *Covenant* blog, and the Living Church Institute a community of Christians working to build up the Church, meeting local challenges and seeking global unity. They are a source of encouragement when I am disappointed, energy when I am worn out, and inspiration when I have trouble seeing a way forward. I am immensely hopeful for the future of Anglicanism, due especially to the ministry of TLC.”

—The Rev. Dr. Matthew Burdette, curate, Church of the Good Shepherd, Dallas

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“Following what might be described as a tryout period, Dean Adams-Shepherd endeared herself to the Cathedral’s parishioners and vice versa,” the wardens said.

Christ Church Cathedral

Seminaries Launch ‘TryTank’ Growth Lab

General Theological Seminary and Virginia Theological Seminary are together launching TryTank: An Experimental Laboratory for Church Growth and Innovation.

The schools have called the Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija of Los Angeles, an alumnus of General Theological Seminary, as founding director.

TryTank will seek to understand the forces threatening the church and identify creative ways to equip future leaders to reinvigorate the church.

Welby: ‘Daily Threat of Murder’ for Syrians

Middle Eastern Christians are on the brink of “imminent extinction,” the Archbishop of Canterbury has warned.

Writing in *The Daily Telegraph* ahead of a Westminster Abbey service to celebrate the contribution of Christians in the region, he said Christians face a “daily threat of murder.”

In the last few years, he said, they have been slaughtered by Islamic State, and in many countries they are squeezed between the upper and lower millstones of pressure within society and of conflicts that afflict the region.

Many have left, he said. Many have been killed, enslaved, persecuted, or converted.

In Iraq there are now less half the number of Christians there compared to 2003. Many of their churches, houses, and businesses have been damaged or destroyed. The Syrian Christian population has decreased by half since 2010.

Welby said we should not ask Syrian Christians to choose between President Assad, “under whom they were tolerated,” and “the unimaginable horrors and threats of so-called Islamic State.”

John Martin



Rendering of All Souls Church

Warren and Mahoney Architects image

Christchurch’s Post-quake Parish

A new “church from scratch” built after the earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, will be consecrated early next year. The members of All Souls Church began using their new building on the parish’s feast day in early November, and the Bishop-elect Peter Carrell dedicated the church Nov. 3.

Carrell will return to the church early in 2019 with Archbishop Philip Richardson, who will consecrate the building. He said the members of All Souls worshiped in halls, other churches, school buildings, and marquees as they waited for their new home.

The Rev. Megan Herles-Mooar, vicar of St. Albans, said the beginning of worship in the new building as a milestone that signals hope and renewal for the whole community.

Julianne Clarke-Morris, via ACNS

Corrections

The Diocese of Eastern Michigan voted Oct. 27 to ask for its neighboring diocese’s consent for the Rt. Rev. Wayne Hougland Jr. to serve as provisional bishop of the eastern diocese while remaining Bishop of Western Michigan (“Michigan Dioceses Move Closer,” Nov. 18). Episcopalians in Western Michigan will discuss the proposal in three workshops scheduled for February and March.

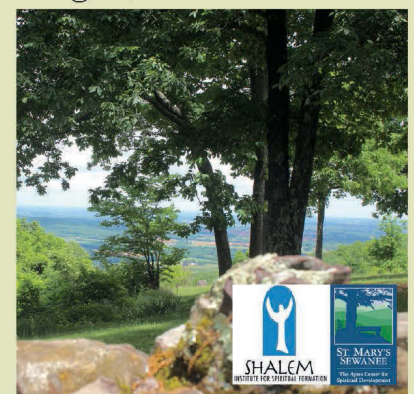
The Soul of Leadership

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Soul of Leadership is offered in partnership by the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and St. Mary’s Sewanee: The Ayres Center for Spiritual Development. Applications are being accepted now for the April 2019 cohort.

For more information or to apply go to <www.StMarysSewanee.org>





'In the Beginning'

Apollo 8 at 50

Earthrise, taken as Apollo 8 orbited the moon

Bill Anders/NASA photo

By Mark W. Ohlemeier

On Christmas Eve in 1968, three American astronauts became the first human beings to travel to another world. The Apollo 8 crew — Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders — had made the quarter-million-mile journey from Earth to the moon, a hazardous voyage through the deadly vacuum of space. Even though this mission would be overshadowed seven months later by the first manned moon landing, the flight of Apollo 8 was a remarkable technological achievement. And it was made even more memorable by the way in which the crew decided to mark this historic event.



Lovell, Anders, and Borman at Kennedy Space Center

NASA photo

The astronauts wanted to do something special during their live television broadcast from lunar orbit, and had been contemplating it for weeks before the mission. They considered several different ideas, such as rewriting the words to “Jingle Bells” or “’Twas the Night before Christmas” with a

space-moon theme, but those ideas did not seem to fit the occasion. They attempted to draft a message of world peace, but everything they came up with seemed hollow. Just a few days before launch, however, they knew that their dilemma was solved thanks to a suggestion made by a friend of the crew.

As the Apollo 8 spacecraft circled the moon on that Christmas Eve, millions of people on Earth tuned in to witness the broadcast. The astronauts pointed out the contrast between the lifeless surface below them and the tiny blue orb outside their window that was home to all known life in the universe. Then, each man took a turn reading the first few verses from the Book of Genesis: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.” These mortal men, as they moved through the dark void of space, had an unprecedented view of creation and chose to mark the occasion by praising the work of the Creator.

The year 1968 was a troubled time in American history: the conflict in Vietnam was still raging; riots at the Democratic National Convention and elsewhere had caused millions in damage; and the country reeled from the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. But the mission of Apollo 8 and its message from the moon offered hope to a divided country and an uncertain world.

Fifty years later, while we too face conditions of national and global anxiety, we can reflect upon the mission of Apollo 8 as a time when the world came together as one, if only for a brief moment, as the crew wished for everyone: “Good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you — all of you on the *good* Earth.”

The Rev. Mark W. Ohlemeier is assistant rector at Christ Episcopal Church in Springfield, Missouri.

Boone Porter on Advent and Christmas

H. Boone Porter Jr. (1923-99) wrote these two short editorials during his first year as editor of THE LIVING CHURCH. Fr. Porter taught church history at Nashotah House from 1954 to 1960, and liturgics at the General Theological Seminary from 1960 to 1970. He served on the Standing Liturgical Commission from 1961 to 1976 and the General Board of Examining Chaplains from 1970 to 1982. He was a member of Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission, the Anglican Society, and the Alcuin Club, and concluded his TLC tenure in 1990.

—Richard Mammana

From *The Living Church*,
December 18, 1977, p. 13.

The End of Advent

Advent speaks first of Christ's future coming to judge the world at the end of history, secondly of his historic coming into our world two thousand years ago, and thirdly of his present coming into our hearts and lives. As the season comes to a close, the last two themes tend to attract all our attention. Indeed for many church people in the Anglican tradition, the first theme has hardly ever received attention, even though it is mentioned in both Creeds. For members of certain other Christian groups, on the other hand, Christ's final coming is a central element in their faith and piety.

One of the changes in spirituality in recent years has been a much wider attention to this very biblical theme of Christ's return. Many Episcopalians have been surprised to find themselves saying

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

A new aspect of the Eucharist comes to life when we think of it as a sign that we are waiting for the day of the Lord's return. To wait is a quite distinct kind of activity. It means recognizing that someone else is the prime mover or principal actor. It means admitting that we ourselves are in secondary roles, so secondary that we do not know

the time schedule. It means living in patience and hope. This is the spirit of much of the Bible, especially of the Psalms which are such a regular part of traditional public and private prayer. This is the spirit in which the New Testament speaks of breaking the bread and drinking the cup until the Lord comes.

This theme of Advent will not go out of season until the Lord has in fact come. All our lives will continue to be in Advent in this sense. Our time, Christian time, is always lived on the brink of eternity. Will history end with a nuclear holocaust, or the total desiccation of the environment, or in a dramatic supernatural event? We do not know. It could end in any one of many ways. In any case, mankind lives on borrowed time: history has no guaranteed survival clause. For Christians

the good life is the life of those who are always ready to greet the Lord. Are we?

Approaching Christmas

These last few days of frantic preparation for Christmas can be lots of fun, or frightfully hectic, or both. We would hope, however, that Christians would not be in quite such a hurry.

We hear people say they wish Christ were put back into Christmas. He is already there, but now, as at other times, we have to be willing to take time to see him.

By taking time for prayer and reflection we not only make it possible for us to have a deeper appreciation of this feast, but we enable ourselves to grow, so that we can become the kind of people who bear witness to others of the presence of Christ within us.



H. Boone Porter Jr. art

The Wonderful Incarnation



By Jordan Hillebert

The Church today is particularly skilled at transforming articles of faith into principles for action. Once-abstract theological concepts are now reinvigorated with pastoral insight and practical urgency. So, for instance, the divine *perichoresis* (the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is understood to encourage perichoretic communities marked by mutual love and empathy. Likewise, the *kenosis* (self-emptying of Jesus Christ) challenges us to kenotic forms of mission and ministry — giving ourselves away for the sake of others.

The supreme example of this practical approach to Christian dogma is of course the near-constant reminder that we should be more incarnational. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Therefore, we should make flesh or incarnate the love of God in the communities within which God has placed us. The mystery of God with us provides something like the rationale for St. Paul’s “I have become all things to all people” (1 Cor. 9:22).

On the one hand, these examples are commendable reminders that right belief informs right action. Scripture

certainly gestures toward the practical implications of our theological convictions. Jesus’ pronouncement on the mutual indwelling of the trinitarian persons gives rise to his prayer: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ... I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one” (John 17:21-23). Similarly, St. Paul’s great hymn devoted to the self-emptying of Christ is prefaced by this command: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). The Incarnation like-

wise informs the Church's mission: "As you [Father] have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

So, yes, in an obvious and crucial sense, faith is inextricably bound to practice. A loving and liberating God animates us to love and calls us to participate in the liberating work of his kingdom. The vocation of the Church, indeed the vocation of every human being, is to reflect our creator and redeemer. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). *Yea and amen.*

On the other hand, at the risk of sounding like a Grinch this Christmastide, I wonder/worry/fear whether the rush to reduce terms and judgments about God to their practical cash value reveals something of our impatience with the important business of thinking and speaking faithfully about God. It is increasingly commonplace for Christians to locate the real significance of theology in the practices that it engenders. Theology, we are constantly reminded, must be *useful*: it must result in obvious outcomes to the benefit of my marriage, my community, my political party, etc. Thus, one often hears in theological circles (from educators and practitioners alike), "My interest in theology is strictly practical." Or perhaps the imperative: "One's occupation with theology *ought* to be primarily practical."

Ignoring for the moment the vital role of contemplation in the Christian life, are we not at risk here of making the faith more about us and less about God? Is the knowledge of God strictly a signpost along the way to more pressing concerns? Is the Trinity primarily a model for ideal community? Are the works of God in Christ efficacious or merely exemplary?

In moving so swiftly from Incarnation to *incarnational*, we unwittingly convey a basic distrust in the liberating, illuminating, enlivening person and works of Jesus Christ. Our activism runs the risk of drowning out our adoration.

The Incarnation is not a principle. It is not just a reminder that God works and speaks through people. It is not primarily a model for ministry.

It is the staggering, awe-inspiring good news that the one by whom all things were made came down from heaven for us and for our salvation. Fumbling in the darkness of our ignorance and self-deceit, we encounter in Christ the light of divine Wisdom. "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). While we were imprisoned in our self-harm and selfishness, God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). While we are lowly in our pride, God has exalted us through the humiliation of his Son.

As St. Augustine declares in one of his justly renowned Christmas sermons:

The Incarnation is not a principle or primarily a model for ministry. It is the staggering, awe-inspiring good news that the Creator came down from heaven for our salvation.

Maker of the sun, he is made under the sun. ... Creator of heaven and earth, he was born on earth under heaven. ... Filling the world, he lies in a manger. Ruler of the stars, he nurses at his mother's bosom. He is both great in the nature of God and small in the form of a servant, but in such a way that his greatness is not diminished by his smallness, nor his smallness overwhelmed by his greatness. (*Sermon 187*)

We attest to this miracle by proclamation and by participation in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. We receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood in order to be united to him and thus become "one body" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Jesus shares in our humanity that we may become "participants in the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). But we do not *repeat* the Incarnation in our lives and ministries. The Incarnation requires no such repetition, thanks be to God! Like John the Baptist, we point instead away from ourselves to the one "from whom we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

This Christmastide and Epiphany, leave some space in your incarnational life and ministry for the Incarnation. And let us heed together the carol's advice: *Venite adoremus*. Come, let us adore him.

The Rev. Jordan Hillebert is tutor in theology at St. Padarn's Institute in Cardiff, Wales, and serves as assistant curate at Christ Church, Roath Park. This essay is adapted from our weblog, Covenant (bit.ly/Incarnational).

Tom Bair Delivers the Spoken Word

A one-man performance of the entire Gospel of Mark — from memory — helps the story come alive.

By Kirk Petersen

Many churchgoers, if they are being honest, will admit that their minds sometimes wander during the Scripture readings on Sunday morning. The typical Episcopal service includes four readings from the Bible, each about a dozen verses.

Sitting through the recitation of an entire Gospel might seem an even greater challenge. But if the Gospel is Mark and the gospeler is Tom Bair, it turns out to be an energizing and enlightening experience.

The text becomes more fascinating because Bair is not reading, but reciting from memory. He delivers a dramatic yet understated rendition of all 16 chapters of the King James Version — 15,919 words, as counted by software — in about an hour and 45 minutes, without intermission. The Gospel of Mark emerges as a work of literature, complete with parallel story lines, ironic contrast, and cryptic foreshadowing of the dramatic denouement.

He has staged his one-person show “a couple of dozen times,” he said, most recently on a November evening at Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. The actor turned investment broker turned actor performed in business casual attire in front of the soaring altar, earning a standing ovation from the roughly 80 people in the pews.

Bair said it took about six months to memorize the entire Gospel, “working at it two to three hours, five to six days a week. There’s no way around it — memorizing a text like this is heavy lifting. However, there are techniques that you can use.”

He described the “technique of the loci,” a mnemonic aid used by the ancient Greeks and Romans. “You begin by hanging an arresting or sometimes even disturbing image in a particular place,” he said. It needs to be a famil-

iar place, so that the location does not distract from the image. He chose the Church of the Transfiguration in New York, where he has worshiped for many years.

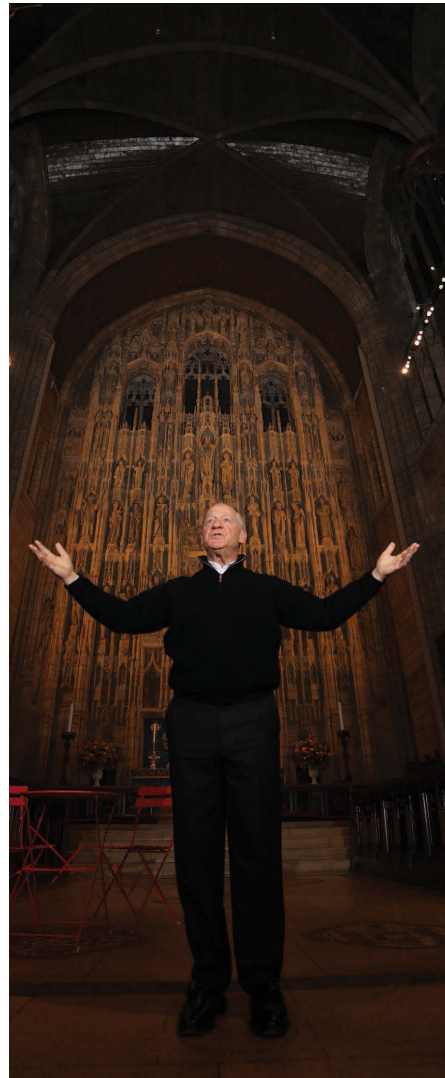


Photo courtesy of Tom Bair

After hanging a series of images, “you simply walk around the familiar place looking at these images, and it prompts you for the next sequence of things.” Each image is associated with a section of the text. “It happens to be the way the brain works,” he said. “You don’t have to remember linearity, you can be prompted by the image itself.”

“Mark is most powerful when tak-

en as a whole,” according to one of the slides Bair used in a seminar the morning after the performance. (He said he is perhaps prouder of the seminar and its materials than he is of the performance.) There are three boat scenes in Mark, each followed by miracles of healing, and of feeding the multitudes with a few loaves and fish. Jesus scolds the disciples for not understanding the implications of the miracles. “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?”

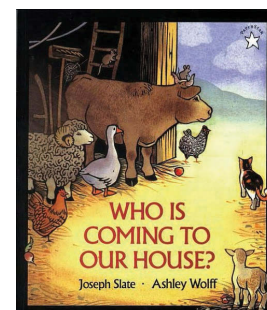
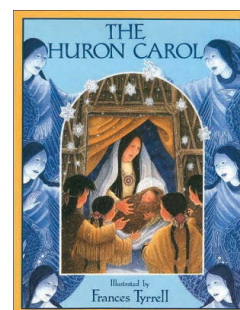
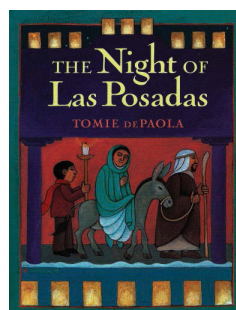
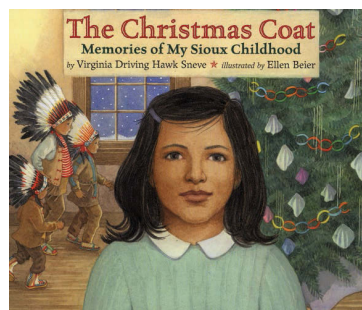
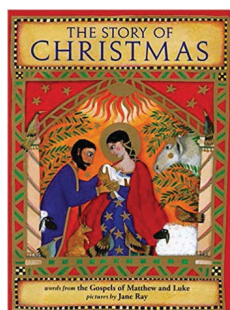
“The text was very consciously constructed to emphasize the central ironic twist,” Bair said. “That is, the disciples were set up to get the inside track, and in the end, none of them got it. The people who were most desperate, who had nothing to lose, *they* got it,” and because of their faith they were healed.

Bair said his performance can be delivered as a clericus (clergy meeting), or as an education program, standalone theater piece, or fundraiser. “I’ve been doing it for about two years, around the country and in cathedral settings, at St. James Cathedral in Chicago, St. Philip’s in Atlanta, and Cathedral of the Incarnation on Long Island.”

He does secular acting as well, and has been a full-time actor since leaving Wall Street three years ago. “I’d done everything I wanted to do, and it was time to move on,” he said. He has appeared in a handful of movies, including *Indignation* (2017) and *Local Color* (1977, during his pre-financial acting career), and in a variety of off-Broadway and regional theater roles.

He appeared most recently as Assistant Attorney General William Rehnquist in *The Post*, Steven Spielberg’s 2017 account of the Pentagon Papers. “Actors go through an awful lot” of auditioning and rejection, Bair said, “but when you get a payoff like a day on-set with Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep and Steven Spielberg, that makes it worthwhile.”

Christmas Favorites



Review by Susanna Quaille Cover

A brisk walk through a bookstore this time of year is a feast for the eyes. Gorgeous photography and abundant glitter sparkle on the season's latest Christmas books, meant to dazzle the child who unwraps them under the tree. I love Christmas magic as much as anyone, but some of our family's favorites have been found in humble and unexpected places like thrift stores and library book sales. We have found these to stand repeated readings, and they convey some glimpse of the truth of the Story, through excellent art and storytelling, to children as well as the grownups who read to them. (Remember to check for used copies of out-of-print Christmas books after the holiday season, when prices will be much lower.)

Many books offer fresh illustrations with the familiar words of St. Luke, but perhaps none do it as well as Jane Ray's *The Story of Christmas* (Dutton, 1991). The pictures are folksy and tender, brightly colored and highlighted with gold. The ornate (but shortened) King James text pairs well with the intricate pictures, and together they glow.

Another genre is the contemporary, or slightly nostalgic, tale of children learning the true meaning of Christmas. One of our favorites is *The Christmas Coat: Memories of My Sioux Childhood* by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (Holiday House, 2011). On a South Dakota reservation, young Virginia dreams of a beautiful, well-fitting winter coat from the donation boxes, but as the daughter

of the local Episcopal priest, she has to offer others first choice, and ends up with nothing, or so she believes. In the end, she learns compassion for a challenging classmate and finds her needs met beyond expectation, and the reader catches a glimpse into Christmas traditions in a Sioux mission community. Our family especially loves seeing the sacrifices and humor of another clergy household.

Oh the newborn squish of *Little One, We Knew You'd Come*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones (Little Brown, 2006)! This is such a great nativity poem for families who have had a baby in the past year or are expecting one. It could be read as a welcome to any child, but the stunning paintings depict the different figures who welcomed baby Jesus, particularly his mother. As with so many of the best Christmas books, this one brings the biblical story into the emotional register of family life.

Looking ahead to Epiphany, I always turn to *They Followed the Star* by Štěpán Zavřel (Scroll, 1969), which retells the Magi's journey with just a little storytelling embellishment. The art is striking, evoking the exotic flavor in this tale of strangers from afar, through the lens of an Eastern European visual tradition. Epiphany is the perfect occasion for reading books that narrate the nativity through other world cultures. *The Night of Los Posadas* by Tomie dePaola (Puffin, 1999) and *The Huron Carol*, illustrated by Frances Tyrrell (Eerdmans, 2003) are also lovely choices.

No Christmas reading stack is complete without a book about someone

bringing Jesus the humblest of presents and being welcomed as royalty. *A Dozen Silk Diapers* by Melissa Kajpust (Hyperion, 1993) is more than a little quirky, but I am so glad I rescued it from my library book sale. Maybe we are all pudgy little spiders wearing wimples like medieval Madonnas, but our gifts that we offer back to the Christ child can be transformed into unexpected and surpassing beauty. I love pondering how the mama spider's diapers woven from her silk were just as suitable for the Savior (and arguably more useful) as the gifts of the Magi.

My absolute favorite Christmas book is the most readily available, and rightly so. *Who Is Coming to Our House?* (Penguin, 1998) by Joseph Slate is a sweet rhyming-board book, its woodcut illustrations depicting various farm animals preparing their stable for a Guest. It captures the eager bustle of holiday preparations, familiar to all small children participating in family baking and decorating and cleaning the guest room.

It expresses the weary doubt that the long-awaited moment will ever arrive. But the tiny mouse never loses confidence that his hope will be fulfilled. May we also long for the glorious Advent of our Lord, preparing together with our children for his slow but nonetheless certain arrival. Come, Lord Jesus. "Welcome, welcome to our house."

Susanna Quaille Cover, formerly a books editor, teaches Sunday school at Trinity Church, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

Gift Ideas

from Friends of THE LIVING CHURCH

Kathleen Alexander



I recommend food — preparing it, sharing it, tucking gift cards from new or favorite restaurants into Christmas stockings (along with babysitting guarantees). Treats and time together are great gifts. But I am haunted

by pictures of many flood and fire-ravaged communities, so this year I'm giving food through donations to World Central Kitchen (worldcentralkitchen.org). This network of chefs arrives with first responders and, mobilizing neighbors, prepares and distributes millions of meals each year to those who need it most. They remain long after others are gone, giving nourishment, comfort, and hope to communities in the midst of bleakness and despair. Is that not what we all await in this season of Advent?

Kathleen Alexander is a parishioner and former senior warden of St. Francis Church in Potomac, Maryland.

Deborah Boston

Families will love Novo Natural's festive mushroom-shaped nutcracker (bit.ly/NovoNutcracker), which gives children a distracting and helpfully destructive kitchen task. Who would not love turning the red mushroom cap and satisfying the desire to really crack something open? Yes, buying shelled nuts is easier, but it is not nearly as much fun.



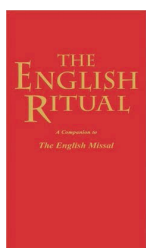
Deborah Boston breaks lots of things accidentally while staying home with four small children and helping her husband, an Episcopal priest, keep everything together.

Will Brown

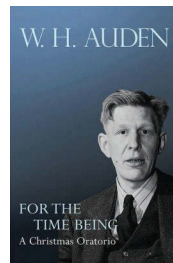
First published in 1913, *The English Office* went through several editions before attaining its final form in 1953. Today, Canterbury Press publishes *English Ritual: A Companion to the English Missal* (bit.ly/EnglishRitual). It contains the prayer book office of 1662, supplemented with hymns, antiphons, an expanded sanctoral kalendar, and other devotional material from the Catholic end of the Anglican spectrum. This reprint from Canterbury Press is useful as an enriched form of the Anglican daily office, or as a reference

work from which liturgical material may be culled. Occasional typos and errata from the 1953 edition are preserved.

The Rev. Will Brown is associate rector of All Saints' Church, Thomasville, Georgia.



Stewart Clem



W.H. Auden's *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio* (Princeton, 2013) is one of my favorite works of poetry. It is more accessible than his other long poems, and Alan Jacobs's introduction and notes brilliantly illuminate the text. The poem is a meditation on the event of the Incarnation, yet it plays with our sense of time.

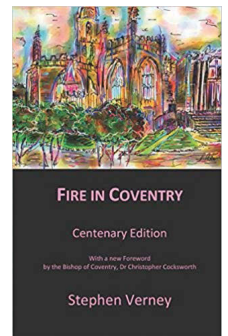
All of the usual characters are here — Joseph, Mary, the wise men — but the contemporary references sprinkled throughout remind us that the Incarnation changed history as much as it was an event within history.

The Rev. Stewart Clem is visiting assistant professor of theology at Valparaiso University.

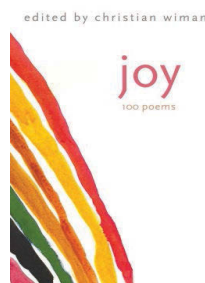
Christopher Cocksworth

As the centenary of the Diocese of Coventry draws to a close, I would like to commend *Fire in Coventry* (bit.ly/FireCoventry), a spiritual classic that tells the story of a gentle, genuine renewal in the Holy Spirit in the center of England as the diocese prepared for the consecration of its new cathedral in 1962. This new edition sets the work of God in one place at one time in the context of divine activity in every place and time.

The Rt. Rev. Christopher Cocksworth, formerly principal of Ridley Hall Cambridge, has been Bishop of Coventry since 2008.



Brian Cole



The poet Christian Wiman is not known as someone to turn to when you are seeking an upbeat note. His poetic gifts have mostly helped us face the dark and honestly describe the encounter. His profession of the Christian faith comes from a place that knows wounds — personal, communal, global. I was surprised to learn that Christian Wiman has edited *Joy: 100 Poems* (Yale University Press, 2017). This collection of mostly modern voices bears witness that joy persists, even in this age. That is good news for all.

The Rt. Rev. Brian Cole is Bishop of East Tennessee.

Michael W. DeLashmutt

I grew up on a family farm in Southwest Iowa. My grandparents, who lived just on the other side of a gravel driveway, were our closest neighbors by a mile. Every year, after opening our own presents at home, we would brave the elements and walk the 100 yards to Grandma's house for Christmas dinner. Although I am sure everything was delicious, my memory of the sights and tastes of her Christmas table center on her brightly colored red and green Christmas pickles.



These delicious sweet pickles draw their unusual color and flavor from the addition of red hots (for the red pickles) and lots of food coloring (for the green ones): not the healthiest treat, but certainly a vivid reminder of the season. We try to

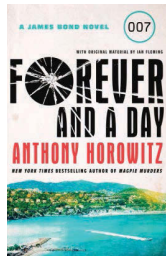
make some variety of pickles (for our table and for friends) every Christmas in memory of Grandma D.

Michael W. DeLashmutt is vice president and dean of academic affairs and associate professor of sacred theology at General Theological Seminary in New York City.

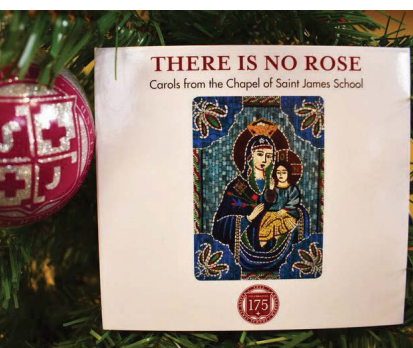
Neil Dhingra

In *Forever and a Day* (HarperCollins, 2018), Anthony Horowitz, current successor to Ian Fleming as James Bond scribe, provides the guilty pleasures, including villains grotesque and politically misguided. But this prequel to *Casino Royale* also explains how a young Bond becomes the fascinating but cold agent in Fleming's debut novel. Surprisingly, much of Bond, not only his tastes in cigarettes and martinis, is shaped by a woman whose war experience included the Special Operations Executive, betrayal, and Ravensbrück.

Neil Dhingra studies education policy at the University of Maryland, College Park.



D. Stuart Dunnan



My favorite gift at Christmas is a new Christmas CD. I was a chorister at the Washington National Cathedral while growing up, so Christmas for me was filled with song. This of course continued during my seven years at Oxford. Happily, I am still surrounded by music at Christmas, as Saint James has an excellent choir and we have an annual tradition of Lessons and Carols, which is always well done. I commend to you *There Is No Rose: Carols from the Chapel of St. James School* (bit.ly/StJamesChristmas2017).

The Rev. D. Stuart Dunnan has been the headmaster of Saint James School in Maryland since 1992.

Kate Eaton



Across New Mexico, it is common to find nichos, small altars with items that include found objects, religious images, and personal items that invite one to stop, ponder, and consider our lives of faith anew. Mishkha has created several nichos that reflect different themes like new birth, silence, and hope. These nichos make wonderful gifts for friends and family. Visit shopmishkha.com to learn more.

Kate Eaton founded Mishkha in 2010 to inspire new vision for worship through the arts, music, movement, and interaction.

Miguel Escobar

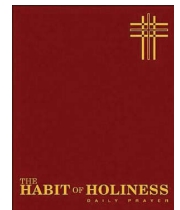
One of the best gifts I received this year was a monthly subscription to Audible, which I've used to delve into nonfiction about the current political crisis. On my commutes, at the gym, and while doing chores, I've listened to *We Were Eight Years in Power* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein, *Fascism: A Warning* by Madeleine Albright, *Fear: Trump in the White House* by Bob Woodward, *The People vs. Democracy* by Yascha Mounk, and most recently *The Future is History* by Masha Gessen. It's been a great way of broadening my understanding of the historical and global context about what is happening today.

Miguel Escobar is director of Anglican Studies for Episcopal Divinity School at Union.

Daniel G.P. Gutiérrez

I send two simple gifts of faith and heart. *The Habit of Holiness: Daily Prayer* (Continuum, 2004) by Martin Warner contains various prayers, Scripture, the Daily Office, and a collection of devotions. I encourage my brother or sister to break it open during the day. Within the book, I include a handwritten letter that gives thanks for the recipient's importance in my life and companionship on this sacred journey.

The Rt. Rev. Daniel G.P. Gutiérrez serves the Diocese of Pennsylvania as bishop.



Sharon Dewey Hetke

For the low-church evangelical on your list, Banner of Truth publishes a beautiful hardcover set of the works of 19th-century evangelical Bishop J.C. Ryle (bit.ly/JCRyleSet). Ryle writes with clarity and power, and my husband has found *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* both wonderful devotional reading and a great help in preaching.

Sharon Dewey Hetke is national director of the Anglican Communion Alliance and assistant editor of The Anglican Planet. She lives in Napanee, Ontario.



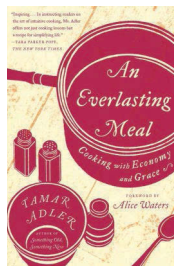
Gift Ideas

(Continued from previous page)

Wesley Hill

Since I am on a sabbatical from teaching, I have had more time to indulge in my favorite pastime: cooking. And because I am not preparing lectures, I have also had time to indulge in a related hobby: reading books about cooking. Tamar Adler's *An Everlasting Meal: Cooking with Economy and Grace* (Scribner, 2012) is one that I have especially enjoyed. Livened by humor, eased by down-to-earth advice, and dotted with simple recipes, it is an inspiration for veteran and novice cooks alike.

Wesley Hill is associate professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.



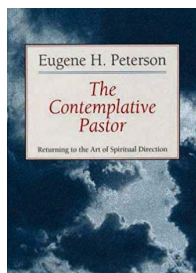
Vicentia Kgabe

I most love giving music and books, those gifts that transport us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually from reality into the world of fantasy and healing. At the top of my list this year is *Let Them Fall in Love*, which CeCe Winans released in 2017. The song "Marvelous" is a favorite. And I recommend *Hallelujah, Anyhow: A Memoir* (Church Publishing, 2018) by Bishop Barbara C. Harris.

The Rev. Canon Vicentia Kgabe is rector of College of Transfiguration, Southern Africa.



Thomas Kincaid



I cannot overstate the importance of *The Contemplative Pastor* by Eugene Peterson. Even as I serve in a setting geared toward numerical growth in our work as witnesses of God's coming kingdom, Peterson's words, first published almost 30 years ago, serve as a clarion call toward the heart of ministry. Continuing his unique ability to combine quickly readable prose with great spiritual depth, Peterson both convicts and encourages ministers to keep as their first priority a time of intense relationship with the God made known in Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Thomas Kincaid is vice rector of Church of the Incarnation, Dallas.

Justin Lewis-Anthony

Bob Dylan, in two short periods of intense work in New York City and Minneapolis 44 years ago, produced one of his most enigmatic and rewarding albums, *Blood on the Tracks*. This autumn he has released *More Blood, More Tracks*, which offers sketches and outtakes from the sessions. Perhaps \$100 for the full version is too dear, but listen to a single song, "Shelter From The Storm," to hear the comfort of the gospel filtered through Dante, Chekhov, and the man from the north country.

The Rev. Justin Lewis-Anthony is deputy director of the Anglican Centre in Rome and author of *If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him: Radically Re-Thinking Priestly Ministry* (Bloomsbury, 2009).



Hannah Matis

'Tis the season for Lessons and Carols, and *100 Years of Nine Lessons & Carols* (bit.ly/100YearsLC) is a wonderful compilation in honor of a century of services from King's College, Cambridge. Almost two hours long, it is a balance of familiar carols with traditional medieval carols like "Adam Lay Ybounden" and modern classics, like Tavener's "The Lamb," Pärt's "Bogoróditse Djévo," and my favorite, Chilcott's gorgeous "Shepherd's Carol." For a musical Advent calendar, or a reverent accompaniment to prayer in Advent, you could not do better.

Hannah Matis is an assistant professor of church history at Virginia Theological Seminary.



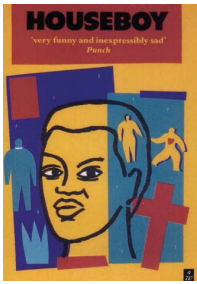
Andrew McGowan



Baking at Christmas is a tradition, and it can include the most basic element of bread, as well as more festive fare. The traditional Italian bread pan (bit.ly/ItalianPan) will be a welcome gift — it allows two loaves in a batard or baguette shape to be baked, and the high center keeps the loaves apart. With two, you can choose whether to give, share, or both.

Andrew McGowan, dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, is writing a book on the theological history of bread.

Ephraim Radner



Want a small, delicate, wrenching novel about colonialism, church, and human yearning? Get hold of Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* (Heinemann, 1966), originally published in French (*Une Vie de Boy*) in 1956, and now considered a classic. Oyono published several other novels and plays, and pursued a distinguished career in the Cameroonian government.

Houseboy details, in poignant and sometimes brutal detail, the first-person experience of a young African servant to French missionaries and administrators. Human decency is still something we are yearning for.

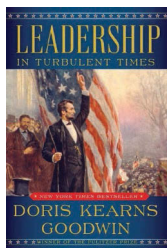
The Rev. Ephraim Radner is professor of historical theology at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto.

Fredrick Robinson

In the film *Green Book*, Don Shirley, a virtuoso jazz pianist, hires a New York City bouncer, Tony Lip, to be his driver for a concert tour of the Deep South in the 1960s. Shirley is African-American and Lip is Italian-American. This true story chronicles some of the challenges they encounter and shows how a lifelong friendship grew out of the experience. It is disturbing and heartwarming.

The Rev. Fredrick Robinson is rector of Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota, Florida.

Dabney T. Smith



A thoughtful and educational gift for this Christmas season is the newly released *Leadership in Turbulent Times* by historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. It is a fast-paced and dramatic survey of four United States Presidents: Abraham Lincoln and transformational leadership; Theodore Roosevelt and crisis leadership; Franklin D. Roosevelt and turnaround leadership; and Lyndon B. Johnson and visionary leadership. I commend it as particularly helpful in the Johnson segment in working through legislative polity and the art of executive persuasion.

The Rt. Rev. Dabney T. Smith has been Bishop of Southwest Florida since 2007.

Jacob A. Smith

This year I will give my friends and loved ones subscriptions to *The Mockingbird* (bit.ly/GiveMBird). The magazine is a piece of art filled with articles that are culturally and theologically riveting. Each issue is organized thematically, exploring such topics as mental health, forgiveness, and the church.

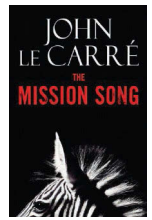
The Rev. Jacob A. Smith is rector of the Parish of Calvary-St. George's in the City of New York.



Stephen Spencer

In *The Mission Song*, John le Carré opens the vivid and complicated world of African mining, warlords, and the exploits of Western interests. Some themes are classic Le Carré, such as deceit, corruption, and ordinary people heroically uncovering these things in high places. But this time there is also sympathetic insight into the interaction of missionaries with African life, especially through the central character, Bruno Salvador, a brilliant interpreter.

The Rev. Stephen Spencer is director for theological education in the Anglican Communion.



Mac Stewart

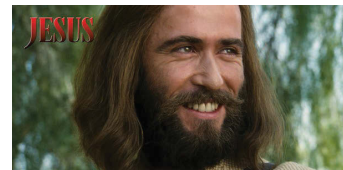
J.R.R. Tolkien needs no introduction, but his short children's story *Farmer Giles of Ham* (bit.ly/FarmerGiles) was unknown to me until recently. It has all the things you would expect from the great medievalist — knights, dragons, legendary swords, a humble farmer doing great things — all laced with Tolkien's inimitable charm in a story of much more manageable length (about 80 pages) than the author's magnum opus. This could be wonderful bedtime reading for your kids, or a nice break from heavier tomes.

The Rev. Mac Stewart is an assistant priest at St. Francis Church in Potomac, Maryland, and a doctoral student at Catholic University of America.

Muthuraj Swamy

Jesus (1999) is very different from traditional Jesus movies. It uses extra-biblical narratives but is largely faithful to the purpose of the Incarnation of Christ. Jesus loves and shows radical openness toward the other. The *Lemon Tree* (Bloomsbury, 2007) by Sandy Tolan and *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity* (Bloomsbury, 2011) by Izzeldin Abuelaish, both written in the background of Israel-Palestine conflict, are invitations to and hope for reconciliation amid hate and violence.

Muthuraj Swamy is director of the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide.



David Zahl

I'm always on the lookout for comfortable T-shirts to exercise and sleep in. Just because we dress down does not mean we have to throw ecclesial pride out the window. While we wait on the folks behind Episcopal Skeletor (bit.ly/EpSkeletor) to design a T-shirt, my go-to would be "W.H. Auden Was An Episcopalian" (bit.ly/AudenTee). Throw in a "Low Anthropology" sticker from *Mockingbird* (bit.ly/LowAnthro) and consider that stocking stuffed.

David Zahl is the director of Mockingbird Ministries.



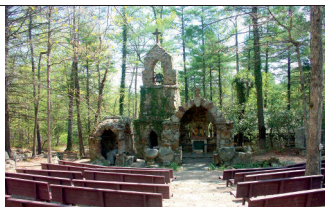
St. Peter's Church

110 N. Warson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63124
314.993.2306 | stpetersepiscopal.org

St. Peter's Episcopal Church is a joy-filled parish in Ladue, a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ lies at the heart of our common life. We seek to be transformed by that relationship as we engage in worship, education, fellowship, and service together. The ministry of hospitality and welcome is central to our calling as part of the body of Christ. From parish-wide events and celebrations to small-group gatherings, we intend for each person to feel welcomed and connected, and to find an opportunity to grow in faith.



A LIVING CHURCH Partner



The Diocese of Virginia

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You may know us best for *Center Aisle*, a leading daily opinion journal of the Episcopal Church's General Convention. *Center Aisle* strives to build the foundational center of our Church — the center that unites us at the foot of the cross.

Center Aisle is published by the Diocese of Virginia, home to 180 congregations and to the Episcopal Church's only open-air cathedral, the Cathedral Shrine of the Transfiguration.

Our diocese is deeply committed to the Triangle of Hope, a covenantal relationship among the Dioceses of Kumasi, Ghana; Liverpool; and Virginia, which seeks to transform the history, ongoing effects, and continuing presence of slavery in our world through repentance, reconciliation, and mission.



A LIVING CHURCH Partner

PEOPLE & PLACES

Appointments

The Rev. **Jack Alvey** is rector of Ascension, Vestavia Hills, AL.

The Rev. **Susan Anderson-Smith** is associate rector for justice and reconciliation at St. Bart's, Manhattan.

The Rev. **William Baker** is curate at Richmond Episcopal Ministry, Staten Island, NY.

The Rev. **Kathleen H. Berkowe** is priest in charge of Holy Communion, Mahopac, NY.

The Rev. **Melinda Bobo** is rector of St. Andrew's in the Pines, Pinedale, WY.

The Rev. **Eugene A. Bourquin** is deacon at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Manhattan.

The Rev. **Linda Boyd** is deacon at Old St. Paul's, Baltimore.

Michael Braxton of Calvary Church, Pittsburgh, is an elected trustee of General Theological Seminary in Manhattan.

The Rev. **Neva Brown** is deacon at St. Bartholomew's, Baltimore.

The Rev. **Stefanie Wilson Brown** is an associate at St. Matthew's, Pacific Palisades, CA.

The Rev. **Robert Bunker** is deacon at St. Philip's, Laurel, MD.

The Rev. **Deacon Deborah Burns** is a deacon at Trinity, Lawrence, KS.

The Rev. **Holly Burris** is deacon in charge, Epiphany, Tunica, MS.

The Rev. **Nancy Chalfant-Walker** is a board member of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

The Rev. **Natalie Conway** is deacon at Memorial Church, Baltimore.

The Rev. **Al Crumpton** is rector of Church of Our Savior, Martinez, GA.

The Rev. **William Cruse** is priest in residence at St. John's, Ramsey, NJ.

The Rev. **Robert Davenport** is interim rector of All Saints, Southern Shores, NC.

The Rev. **Maria Evans** is assistant priest at Good Shepherd, Town and Country, MO, and at St. Luke's Church, Manchester.

The Rev. **Robert Flanagan** is interim priest in charge of St. Mark's, Mt. Kisco, NY.

The Rev. **Kathryn Gillett** is associate rector for outreach and spirituality at Christ Church, Pensacola, FL.

The Rev. **Jane Gobert** is interim rector of Grace, Pemberton, NJ.

The Rev. **Gina L. Gore** is associate for children and family ministries at St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan.

The Rev. **Lynne Grifo** is interim priest at St. Peter's, Mountain Lakes, NJ.

The Rev. **Stephen Hagerty** is associate rector for discipleship at St. John's, Ellicott City, MD.

The Rev. **Natalie Hall** is ecumenical and interreligious officer for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The Rev. **Douglas Halvorsen** is interim priest at Advent, Cape May, NJ.

Clayton Harrington is campus minister at the University of Georgia, Athens.

The Rev. **Susan Harriss** is priest associate at

Christ the Redeemer, Pelham, NY.

The Rev. **Daniel W. Hinkle** is interim priest at Holy Innocents', Beach Haven, NJ.

The Rev. **Geoffrey Hoare** is rector of St. Alban's, Washington, DC.

Dena Douglas Hobbs is the Diocese of Atlanta's campus missionary for Macon colleges.

The Rev. **David Jenkins** is priest in charge of St. Peter's, Pittsburg, KS.

The Rev. **Abram Jones** is curate at St. James', Jackson, MS.

The Rev. **Liz Jones** is associate for pastoral care at St. Peter's by-the-Sea, Gulfport, MS.

The Rev. **Walton Jones** is rector of Resurrection, Starkville, MS.

The Rev. **Doug Kinsey** is assisting priest at Nativity, Crafton, PA, and pastor of St. Matthew's (ELCA), Crafton.

The Rev. **Pierce Klemmt** is interim priest at St. Elizabeth's, Ridgewood, NJ.

The Rev. **Ellen Kohn-Perry** is associate rector of St. Paul's, Chatham, NJ.

The Rev. **Mark Kowalski** is deacon at St. Martin of Tours, Omaha.

Corey Kundert is young adult ministry coordinator for the Boone area in the Diocese of Western North Carolina.

The Rev. **Michael Kurth** is curate at Christ's Church, Rye, NY.

The Rev. **Daniel Leatherman** is priest in charge of St. Timothy's, Aiea, HI.

The Rev. Canon **Terence A. Lee** is rector of St. Philip's, Harlem, NY.

The Rev. **David Wesley Lemburg** is priest in charge of St. George's, Savannah, GA.

The Rev. **Bradley Linboom** is rector of Holy Nativity, Clarendon Hills, IL.

The Rev. **Mike Loyd** is priest in charge of St. Andrew's, Derby, KS.

The Rev. **Earl Mahan** is priest in charge of Good Shepherd, Town and Country, MO, and continues as priest in charge of St. Luke's Church, Manchester.

The Rev. **Chas Marks** is rector of St. Augustine's, Kansas City, MO.

The Rev. **David Matlak** is director of spiritual life at Rosslyn Academy, Nairobi.

The Rev. **Karen Maurer** is associate priest at St. John Chrysostom, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA.

The Rev. **Christine McCloud**, a deacon, is canon for mission in the Diocese of Maryland.

The Rev. **Bonnie McCrickard** is rector of St. Timothy's, Rocksborough, PA.

The Rev. **Margaret E. McGhee** is curate at Bethesda-by-the-Sea, Palm Beach, FL.

The Rev. **J. Gregory Morgan** is interim priest in charge of St. Alban's, Staten Island, NY.

The Rev. **Brandon Mozingo** is deacon in charge of St. Stephen's, McKeesport, PA.

The Rev. **Michael Muller** is priest in charge of St. Peter's, Essex Fells, NJ.

The Rev. **Gwyneth M. Murphy** is interim rector of St. John's, Larchmont, NY.

The Rev. **Graeme Napier** is rector of St.

John's in the Village, New York City.

The Rev. **San Ninan** is priest in charge of All Saints, Valley Cottage, NY.

The Rev. **William Ogburn** is associate rector of St. Luke's in the Fields, Manhattan.

The Rev. **Phillip Parker** is deacon in charge of Advent, Sumner, MS.

The Rev. **John Perry** is rector of St. John the Baptist, Hardwick, VT.

The Rev. **Christopher Phillips** is associate chaplain at St. Paul's School, Brooklandville, MD.

The Rev. Br. **Robert M. Pierson**, OHC, is priest in charge of Ascension/Holy Trinity, West Park, NY.

The Rev. **Eleanor N. Prior** is canon pastor of St. Luke's Cathedral, Portland, ME.

The Rev. **Rebecca Ragland** is rector of St. Paul's, Carondelet, MO.

The Rev. **Neil K. Raman** is associate rector of Calvary, Pittsburgh.

The Rev. **Thomas P. Reeder** of Florida is rector of Christ Church, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL.

The Rev. **James Richardson** is interim dean of Trinity Cathedral, Sacramento, CA.

The Rev. **Jon Richardson** is priest in charge of St. David's, Kinnelon, NJ.

The Rev. **Chris Robinson** is vicar of Nativity, Water Valley, MS, and continues as chaplain of the Episcopal Church at Ole Miss.

The Rev. **Steve Schlossberg** is rector of St. Matthew's, Richmond, VA.

The Rev. **Ed Scott** is deacon at St. Andrew's, Glenwood, MD.

The Rev. **David Forster Sellery** is canon for congregational mission in the Diocese of North Carolina.

The Rev. **Izabella Sempari** is vicar of St. Cuthbert's, Oakland.

Heidi Shott is communications director for the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

The Rev. **Lisa Siciliano** is deacon for the Southern Maryland Region, based at All Saints, Sunderland.

The Rev. **George Stamm** is a canon of the Diocese of Eau Claire who will assist bivocational clergy. With his wife, Cynthia, he is a chaplain to retired clergy and surviving spouses.

The Rev. **William Smyth Stanley** is associate rector for pastoral care and adult formation at All Saints, Beverly Hills, CA.

The Rev. **Patricia Stansfield** is rector of St. John the Baptist, Corona, CA.

The Rev. **John DeWitt Stonesifer** is interim rector of Christ Church, Short Hills, NJ.

The Rev. **Cathie Studwell** is interim priest at St. Bartholomew's, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ.

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The Rev. **Erika L. Takacs** is rector of Atonement, Chicago.

The Rev. **Elaine Thomas** is rector of All Saints, Hoboken, NJ.

The Rev. **Morris Thompson III** is rector of Mediator, Meridian, MS.

The Rev. **Susan Tiffany** is assistant rector of St. Paul's, Akron, OH.

Andrew Tomat is treasurer of the Diocese of Los Angeles.

The Rev. **Naomi Tutu** is missionary for racial and economic reconciliation at Cathedral of All Souls, Asheville, NC.

The Rev. **Vaughn Vigil** is deacon at Church on the Square, Baltimore.

The Rev. **Laurence Wainwright-Maks** is missionary for the deaf and hard of hearing in the Diocese of Rochester.

The Rev. **Thomas P.H. Warren** is rector of St. Mary's, Kinston, NC.

The Rev. **Tommie Lee Watkins Jr.** is rector of St. Andrew's, Birmingham, AL.

The Rev. **Michael T. Watson** is priest in charge of St. Luke's, Somers, NY.

The Rev. **Luke A. Wetzel** is rector of St. Paul's, Riverside, IL.

The Rev. **Sharon E. Williams** is priest in charge of St. Andrew's, Cleveland.

The Rev. Canon **George F. Woodward III** is rector of St. Paul's, Guanajunto, Mexico.

The Rev. **Paul Yoon** is priest in charge of St. Agnes, Little Falls, NJ.

The Rev. **Holly Rankin Zaher** is rector of St. Paul's, Evansville, IN.



COVENANT

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THE
LIVING CHURCH

covenant.livingchurch.org | livingchurch.org



The Living Church Foundation seeks to extend its unique ministry of journalism, publishing, organizing, and leadership development for the life and vitality of the Church.

Work and Joy

From Bethlehem, a small clan of Judah, a savior will come forth whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. He will stand and feed his flock in the strength and majesty of the Lord. He will make the flock secure and he will be one of peace. Old and ancient, the One hoped for is, in truth, enthroned upon the cherubim (Mic. 5:2-5a; Ps. 80:1). “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 124:8). “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation” (Ps. 62:1). “Stir up your might, and come to save us” (Ps. 80:2). God alone restores and saves and brings light and everlasting peace. Enthroned high above the heavens, God deigns to act and care for a human flock.

We know how, but we would do well to pretend that we do not. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ works salvation in the secret chamber of his mother’s love, and he is to her, as he is to us, magnificent joy.

We may join the work and participate in the joy.

Christ’s work is beautifully though demanding described by St. Irenaeus: “The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man, in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father’s pleasure. Therefore, on account of this, the Lord himself gave this sign of our salvation — Emmanuel from the Virgin — because it was the Lord himself who was saving them, because through themselves they had no way to be saved” (*Against Heresies* 3.20.2-3).

This is the act of God, in which his power is shown in mercy and lowliness by fitting the second person of the Trinity to us and reforming our nature so that we are fitted to him. Classically stated, he became what we are so that we could become what he is. And we become what he is by adoption and

grace, and by the reformation of our nature (recapitulation in Christ) and the progressive formation of Christ, the image of the Father, in us. In Christ, we are assumed and elevated and transformed from glory to glory.

This work is a cause for joy, a joy we so desperately need and God is pleased to give. “Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name’” (Luke 1:46-49). What does it mean to magnify the Lord? It certainly cannot mean to increase God!

As St. Ambrose says, we are drawn to notice a change in ourselves, not in God. “The Lord is magnified just as you have read elsewhere, *Magnify the Lord with me*, not in such a way that something is joined to the Lord by a human voice, but because the Lord is magnified in us” (*Exposition on Luke* 2.19.22-23, 26-27). If only — God help us — we may have this joy renewed and increased, a soul magnified and ever more sublime by its participation in the life of God.

Look It Up

Read Luke 1:46.

Think About It

You do not want less.



On the Mountaintop

The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration in Vail celebrates 45 years amid the majestic Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

The ECOT congregation worships weekly at both the Vail Interfaith Chapel and the Edwards Interfaith Chapel & Community Center, and provides worship services at the Beaver Creek Chapel throughout the year. Sharing each facility with Jewish, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Pentecostal faith communities, we welcome both full time and seasonal members, and friends from many faiths from around the world.

We are proud to feature our ministries to infants, children, and youth and offer a robust commitment to outreach participation locally, nationally, and internationally. We serve the entire Vail Valley with pastoral care, emergency assistance, faith formation, religious counseling and a loving community.

The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration

P.O. Box 1000, Vail, CO 81658
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The One Great Mystery

This is the day that the Lord has made. It is also the day when most parochial clergy are on vacation and, presumably, attending the liturgy elsewhere. Attendance among the laity drops notably in most places too, giving this day its sad reputation as a *Low Sunday*. The few who are present, however, may relish a secret privilege, the opportunity to hear again a summation of the whole gospel in two very striking passages. We hear what Jesus Christ did and what he did for us. What did he do? He became what we are. What did he do for us? He made us what he is.

Listen. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (Gal. 4:4-7). God sent his Son to be born of a woman, to be what we are. Having been redeemed from sin and death, we are caught up in the new life of Christ and receive adoption as children. Jesus is the Son of God by nature; we are the children of God by adoption and grace. This is an important distinction. It should be stated, but not overstated. We are indeed children of God!

Listen again. "[T]o all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:12-14a). The Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, became what we are. He became the human being, the new Adam, a recapitulation and reformation of our contorted lives. He did this for us and made us children of God, born of God, born again from on high.

As daughters and sons of God in Christ Jesus, we are members of his body, branches of the vine, and stones in one holy temple. Do you know what a privilege this is, what a joy, what a vocation, to be a child of God? If you know it, know it more deeply.

The following is a spiritual exercise. Being a child of God feels like this:

"What is this new mystery surrounding me? I am both small and great, both lowly and exalted, mortal and immortal, earthly and heavenly. I am to be buried with Christ and to rise again with him, to become a co-heir with him, a son of God, and indeed God himself.

"This is what the great mystery means for us; this is why God became man and became poor for our sake: it was to raise up our flesh, to recover the divine image, to re-create mankind, so that all of us might become one in Christ who perfectly became in us everything that he is himself" (Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration 7*).

We are cautioned, of course, not to think too highly of ourselves, not to ponder things that are too great for us. We are told to put on the mind of Christ who humbled himself. We are on earth, we are sinners, and we wait for the fulfillment of all things in Christ. And yet our waiting is a form of possessing. The grace in us is the grace of Almighty God, and God has designed to make us his children.

Look It Up

Read John 1:12-13.

Think About It

God has decided.

Investing in Others

Church of the Incarnation is one of the largest and fastest-growing churches in the Episcopal Church. With creative programs for kids, students, couples, families, and seniors, Incarnation has become a magnet, especially for college students and young professionals. Enthusiastically traditional in its teaching and preaching, the church recently hosted an international conference for vocational discernment, the RADVO Conference.

To accommodate the growth of the parish and to expand its ministries among the poor, the parish raised over \$27 million in a recent capital campaign. In August, Incarnation will open its doors to a satellite campus: Incarnation North Campus, serving the community of North Dallas. Incarnation's seven Sunday services include two Rite I Choral Eucharists, three Rite II Contemporary Uptown services with an outstanding contemporary band, and Choral Evensong. Strongly committed to living for others, the church runs a wide variety of social programs, investing over \$1 million in outreach support to the poor each year, helping local children, the homeless, and those in need around the globe via missions.

When in Dallas, drop by and visit us — we would love to meet you!

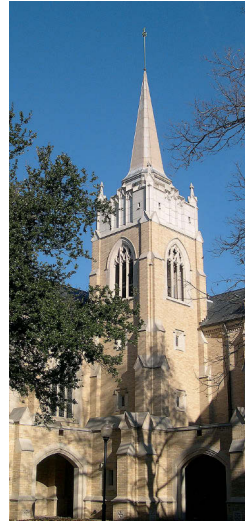
Church of the Incarnation

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THE LIVING CHURCH is published 20 times per year, dated Sunday, by the Living Church Foundation, Inc., at 816 E. Juneau Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53202. Periodicals postage paid at Milwaukee, WI, and at additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$55 for one year; \$95 for two years.

Canadian postage an additional \$10 per year;

Mexico and all other foreign, an additional \$63 per year.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE LIVING CHURCH,

P.O. Box 510705, Milwaukee, WI 53203-0121. Subscribers, when

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THE LIVING CHURCH (ISSN 0024-5240) is published by THE LIVING CHURCH FOUNDATION, INC., a non-profit organization serving the Church. All gifts to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

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Boundless Riches

To avoid the pitfall of depression, prayer should precede exposure to the news. Time should be given to biblical words and narrative and poetry and long silences. Keep the dictionary close, pick up a pen, and throw prayers at heaven. Most importantly, give thanks. Eventually, however, the business of the day must begin and the onslaught of distress. "For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples" (Isa. 60:2). One might think the prophet Isaiah is describing yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is not, however, describing *forever*.

In the midst of travail and sorrow, God has set a great light over an elect people to which all the nations of the earth are drawn. "Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried in your nurses' arms" (60:4). This messianic vision of migrations is also one of astounding joy. "Then you will see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you" (60:5). No bad news should be allowed to extinguish hope from hearts of those who have heard the good news of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, the center of all things.

The vision of Gentile nations moving toward Jerusalem anticipates salvation realized in Christ Jesus. They "have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promises in Christ Jesus. ... Although I am the least of all the saints, this grace has been given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:6-8). The epistle further describes the good news of Christ as "the wisdom of God in its rich variety" (Eph. 3:10). There is no limit to the outpouring of grace given in Christ, for he is an outpouring of love from the Father's heart (John 1:18). Flesh of our flesh and bone of

our bone, Jesus Christ gave himself in love to the end, accepting and absorbing every bitter blow, every insult, and every torment until death. In his living and dying and rising again, he gave and still gives the boundless riches of new life. Death does not defeat him. His is life forevermore.

Meditating on the wealth of Christ, the author of Ephesians erupts in praise and supplication: "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (3:14-19).

Receiving the boundless grace of Christ, we might ask, "How will I repay the Lord for all the good he has done for me?" (Ps. 116:10). Repayment is itself an act of grace, a free opening of one's heart to God. Like the wise men of old, we bend the knee, pay him homage, and open the treasure box that God has filled.

Look It Up

Read Ephesians 3:8-10.

Think About It

Always new, boundless, and varied.

God Is Love

The word *love*, although abused by overuse and sentimentality, remains profoundly significant for Christian faith. Replacing it with the New Testament *agape* or *charity* may give it a scholastic sound, but in the end *love* is the English word we need to speak of God's relationship with created things.

God's very being is love. God is begetting love, responsive love, and love's eternal flow. God is one in a triune community of love. Before the heavens and earth were made, God *is* love. God's love is full and sufficient, for he has it completely and without defect. In a sense, God's inner life of love is unifying, but without any suggestion of discord. Try these words of Thomas Aquinas and think slowly: "To a great extent love is called a unitive power in God, but without composition; because that good which God wants for himself is none other than himself who is good through his own essence" (*Summa Theologiae* I.q20.a1.ad3). God is sheer and absolute love, begetting without loss, responding in freedom, shared in perennial exchange.

God is love without beginning and without end. Creation begins, though it begins from that same eternal love that God is. "The love of God," Aquinas says, "is pouring and creating goodness into all things" (I.q20.a2). There is, we dare to say, something of God in all things, for God, who is the cause of all things, has through the abundance of his loving goodness and his providence gone outside himself to every existing thing. God is, and God is love. God creates for love and cannot hate anything he has made.

Listen to love: "But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isa. 43:1). "I will be with you, I am your Savior, you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you" (Isa. 43:2-4). This same love comes to the Church and all the baptized as the gift of the Holy

Spirit. What happened to Jesus happens to us. "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:21-22). Indeed, as the prologue of John's Gospel states, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (1:12-13). The very love with which the Father loves the Son is the love God lavishes on us in his Son. We are *in Christ*; we are *branches of the vine*; we are *members of his body*.

Because the love of God in Christ that has been poured into our hearts is nothing less than God, this love can and will feel, though not always, like an overwhelming power. God's love is an overwhelming goodness that sustains all things as they ought to be, which purges and strips away sin, the flesh, and the devil. So, God is holy splendor, thunder, power, and majesty. God makes the trees tremble and rattles the earth. God shakes the wilderness. All say of God, "Glory, Glory, Glory!" (Ps. 29). God breaks into our world. God disrupts our lives insofar as we do not yet know that he is our life.

When we most deeply know God, we know ourselves loved by him.

Look It Up

Read Isaiah 43:1-7.

Think About It

The power of love in you.



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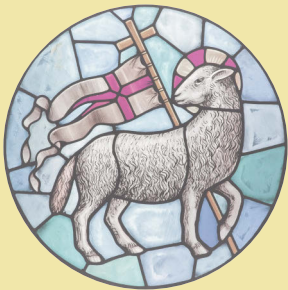
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