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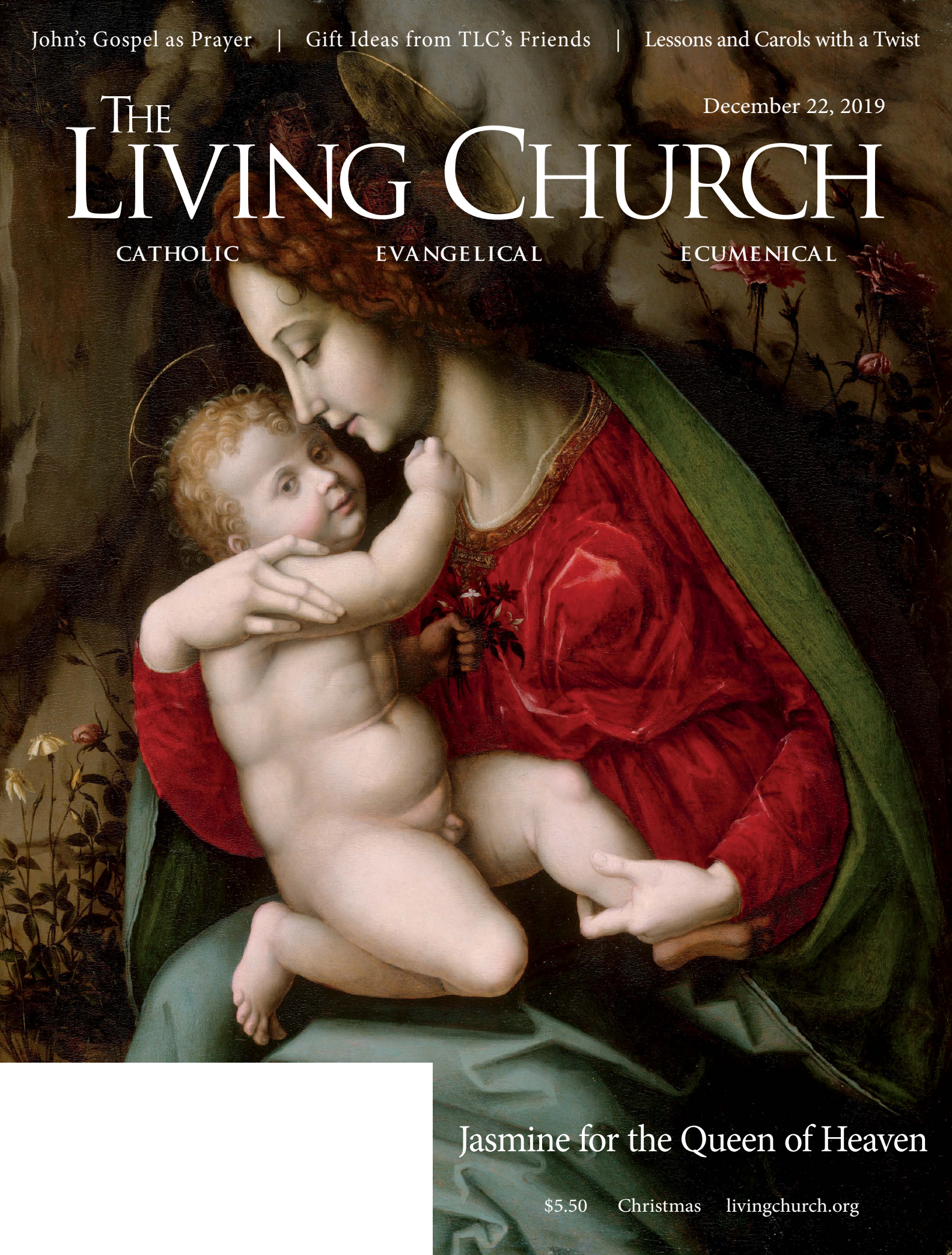
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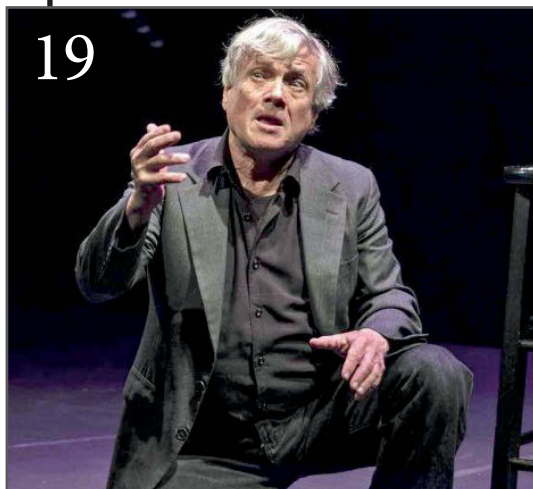
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## ON THE COVER

Madonna and Child  
Bachiacca (Francesco d'Ubertino Verdi) Italian  
The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection, 1982  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

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# THE LIVING CHURCH

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LIVING CHURCH Partners

We are grateful to St. George's Church, Nashville [p. 25] and St. Martin's Church, Houston [p. 27] whose generous support helped make this issue possible.

# Pope, Abp. of Canterbury Plan Peace Visit to South Sudan

By Mark Michael

Archbishop Justin Welby and Pope Francis will travel together to South Sudan early in 2020 if the nation's leaders continue to make progress in developing a unity government. The pastoral visit, which would be the first of its kind, grows out of several years of intimate involvement in the nation's peace process by the two leaders.

The Vatican Press Office and Lambeth Palace jointly announced the potential visit following a meeting on November 13 between the two leaders. Archbishop Welby was visiting Rome to participate in the installation of Archbishop Ian Ernest as the director of the Anglican Centre in Rome.

In a Facebook post, Archbishop Welby said of the joint meeting, "We discussed our shared passion for peace in South Sudan and agreed that if the political situation permits the creation of a transitional government of national unity, it is our intention to visit together. Our commitment to the



Vatican Media

Pope Francis embraces Archbishop Welby.

teaching of Jesus means we long to see a lasting solution to the conflict in South Sudan. We renew our call for spiritual and political leaders there to strive for peace."

The Vatican press bulletin specifically noted that the visit would be held "if the political situation in the county should allow the establishment of a transitional government of national unity in the next 100 days, at the expiry of the agreement signed in recent days in Entebbe, in Uganda."

South Sudan's president Salva Kiir met with opposition leader Riek

Machar at Entebbe on November 9, and they jointly agreed to form a transitional government by February 20. President Kiir has pledged \$100 million towards establishing governmental structures for the nation, but major differences about security assurances and state boundaries remain between the two parties.

Christian leaders have played a major role in the peace process in Sudan, a country that is 60% Christian, mostly Roman Catholic and Anglican. A joint statement by ecumenical church leaders in July 2018 lamented the lack of progress: "Our hearts pain for the suffering, tired, hungry flock and for our leaders with all their fears, anger and trauma as they struggle both across our nation, the region and the world." The statement, issued from Nairobi, played a major role in bringing opposing leaders to the negotiating table. The Anglican Archbishop, Justin Badi Arama, later helped to renew stalled peace talks.

Sudan's six-year civil war, which broke out just two years after national independence was declared, has devastated the country. An estimated 200,000 people have been killed, and millions have been displaced. The UN has described rape as "endemic" in the country, and the World Food Program warned in June, during the peak of the hunger season, that more than 60% of citizens were suffering from a widespread food shortage.

## New Primate for Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

By Mark Michael

The Rt. Rev. Michael Lewis became President Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East on November 17. Lewis,

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who has served as Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf for the past twelve years, succeeds Archbishop Suheil Dawani of Jerusalem in this primatial role.

Lewis, who will continue his diocesan ministry, will serve a term of two-and-a-half years. The province is the Anglican Communion's largest in geographical spread, but is among the smallest in population, with only 55 congregations and about 35,000 members (slightly more than the Diocese of Chicago). The province is composed of four dioceses: Cyprus and the Gulf, Egypt and North Africa, Iran, and Jerusalem.

In an interview with *Anglican News Service*, Lewis said that he hoped to raise awareness about the ministry of the diocese, which gathers Anglicans who practice their faith in diverse settings. "There are some countries where Christianity is honored and taken to be a part of the integral life of a nation. There are others where it is under some pressure and threat and where maybe people will wonder what part

Christians are playing." A June 2019 Pew report described all twenty countries of the province as places where the levels of government restriction on religion is either high or very high.

Lewis said that the situation is especially challenging for Anglicans in Iran. The Diocese of Iran, whose presence dates from Henry Martyn's pioneering missionary work in 1811, currently has only four small parishes. Iran has been without a bishop since 2017, and the Rev. Dr. Albert Waters, the acting vicar-general, was forced to leave the country earlier this year when his visa was not renewed.

According to a May 2019 report from *Radio Farda*, an English-language Iranian news source, Mahmud Alavi, the Iranian Intelligence Minister, said that his agency was active "in countering the advocates of Christianity" amid a growing number of illegal conversions from Islam to Christianity. A 2015 study conservatively estimated that there are 100,000 Christian converts currently living in Iran, most of

them evangelicals and Pentecostals. While Christianity is officially protected under the Iranian constitution, the printing and distribution of Bibles and other forms of Christian literature is illegal, and conversion from Islam is potentially punishable by death.

Lewis also noted that Anglicans in Iraq face deep challenges. St. George's in Bagdad, the single Anglican Church in that country, has played an important role in peace-building amid episodic violence. The overall number of Christians in Iraq has fallen by 80% since the US invasion in 2003. The province's growing edge has been among Sudanese refugees in the Horn of Africa, where the groundwork is being laid to develop a new Anglican province, based in Egypt.

Lewis said that ecumenical cooperation is deeply important in the region, and he currently serves as a member of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue. "We have to recognise that we must practi-

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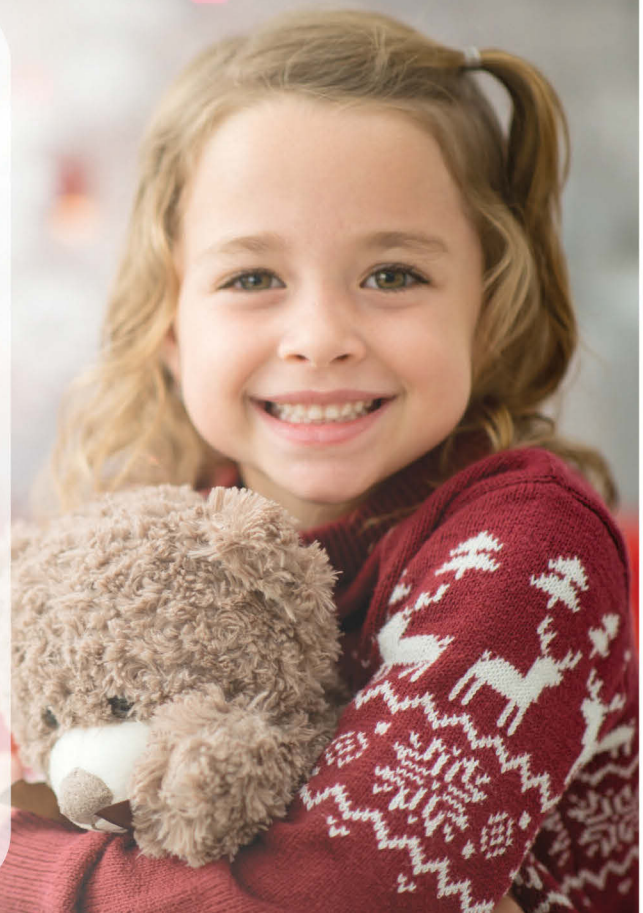
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(Continued from previous page)

cally work ecumenically together with other mainline Christians of goodwill," he said. "There are huge benefits that come from that and ecumenism across the province is in good heart."



## New Statistics Show Dramatic Decline for Canadian Anglicans

By Mark Michael

The Anglican Church of Canada will run completely out of members in just over 20 years if current rates of decline continue, according to a report presented to the Church's Council of General Synod on November 9. The Rev. Neil Elliott, a priest of the Diocese of Kootenay, was commissioned by General Synod in 2016 to gather data on church membership and participation, the first reliable statistical survey in almost two decades.

The church's new primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, described the data as a "wake-up call" for Canadian Anglicans, according to *Anglican Journal*. But she also said she hoped the bad news would not pull the church into a "vortex of negativity," adding, "It's my hope that when we leave here, the message we take is not 'Oh no, the church is dying,' but 'Oh, we've got a challenge,'" she said. "But we've also got a hopeful way of addressing that."

Elliott relied on five different data sets and measures of participation to gather information, and noted that all generated remarkably similar estimates. His report noted that since the

last reliable statistical totals, the annual rate of decline in the numbers on parish rolls has been 2.77%, from 641,845 in 2001 to 357,123 in 2017. During the same period, Canada's total population increased from 31 million to 37 million. Other measures of vitality showed similarly drastic rates of decline. The number of baptisms in 2017, for example, was 5,411, down from 13,304 in 2001 (and 44,416 in 1961). The overall percentage of Canadians who are Anglicans has decreased from a high point of 7% in 1961 to about 1% today.

In a detailed analysis on *Covenant*, church statistician David Goodhew noted that the Canadian church has seen decline in all dioceses except the indigenous-majority Diocese of the Arctic, in the country's far north. The decline has been especially steep in the nation's rural dioceses, which serve communities that have generally experienced depopulation. Ten dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada — a third of all dioceses — have an average Sunday attendance of less than 1,000.

Among Anglican provinces, Elliott noted that the Canadian church's rate of decline for 2018 was exceeded only by that of the significantly larger Episcopal Church, which has a projected "zero-member date" of 2050.

Goodhew pointed out, though, that not all Canadian churches have experienced decline, and that advancing secularism cannot fully account for the decline. "Whilst some denominations in Canada have shared Anglicanism's steep decline," he wrote, "some have not. It is a seductive delusion to assume that there is some inevitable tide of secularism sweeping all Canadian churches into oblivion and that the ACoC can do nothing. In particular, churches rooted in ethnic diversity are thriving in Canada's now hugely diverse larger cities. Denominations and congregations have agency over their fate."

Bishop Jenny Andison, a suffragan of the Diocese of Toronto, reflected on the announcement in a recent post on *Covenant*. She said she hopes the bracing news can help Canadian Anglicans embrace the call to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their communities.

“If our own numerical decline means that we decide to get serious about reclaiming our apostolic calling to be missionaries to our culture and encourage church planting, fresh expressions of church, and reshaping our parishes for mission, then it’s about time. If these statistics light a fire under us to keep re-imagining ministry in our neighborhoods in fresh and creative ways beyond the traditional parish model, then excellent. And if the decline means that we are more ready to acknowledge our own sinfulness (personally and institutionally) and come to God in great humility and repentance, asking to be led forward by the Holy Spirit, then bring on the bracing statistics!”

## Bishop Roundup

### Georgia

The Diocese of Georgia voted on November 15 to elect its longtime canon to the ordinary to serve as the XI Bishop of Georgia. Assuming he receives the necessary majority of endorsements, the Rev. Frank Logue will be consecrated on May 30, 2020. He will succeed the Rt. Rev. Scott A. Benhase, who has served since 2010.

A canon to the ordinary is normally the chief of staff in a diocese, and it’s unusual to become bishop in the same diocese. Logue told *TLC*, “Through the election, the diocese is showing that they really like the direction the diocese is going in. I feel like my call is an elevation of the work that Bishop Benhase and the team I’ve been on have done for the past 10 years.”

He credited Benhase with establishing leadership training and greater transparency financially, and generally moving the operation to a more business-like approach. “If you go through a time of focusing more on task, as slightly higher than relationships, what people want then is a deeper connection with one another,” and that’s what the diocese said it was looking for in its profile.

Logue was elected on the first ballot, which is not typical, and is mathematically challenging when there are five candidates.

### Missouri

Bible-belt Missouri, a slave-holding border state during the Civil War, has elected a gay, black immigrant to serve as the XI Bishop of Missouri.

The Rev. Deon K. Johnson, who currently lives in Michigan with his husband and two children, was elected on the first ballot from a slate of three candidates at the 180th diocesan convention. Assuming he receives the required endorsements from more than half of the diocesan bishops and standing committees, he will be consecrated April 25, 2020. He will succeed the Rt. Rev. George Wayne Smith, who has served as diocesan bishop since 2002.

In the profile he wrote prior to the election, Johnson said he was born in Barbados, and emigrated to New York at the age of 14 with his older brother — leaving their mother and grandmother behind. He has served for the past 13 years as rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Brighton, Michigan, about 40 miles west of Detroit. He described the church as having “a long history of social activism particularly around the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons, tackling food insecurity, and youth and young adult engagement.”

### Alabama

Two women and a man have been nominated as candidates to become the XII Bishop of Alabama:

- The Rev. Glenda Curry, rector of All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Alabama;
- The Rev. Evan D. Garner, rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas; and
- The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles, priest-in-charge at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas.

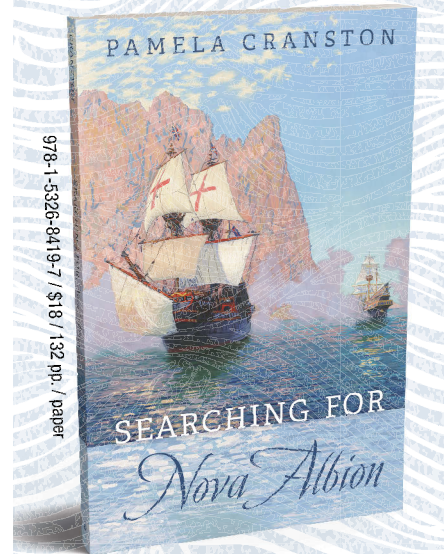
Election is scheduled for January 18, and consecration for June 27, 2020. The winning candidate will succeed the Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan, who was elected bishop suffragan in 2008 and bishop diocesan in 2011.

### Minnesota

The Episcopal Church in Minnesota has announced two candidates for the position of X Bishop of Minnesota:

- The Rev. Canon Abbott Bailey,

(Continued on next page)



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canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of California; and

- The Very Rev. Craig Loya, dean of Trinity Cathedral, Omaha, Nebraska.

Election is scheduled for January 25, and consecration for June 6, 2020. The successful candidate will succeed the Rt. Rev. Brian N. Prior, who has served as Bishop of Minnesota since 2010.

### Taiwan

The Episcopal Diocese of Taiwan has received notification that Bishop-Elect Lennon Yuan-Rung Chang has received the required majority of consents from bishops diocesan and standing committees. He was elected on August 3, 2019, and will be consecrated as Bishop of Taiwan on February 22, 2020, succeeding the Rt. Rev. David J.H. Lai, who has served since 2001.

### Pioneering LGBT Activist Louie Crew Clay Dies at 82

By Kirk Petersen

Dr. Louie Crew Clay, an English professor who advocated for gay and lesbian Episcopalians for most of five decades, died peacefully on November 27 with his husband, Ernest Clay, at his side. He would have turned 83 on December 9. The announcement was made by the Rev. Brent Bates, rector of Grace Church in Newark, NJ, where the Clays worshiped.

Louie Crew, as he was known most of his life, founded Integrity USA, a gay-acceptance group within the Episcopal Church, in 1974. This began a career as both a champion of the LGBT community and a target for opponents of the burgeoning gay rights movement.

Crew lived long enough to be able to legally marry Ernest Clay and take his name in 2013, and to see the 2015 General Convention approve the use of marriage rites for same-sex couples.

At that convention in Salt Lake City, House of Deputies President Gay Clark Jennings said: “Many of us here tonight



ENS photo

At the 2015 General Convention, from left: the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, the Rev. Susan Russell, the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, Louie Crew Clay and Ernest Clay.

have never known an Episcopal Church without a strong, steady voice supporting LGBTQ people.” She cited his accomplishments, including a term on the Executive Council and six General Convention appearances as a deputy for the Diocese of Newark.

“I’m proud to say Louie is my friend,” she said, while awarding him a House of Deputies medal “on behalf of your distinguished, creative, courageous, persistent, prophetic service and witness to the Episcopal Church that you love so dearly.”

Just two days before Crew’s death, the most recent president of Integrity USA stepped down, citing health and family reasons. *ENS* reported that the Rev. Gwen Fry was resigning at a time when “the organization’s volunteer board faces members’ accusations of mismanagement and lack of transparency.”

### Longtime Director of King’s College Choir Dies

By Mark Michael

Sir Stephen Cleobury, the longtime director of the choir of King’s College, Cambridge, arguably Anglicanism’s most famous ensemble, died on November 22, after a long struggle with cancer. He died on the Feast of St. Cecilia, the patron of church music. Cleobury was music director at King’s for 37 years, and was knighted for his services to the nation in the Queen’s Birthday Honors earlier this year.

An important promoter of contemporary church music, his most significant initiative was commissioning a new carol for the Christmas Eve


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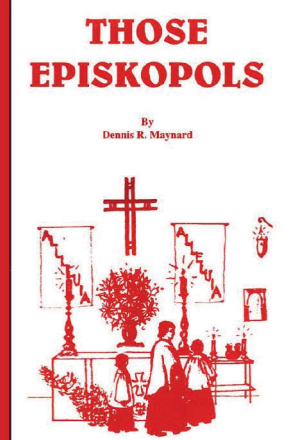


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Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, which is broadcast around the world on BBC Radio Three. A remarkable range of contemporary composers, including Arvo Part, John Tavener, and Jonathan Harvey, composed pieces for the service, and no offer Cleobury ever made for this was refused.

In a moving tribute on Facebook, Cleobury's friend, composer John Rutter, recalled Cleobury's kindness in 1987, when Rutter fell seriously ill and was unable to complete a large choral work for a London concert for the choir.

"He was sensitive enough to understand how terrible I felt about that. And he came back to me with, 'Well, John don't worry. But, would you just be able to write a carol for the Christmas Eve service?' I wrote *What Sweeter Music* [*What Sweeter Music Can We Bring*, one of Rutter's best known and most performed pieces]. They gave a beautiful first performance and Stephen has championed it ever since. That was an act of kindness on his part I will never forget and I suspect that there were many others."

Cleobury last led the choir for the world-famous service on Christmas Eve, 2018, the hundredth anniversary. Rutter's *What Sweeter Music* was among the carols sung.

Rutter assessed Cleobury's legacy as innovative, but shaped by respect for tradition. "It's greatly to his credit, that in an expanding choral world when there were so many more fine liturgical choirs coming onto the scene, that he maintained and built up Kings honored place in the choral firmament...It was a reign which saw changes in a changing world that were absolutely in keeping with the dignity and tradition of King's but which brought it into the twenty-first century."

## Border Summit Focuses on Migrant Crisis

By Alexander Swain

200 Episcopalians and other Christians from across the country and beyond attended the second annual Border Ministries Summit in Tucson, Arizona, on November 21-23. They convened at

a time of increasing human migration globally, and rising tensions along the U.S.-Mexico border as the United States stands accused of mistreating migrants and refugees.

The conference, held at Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church in Tucson, Arizona, featured presentations from several bishops along the border and from Central America.

Bishop Juan David Alvarado of the Anglican Diocese of El Salvador said there are three main drivers of migration from Central America and Mexico: violence, climate change, and lack of economic opportunity. He said that in 2017 alone more than 296,000 new displaced persons were forced to flee their homes. "There are some churches around the year 2000 where there were one-hundred people, today we have 15 individuals in these churches," he said.

"I believe that God doesn't see borders," said Bishop Susan Snook of the Diocese of San Diego. "We are all citizens of the kingdom of God, and God calls us to act as citizens with our neighbors. God doesn't see borders, but God sees suffering. We are called to see it too."

Bishop Ricardo Gómez Osnaya of the Diocese of Western Mexico called on Christians to "make Christ present amidst a community," and said, "what I see [at refugee camps] is a people with a need, and a legitimate aspiration for a better life." He went on to say that the Church must honor "its prophetic duty and its call to walk with and alongside immigrants at this time. The Church needs to be that change agent."

"Why is it so difficult," asked Bishop Bill Lyons of the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ, to

respond "with horror at the things we see?" He called for developing a united theology and actionable response throughout the Church.

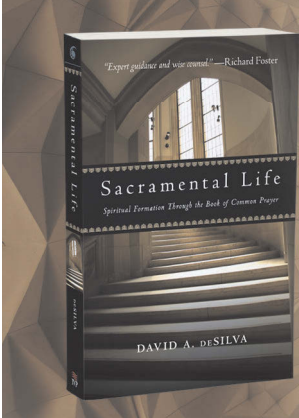
The Church must "talk about immigration as a theological and pastoral challenge for the Episcopal church and the Anglican church," Alvarado said. "No one is a migrant on earth, as we've all been created by God, and borders are artificial borders."

Numerous organizations from Arizona and beyond were present to share their work and ministries for migrants.

Take up a Cross was founded by Alicia Baucom in response to "more than 3,000 migrant deaths in the Pima County area of Southern Arizona" since 2001, caused by "deadly heat, venomous reptiles, and rough desert terrain." The organization can provide a cross with a unique identifier that marks the remains of someone who gave their life migrating for a new home.

The Tucson Samaritans works more directly with migrants, declaring: "When a government fails to respect and protect basic human rights... it is the responsibility of citizens to act in defense of these rights." Their work involves volunteering to "place water on migrant trails, participate in search and rescue efforts, make presentations to advocate for a more realistic and humane border policy," and more.

"The call to walk alongside one another is the call to be transformed," said the Rev. David Chavez, missioner for border ministries for the Diocese of Arizona, at the conclusion of the conference. "Really it's the call to recognize that everything we do as a Church is for the sake of the neighbor."



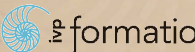

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# Jasmine for the Queen of Heaven

The U.S. Postal Service has printed Christmas stamps for nearly a half-century, and since 1966, one of the stamps has usually depicted the Nativity or a Madonna and Child. Most of the featured images have been Old Masters, especially from the National Gallery's outstanding Kress Collection of Renaissance art, and always from an American museum.

The survival of the religious Christmas stamp is rather remarkable, and does yeoman's work in bringing these treasures to public attention. The real motives behind plumping for the traditional are probably practical. Government-associated enterprises are wary of setting off righteous indignation by meddling in the avant-garde. And despite all the handwringing about creeping secularism, Americans still send 2 billion Christmas cards a year, around three percent of the first-class mail the Postal Service handles. A significant number of these are likely still sent with religious stamps. At least they're usually the first ones to run out at my local post office, and the D.C. suburbs are no great haven of piety.

The Postal Service's switch to "forever" commemorative stamps in 2000 has made it easier to cycle older stock. We now get a religious Christmas stamp about every other year.

The last one, issued in October 2018, is a real treasure. It's a detail of a *Madonna and Child* painted in the 1520s by the Florentine Mannerist painter Bachiacca, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bachiacca's first major project was decorating the walls and ceilings of Cosimo de Medici's study with carefully rendered paintings of animals and plants. He specialized in small images for domestic use, like the two-by-three-foot panel in the Met, where naturalistic detail could be viewed closely and could serve as an aid to devotion.

Medieval devotional writers and artists developed a complex web of symbolic associations for flowers. Sometimes, they noticed natural features that evoked colors or numbers from salvation, or they reconfigured earlier connections between the plants and tales from pagan mythology.

Bachiacca's panel frames Mary's body with a bower of sweetbriar, roses, and cornflowers. Sweetbriar, with its five petals, signified the wounds by which Christ redeemed the world. Roses and cornflowers were associated with the Blessed Virgin. Achilles had used cornflowers to heal a

wound from an arrow that had been in the venom of Hydra, the great sea-serpent. Reconfigured, it suited well as a reminder of she who bruised the serpent's head by her simple faith and purity (Gen. 3:15).

At the center of the image, the Christ Child presents his mother with a bouquet of jasmine flowers, still an exotic addition to Renaissance gardens. Its name comes from the Persian *yesamin*, meaning gift of God, and it is highly valued by various Asian cultures for its delicacy and intense fragrance. Brides are sometimes still decked in garlands of jasmine in Thailand and its blossoms flavor one of China's most beloved teas.

The Crusaders probably brought jasmine to Western Europe, where it became an essential product in the budding French perfume industry. Boccaccio describes borders of rose and jasmine planted alongside the walks of the Tuscan villa in which his *Decameron* is

set. Written in the early 1350s, it is the first mention of the plant in Western literature. Bachiacca would have known the setting well.

Jasmine features petals of purest white and an intense fragrance — perhaps the world's strongest-smelling plant. A bouquet of jasmine is a fitting gift for Mary, the Queen of Heaven. She responded to God's summons in hope and sang his praise with courage. Above all of us, she is the one who, in St. Paul's words, "leads us in triumph, and . . . spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere" (2 Cor. 2:15). Her humble purity is for us, "a fragrance from life to life" (2:16), pattern and sign of the transforming work of the One that "lifteth up the lowly" (Luke 2:52).

But Mary's is, in truth, a borrowed fragrance. She is filled in advance with the grace that streams from the resurrected body of her Son. If she is crowned above all saints, it is to share in the rule of her Son's native land. No less a hope awaits poor sinners like us, who rejoice in the dawn of grace this Christmas and long for the fragrance of jasmine yet to come:

*Not in that purely lowly stable,  
With the oxen standing by  
We shall see him, but in heaven,  
Set at God's right hand on high.  
Where like stars, his children crowned,  
All in white shall stand around.* (Hymn 102, vs. 4)

—Mark Michael



# Gift ideas from friends of THE LIVING CHURCH



## Jenny Andison

Socks. My husband and I have three teenage daughters and every single weekday morning, I listen to some version of, “Mummy, I need some socks!” For Christmas, everyone is getting Conscious Step socks made in Nepal from Ten Thousand Villages. Ten Thousand Villages is the fair-trade social enterprise of the Mennonite Central Committee in North America. They partner with small-scale artisans and co-ops to bring

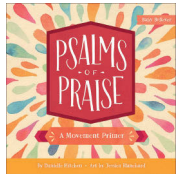


their wares to international markets. They have a wonderful Christmas guide, which also sells socks!

*The Rt. Rev. Jenny Andison is a bishop suffragan of the Diocese of Toronto.*

## Elizabeth Baumann

For any small children on your list or a gift to your church’s children’s ministry, I love board books — the kind with thick cardboard pages toddlers can’t tear. Our family especially loves *Psalms of Praise: A Movement Primer* by Danielle Hitchen; *My First Pictures of Jesus* by Maïte Roche; and *We Go to Mass* by George Brundage (unlike others of its kind, it shows children

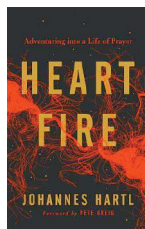


receiving Communion, rather than just a blessing).

*Elizabeth Baumann is a priest’s wife and children’s minister, whose two daughters (ages 4 and 1) tested these recommendations.*

## Christopher Beeley

*Heart Fire: Adventuring into a Life of Prayer* (Muddy Pearl, 2018) by Johannes Hartl is a moving tale of the sort of prayer that will change your life. Hartl writes of his ecumenical experience of prayer, from Cistercian monasteries and the Syrian desert to hospital wards and inner-city drug communities. A compelling introduction and a worthy guide into the depths, replete with miracles that testify to the power of the risen Lord, *Heart Fire* is a treasure of a book.



*The Rev. Christopher Beeley is Bovender Professor of Theology and director of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies at Duke Divinity School.*

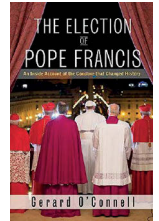
## Kristine Blaess

When our children were young, we began the tradition of giving them money to give away. This is their “big” gift each year and has brought the most joy of any gift. The kids choose where to give the money. They can give it to their school, to the church, or to a nonprofit doing work that is meaningful to them. Our kids have built relationships with leaders of the nonprofits they support each year.

*The Rev. Kristine Blaess is rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and a member of the Living Church Foundation.*

## Brian Cole

In a year when many of us have followed Episcopal bishop elections closely, I commend *The Election of Pope Francis: An Inside Account of the Conclave that Changed History* (Orbis, 2019). Written by Gerard O’Connell, a long-time Vatican reporter, the book is an ecclesiastical thriller. The reader goes inside the room where voting cardinals pray, debate, and decide who will lead the Catholic Church after the surprising resignation of Pope Benedict XVI.



*The Rt. Rev. Brian L. Cole serves as the 5th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee.*

## Sarah Cornwell

Many of us have quasi-sacred Christmas traditions that we have shared with loved ones in the past that distance or other circumstances may prevent us from celebrating together at present. Consider sending the ingredients of a cherished tradition (like Christmas morning pancakes) along with a handwritten note of fond memories to let your loved ones know that these Christmas traditions continue to be beloved and remembered.

*Sarah Cornwell is a laywoman who lives with her family in the Hudson River Valley.*

## Anthony Curren

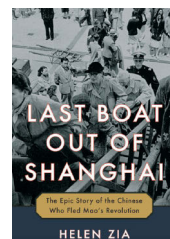
The best present I have given recently was to my nephew for his 18th birthday. A student of English literature, he is very proud of his book collection. I bought him an embossing stamp to mark his books “Ex Libris Joseph Stonor.” Last year I made Marmalade and gave jars to the three secretaries with whom I work at the Pontifical Council. Shops don’t sell bitter Seville oranges in Rome as they do in the UK, but there are orange groves on the Aventine Hill and the trees, planted for ornamental reasons, are Spanish, and perfect for making marmalade. I use the fool-proof technique demonstrated in this classic old video <https://bit.ly/2O0DBGK>, but with much less sugar and some grated fresh ginger and a little whiskey for a kick.



*The Rev. Tony Curren is an English priest who works in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity with responsibilities for the Catholic Church’s relations with Anglicans and Methodists*

## Stuart Dunnan

*Last Boat out of Shanghai* (Ballantine, 2019) by Helen Zia tells the true stories of four young people who fled Shanghai as the Red Army was taking the city in 1949. They look back to their childhoods under the Europeans, then the Japanese, and then the Nationalists, and the lives they built after leaving.



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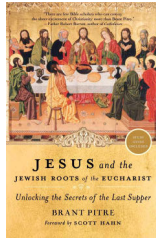


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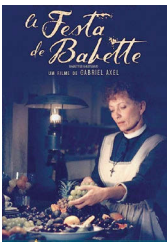
Saint John's University, an Episcopal mission founded by our alumnus Samuel I. J. Schereschewsky, also figures prominently. The story was incredibly engaging, in just the way that the Christmas story is engaging: a testament to human hope, love, courage, and resilience, and the grace of God which carries us through, that light shining in the darkness. *The Rev. Stuart Dunnan is headmaster of Saint James School and a member of the Living Church Foundation.*

## Nicholas Knisely

*Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (Image, 2011) by Brant Pitre (with a preface by Scott Hahn) is a brilliant, accessible presentation of an underappreciated aspect of the Eucharist given to the Church; its deep and profound meaning to the Jews of Jesus' day. It will transform your preaching during Holy Week and broaden your understanding of the Mass. *The Rt. Rev. Nicholas Knisely is the present Bishop of Rhode Island and an occasional author.*



## Lorenzo Lebrija



A single figure who embodies God's self-giving love sets a great feast to change the hearts of all. I'm not talking about Jesus. In this case, it's the plot of a film that makes for a beautiful pilgrimage you can take without ever leaving your home. *Babette's Feast* (1987) is a movie that theologians, critics, artists, and, of course, foodies all love. And

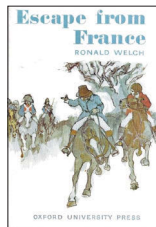
it's a favorite of both Rowan Williams and Pope Francis. Treat yourself.

*The Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija is the founding director of the Try-Tank Experimental Lab for church growth and innovation.*

## Mark Michael

Ronald Welch's 12-volume *Carey Family Saga* is an excellent choice for the swash-buckling adventure fan on your list. Handsomely republished by Slightly Foxed, this postwar children's classic traces seven centuries of a family's service to God, King and Country, from the Horns of Hattin to the trenches of Ypres. It's sure to kindle a love of British history and — with God's help — a passion for valor and magnanimity. May also result in bedroom floors littered with toy soldier reenactments of Waterloo.

*The Rev. Mark Michael is editor of THE LIVING CHURCH.*



## Kate Moorehead

My mother is a composer and loves to set sacred texts to

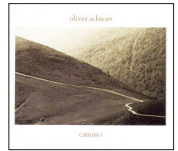
music. One of my favorites is a setting of the words, "Peace Be with You." The phrase, which the world cries out to hear and experience, is repeated in twelve languages: Portuguese, Zulu, Croatian, Hindi, Hebrew, Thai, English, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Swahili, and Russian. Mom will send you an MP3 and PDF files of the full score and other goodies, for free if you contact her at [susanbingham@chancelopera.com](mailto:susanbingham@chancelopera.com).

*The Very Rev. Kate Moorehead is dean of Saint John's Cathedral, Jacksonville, Florida.*

## Dane Neufeld

A few years before he passed away, Canadian fiddler Oliver Schroer walked the Camino trail with his wife, two friends, and some recording equipment. The result was a beautiful solo fiddle album, *Camino* (Big Dog Music, 2006), often recorded amidst the gentle sounds of village life, monastic chant, and the sacred acoustics of churches along the way. The music is raw, unproduced, and richly complex and meditative. For years my wife and I have loved this album, which makes a wonderful gift.

*The Rev. Dane Neufeld is the rector of All Saints', Fort McMurray, in the Diocese of Athabasca.*



## Amber Noel

Give away something you own and love. Feel confident the recipient will value and use it. If necessary, give yourself time to be ready to part with it. (Give the wrong thing, too soon, or to the wrong person, and you'll just feel annoyed.) Your rose bush, your favorite mug, heirloom boots, or a sweater you knit (good patterns at [tincanknits.com](http://tincanknits.com)). It's a bracing Advent exercise, fun, and often (prepare yourself) a real tear-jerker.

*Amber Noel is newly associate director of the Living Church Institute and associate editor at TLC.*

## Kirk Petersen

I give you my wife's recipe for candied nuts, which look great in a festive tin:

- 1 lb. walnut or pecan halves
- 1 egg white
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon



### Instructions

- Combine sugar, salt and cinnamon; set aside.
- In large bowl, whisk egg white and vanilla.
- Add nuts and seasonings to large bowl, toss to coat.
- Spread nuts on sprayed cookie sheet, bake 1 hour at 250°, turning once.

Make a double batch—you don't want to give them *all* away.

*Kirk Petersen is associate editor of THE LIVING CHURCH.*

## Chip Prehn

Besides a gift subscription to THE LIVING CHURCH magazine, I recommend Wendell Berry's *What I Stand On: Collected Essays*, edited by Jack Shoemaker. This handsome, two-volume boxed set from the Library of America may be ordered for less than \$35 from Amazon and sent directly to the person you wish to remember at Christmas. This gift would be a way for someone you love to have some of the most beautiful prose-writing of our time. Berry is

wise and a prophet.

*The Rev. W.L. Prehn is a board member of the Living Church Foundation.*

## Ephraim Radner

For New Year's: Burns's *Auld Lang Syne* has faded. Besides, it's boring. Far better is Léo Ferré's *Pauvre [Poor] Rutebeuf*, from 1956. Ferré, a standout French popular musician, stitched together his lyrics from the 13th century poet Rutebeuf, who recounts his hard life and vanished friends. It is filled with pathos, love, loss, and God. Ferré's simple music is inspired, along with his performances. Nana Mouskouri has a sublime version. Even a young Joan Baez (1965) shines!

*The Rev. Ephraim Radner is professor of historical theology at Wycliffe College, Toronto and a member of The Living Church Foundation.*



Ferré

## Vivian Ruth Sawyer

My cousin Peggye Hart Knight was a fantastic cook, and produced an epic, all-butter pound cake with a crunchy, sugary crust that made people swoon. I routinely ordered dozens to give for Christmas, tying the recipe on top with a deep blue ribbon. Peggye died this year, so I might dare try making her pound cake, although it will not be as good as that being shared this Christmas

by the communion of saints.

*Vivian Ruth Sawyer is co-facilitator with her husband, Tom Noland, of the Consortium for Christian Unity.*

## Rita Steadman

At Christmas I can find lovely gift lotions and oils that soothe the hands and the heart at [thistlefarms.org](http://thistlefarms.org). Thistle Farms helps “women survivors of trafficking, prostitution,



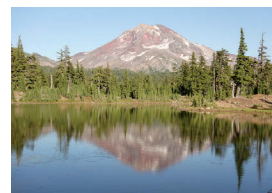
and addiction find healing, hope, and freedom.” Women find safe housing and support, and become employed by participating in product creation and commerce at Thistle Farms. As their web site says, “Survivors get a second chance at life and you feel good about the things you buy.”

*The Rev. Marguerite Steadman is rector of St. John's, Bangor, Maine, where she also works with women from Courage Lives, an organization committed to supporting women survivors of human trafficking. She is also a member of the Living Church Foundation.*

## Bobby Smith

Take someone you love on a hike through the Willamette National Forest in Oregon. I particularly recommend the McKenzie River Trail; don't miss Sahalie and Koosah Falls. Fly into Bend, sample some of the local wines and craft brews; spend time in Sisters and hike the beauty that is God's creation.

*The Rev. Bobby Smith is dean, president and CEO of Saint Francis Ministries, an international ministry that offers healing and hope to children and families.*



Robert Shaw and Paul Scofield in *A Man for All Seasons*

## Joe Swimmer

Every year on or around Christmas, we watch the film adaptation of Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons* (1966). While you can quibble with the historical veracity of Bolt's text, the

overarching theme of holding fast to one's faith and beliefs, even when it means sacrificing everything, never fails to encourage. It is a message we need to hear now more than ever. Also, Paul Scofield is an amazing actor!

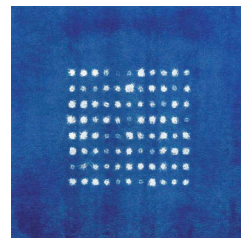
*Joe Swimmer is executive director of the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes.*

## Steven Tomlinson

This year I've been sharing *re:member*, the latest project by Icelandic musician Olafur Arnalds. What's remarkable about friends' responses is not the considerable enthusiasm with which they've embrace the music, but the range of emotion it seems to evoke — “childlike joy,” “awe,” “startling empathy,” “grief and rebirth” — to quote from a few thank-you notes. The conversations about Arnalds' “reimagined” classical music have been as much fun as the work itself.

*Steven Tomlinson is associate professor of leadership and administration at Seminary of the Southwest and teaches entrepreneurship at the Acton School of Business in Austin, Texas.*

(Continued on next page)



# Gift ideas from friends of THE LIVING CHURCH



(Continued from previous page)

## Paul Wheatley

For the Bible-lover on your list, I recommend two new translations. First, *The Hebrew Bible* (Norton, 2018) by Robert Alter with commentary is a pricey but valuable gift for those who love the narrative quality of the scriptures, done by a master of biblical narrative. Second, David Bentley Hart's *New Testament* (Yale, 2017) with commentary provides a literal — but not rigid — translation with notes alerting the reader to several issues of interpretation and translation.

*The Rev. Paul Wheatley is a PhD candidate studying Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity at the University of Notre Dame.*

## Joseph Wandera

*While Shepherds Watch Their Flock* (Higher Life, 2009) by Timothy S. Laniak offers helpful insights into the world of shepherds in biblical times and today. Those engaged in pastoral ministry and other forms of leadership can learn much from its forty daily reflections on topics like compassion, courage, and searching for God's own heart. This book is a gift to an increasingly polarized world in need of

godly and compassionate leaders in the church and in political and economic life. *Joseph Wandera is Bishop of Mumias in the Anglican Diocese of Kenya and a member of the Living Church Foundation.*

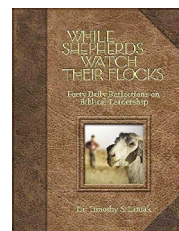
## Paul Zahl

I suggest a little Italian comedy film entitled *Don Camillo* (1952), easily available in a nice package from Koch Lorber.



It tells the story of a traditionalist Roman Catholic priest in a small town in the Po Valley, who “faces off” with the newly elected Communist mayor, who is just as strong in his convictions as the priest. Trouble is, they are childhood friends, and share a genuine bond of respect and love. This delightful, contagious movie could not be more apt and hopeful given the current political divide in our country. You'll love it.

*The Rev. Paul F.M. Zahl is a retired Episcopal priest living in Winter Garden, Florida.*



**“I was a stranger and you welcomed me...**

for as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

~Matthew 25:35,40

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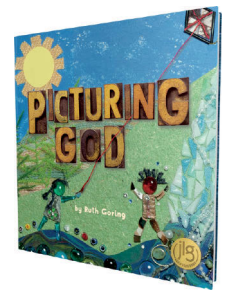
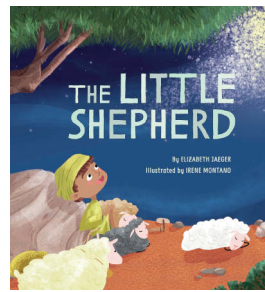
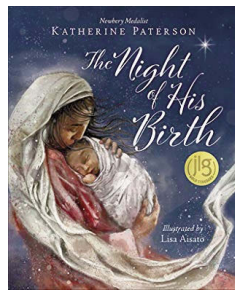
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THE *Episcopal* CHURCH



## New Children's Christmas Stories

# Lost Dogs, Little Shepherds, and Mystical Interludes

Review by Cole Hartin

Anyone can become an author of children's books, it seems. This year's offerings from religious publishers showcase both the sub-average as well as the exemplary. While authors continue to be inspired by the Christmas story, the standard narrative seems to have tired them. This year we see different takes on the traditional story: Kathleen Bostrom uses the holiday "feels" as a backdrop to a story about a missing dog. Katherine Paterson sees the miracle of the incarnation anew through the eyes of Mary. Elizabeth Jaeger asks how a common shepherd boy would have responded to Christ's birth. Ruth Goring skips the traditional Christmas vibes and offers a provoking visual exploration of divine love. Each author has moments that please, but some books are worth far more than others.

### *The Worst Christmas Ever*

By Kathleen Long Bostrom; illustrated by Guy Porfirio

Ages 3-7

Flyaway Books, pp. 48, \$17

This is a brightly colored portrayal of a sad boy who has lost his dog. Following the move of Matthew and his family to California from cooler climes, Bostrom describes the heartache inherent in leaving old friends and worshipping in new churches. Christmas seems an almost accidental backdrop to this story, until Matthew's missing dog turns out to have been hiding in his parish's outdoor nativity set. It turns out, that after days of searching, Jasper, the family dog, has reappeared under the straw in Jesus's crib just when Matthew's family is re-enacting the first Noel. The story feels forced, and has little depth. Still, my kids (3 and 5 years old) appreciated the resolve of the lost-then-found dog.

### *The Night of His Birth*

By Katherine Paterson; illustrated by Lisa Aisato

Ages 6-10

Flyaway Books, pp. 32, \$18

Katherine Paterson is a poet. Her writing pairs wonderfully with the ethereal illustrations of Lisa Aisato in this excellent

reflection of Christ's birth from the perspective of Mary. Adults and mature children alike will delight in the simple yet deep meditation of the nativity. This book may not have the glitz and pacing to keep younger readers attentive, but its literary quality will make it a family treasure that finds its way to the coffee table every December.

### *The Little Shepherd*

By Elizabeth Jaeger; illustrated by Irene Montano

Ages 3-5

Beaming Books, pp. 32, \$16.99

With simple rhyming verse, Jaeger recasts the story of Jesus's birth from the perspective of a shepherd boy. The pace is quick and the illustrations are engaging, though they lack the depth and detail that is found in Paterson's book above. All this is fine, however, because Montano's illustrations are meant for little ones and for them, they will not disappoint. Nothing too out of the ordinary here but it will be a pleasant addition to any family's Christmas bookshelf.

### *Picturing God*

By Ruth Goring

Ages 5-8

Beaming Books, pp. 40, \$17.99

This book is a sacramental and mystical contemplation on the nature of God. Goring uses photographs of household objects like string and beads to illustrate her probing prose. In the vein of Julian of Norwich, whom she quotes, Goring depicts scenes of prayer and shepherding to visualize the love and faithfulness of God. Adults will find this book compelling and children will find the images and the various elements used to make them fascinating. Parents looking for a book to complement and expand on images found in biblical stories will find this a welcome and beautiful resource. Not much of a holiday theme to this one, but a wonderful gift idea, nonetheless.

*Cole Hartin is assistant curate of St. Luke's Church, Saint John's, New Brunswick*

# Small Church Meets Big Post-Hurricane Housing Need

By Kirk Petersen

When priests find themselves doing some unpriestly project or task, some of them have been known to say: “I didn’t learn about this at seminary.”

The Rev. Debra Maconaughey graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary, where she learned many things. Among the things she did *not* learn there is how to develop an apartment complex.

Maconaughey is the rector of St. Columba Episcopal Church in Marathon, Florida, a town of 8,600 which is more or less in the middle of the Florida Keys. The Keys are a fragile ribbon of islands extending more than 100 miles from the southern tip of Florida toward the Gulf of Mexico.

In September 2017, Hurricane Irma plowed right through the center of the Keys after causing catastrophic damage in the Caribbean Sea. St. Columba was spared serious damage, and more than 100 people found shelter there for weeks after the hurricane. But much of the town was devastated.

After the initial crisis passed, Maconaughey and her flock realized that recovery was going to take years, not months. Two years out, she estimates that Marathon is about 50 percent recovered, and other parts of the Keys perhaps 75 percent.

Before Irma, “workforce housing was already a problem, and so much of the workforce housing was just destroyed,” Maconaughey said. This has hampered the economy and the recovery. “If you go to a store, the line’s going to be really long, because there’s only one employee.” The others have had to move away.

“Houses are still standing, and they need to be demolished. There are many vacant lots where houses were standing, and they’ve been demolished, and they’re waiting either to get permits or figure out how to pay for rebuilding.”

The church started by buying or renting 22 trailer homes to provide



The Rev. Debra Maconaughey displays a kitchen under construction, where a hurricane left devastation. St. Columba photo

temporary shelter. “We have people in our parish still living in trailers in their driveway,” she said.

They set their sights on something more permanent. “We want to be able to offer to people in our community [whose] places were destroyed, a place to get their feet on solid ground.”

They found a 16-unit apartment complex a mile from the church where the interiors had been destroyed, but the concrete walls were still structurally sound.

“It was on the market for \$1.75 million — that’s more than \$100,000 per unit” for not-yet-gutted shells, said Bailey Dotson, a parishioner.

Dotson is kind of the opposite of Maconaughey — he’s never been to seminary, but he does know a thing or two about developing apartments. “My background is real estate development — I’ve built several thousand apartments” before retiring to Marathon, he said.

The Florida Keys have complicated restrictions on how much housing can be built — reflecting the fact that the only evacuation route is the Overseas Highway that connects the Keys. But because the apartment complex had

been destroyed, the owner automatically had building rights for a similar number of units elsewhere.

“Those grandfathered rights are worth about \$40 to \$50 thousand per unit on the open market,” Dotson said. The church offered to let the owner keep those rights and subtract the value from the purchase price.

“So from a million-seven we ultimately got the price down to less than a million dollars,” Dotson said. The owner also agreed to take \$500,000 down and carry the remainder as a loan, with the church paying interest only for five years. “It made it possible for us to do the deal,” he said. The church will get a few years of cash flow from the apartments before having to refinance the loan.

Once the property was purchased, the church still faced the need to spend most of a million dollars to make the units livable again. Episcopal Relief & Development “kicked in \$400,000,” Dotson said, and the rest has been raised from parishioners and loans.

The interior demolition work was done primarily by volunteers, “with tons of sweat equity,” Maconaughey said. The construction work is under



# Injecting Creativity into Lessons and Carols

By David Palmer

One of the things that generates loyalty to the Episcopal Church among its parishioners is an affection for its traditions. (Just ask any member of the committee for the 1982 Hymnal whether they got an earful for removing “Turn Back, O Man” from it!) The festival of lessons and carols (usually nine) is among these beloved traditions. Usually offered during Advent, when scheduled late, it often has plenty of Christmas content.

It may come as a surprise to some that this perennial tradition actually has its origins in 1880. The famous annual presentation of this service at King’s College, Cambridge began in 1918 when the dean of the college became convinced that more imaginative worship was needed by the Church of England. These facts remind us that all traditions were once new and that, when the church’s worship needs an injection of creativity, it may not be helpful to say, “But we’ve never done it that way!”

Much as Stravinsky redefined musical traditions in his neoclassicism, Christ Episcopal Church in Ballston Spa, New York, redefined the tradition of lessons and carols in 1994, hoping to bring new people into the church.

The idea originated with a parishioner, Field Horne, who spoke to the then-new rector, Derek Roy, about offering a service that drew on non-mainstream carols, primarily Celtic, African-American, and Shape Note. Given the go-ahead, Horne recruited musicians both in and out of the parish to do the service.

(Continued on next page)



In this “before” photo, the debris is gone but reconstruction has not started. Below: a new thrift shop facing the Overseas Highway. St. Columba photos

way, and they hope to have tenants moving in by February 2020.

The 16 one-bedroom units initially will be available only to people with jobs in Marathon whose homes were destroyed in the hurricane — a pool of potential tenants that will be more than large enough to fill the four buildings of apartments. Another small building facing the Overseas Highway will become a thrift shop operated by the church.

“We are planning for \$900 a month rent — unheard of down here,” Maconaughey said. Zillow.com, an online real estate service, shows four one-bedroom apartments available in Marathon as of late November, with rents ranging from \$1,400 to \$3,000. At the high end of the market, sale prices for single-family waterfront estates top out at \$15 million.

Maconaughey’s bishop, the Rt. Rev.

Peter Eaton of the Diocese of Southeast Florida, is a big fan of the project. He described it as “an extraordinary story of how a parish, which a decade ago was slated to be closed, has recovered over these ten years to such an extent that it has purchased and renovated an apartment building in the neighborhood to provide essential affordable workforce housing.”

Parochial report data indicate St. Columba has an average Sunday attendance of a little more than 80, and plate and pledge income of about \$170,000. “It’s a little church, but it’s doing big things,” said Marilou Dotson, Bailey’s wife, who has been managing all of the paperwork for the project. Maconaughey said the church plans to hire a professional management company for the long haul.

“Fortunately, we had a lot of very sophisticated folks, who were able to put that kind of a deal together,” Bailey Dotson said. In addition to the Dotsons, the church committee also includes an architect, and “a guy who’s very knowledgeable in commercial properties.”

And they had faith. “We believe everything comes from the Eucharist. We believe God makes the table bigger,” Maconaughey said. “We believe clearly and strongly that we need to be the light of Christ to the world.”

She learned about that at seminary.





Musicians at Christ Church, Ballston Spa's 2016 Lessons and Carols Service. Front row: Theresa LaGattuta-Bruno, Kristin McCabe, Trish Miller. Back row: Joel Rosenberger, Dan Berggren, Rick Bunting, John Kirk, Field Horne

Photo courtesy of Field Horne

(Continued from previous page)

He hired two folk musicians, John Kirk and Trish Miller, whom he knew from music circles and who had just moved to the area to play and sing. Not only did they agree, but when the church decided to offer the service again the next year, "John and Trish," Horne says, "who are the headliners in every way, said, no, they didn't want to be paid, because they were joining the parish."

Since then, Christ Church has offered the service every year with continuing innovations in its repertoire. Horne says, "My personal feeling is that Christmas carols have been overdone. We have about a dozen that are the standards. Leaving church aside, you hear them on Muzak way too much. We do a lot of songs that are basically unknown. Musically, they're all strong; theologically, I think they're pretty good; and the audience loves to hear them and loves to hear the occasional new one and also the ones that we haven't done in a few years. We have way over 50, 60 [songs in total]. So, we're doing between 9 and 12 every year, and we obviously cycle through them." The congregation sings one or two songs, not necessarily carols, from the 1982 hymnal. The rest are sung by soloists and small ensembles.

Christ Church can seat 180 to 200 with extra chairs, but, after 6 years or so of offering the service, attendance grew beyond standing room, and they had to turn people away. Since then, they have offered the service on two

nights, and total attendance each year has been about 350. "I would doubt that more than about 100 any particular year are from the parish itself," Horne says. "We get a lot of people from neighboring churches, not Episcopalians particularly, and we do get unchurched people."

The church has produced three CDs of the carols that are sung at the service, each presenting a variety of instrumentation and voices. In addition to guitar, John plays fiddle, mandolin, banjo, and bodhran, the drum used in traditional Irish music. The vocal soloists have distinctive qualities, as if one were hearing Burl Ives, James Taylor, Lyle Lovett, and Carly Simon sing folksongs about Christmas. (All of these artists actually have recordings of Christmas music.) The Kentucky folksong, "Bright Morning Stars are Rising" is sung a cappella by a female trio in close harmony. The choruses of Bob Beers' "Peace Carol" are sung by a multi-generational ensemble.

The third CD contains the song, "Meadowhall Carol," by Jim Boyes, which issues a stern rebuke to the world's indifference to the angels' song:

Believers say it's faith and hope and charity that lights the guiding star  
And gifts of gold bestowed upon the military that fans the flames of war.  
'Let swords be drawn, ploughshares foresworn, and crops remain ungrown;  
Let children starve and life be scorned in a God-forsaken zone.'

Classic Christmas music, too, has its share of challenging messages from the Coventry Carol's reminder of the slaughter of the innocents to the last verse of "O, Little Town of Bethlehem," which prays, "Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today."

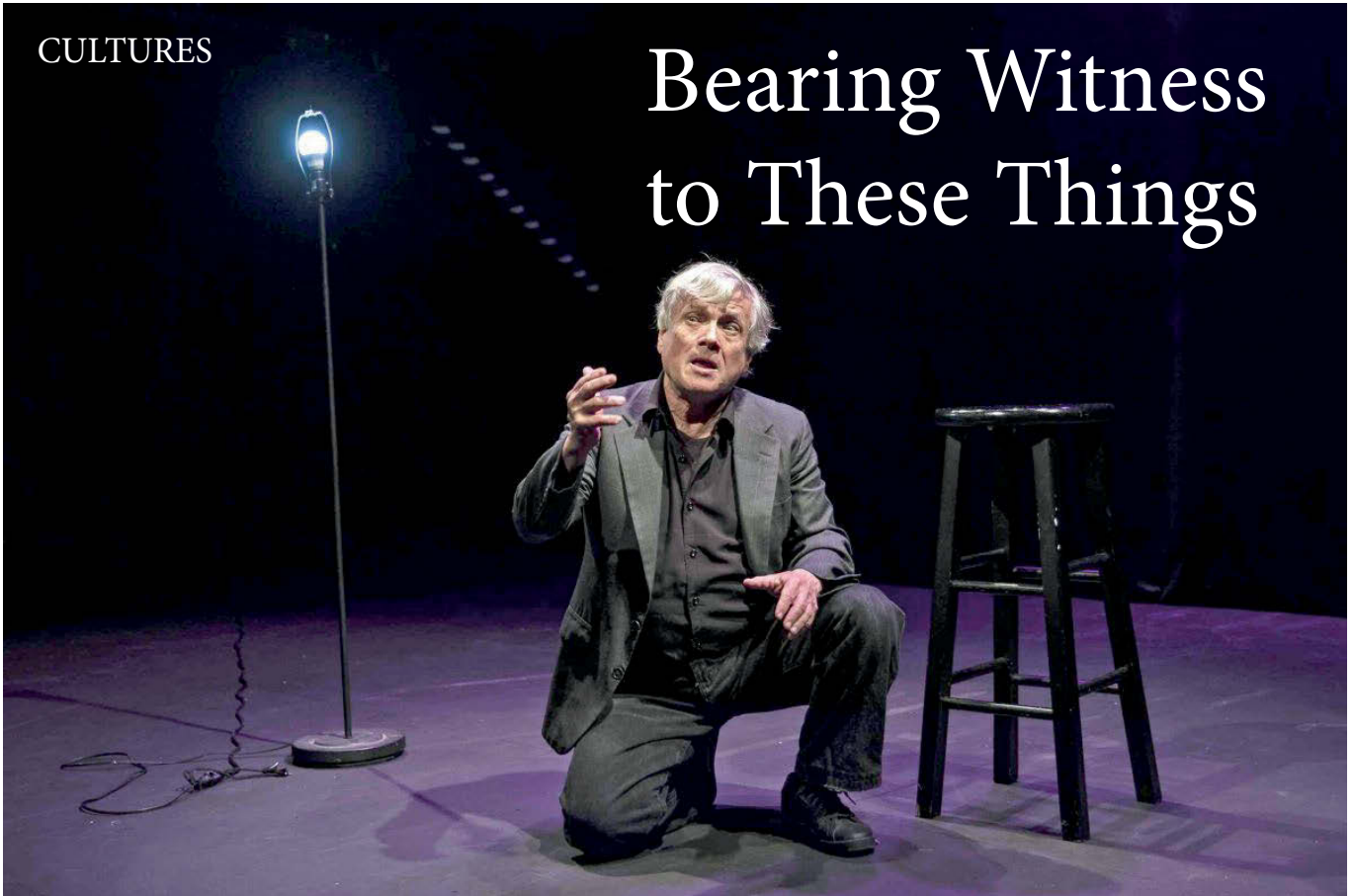
Even commercial radio, with its endless Christmastime iterations of "Jingle Bell Rock" and "Sleigh Ride," will occasionally play John Lennon's "Happy Xmas," in which the artist expresses his feeling that "the world is so wrong" and calls out that we "stop all the fight." 38 years after Lennon's recording, Midge Ure and Bob Geldof released "Do They Know It's Christmas?," a song about "the other ones," the "world outside your window... of dread and fear."

Clearly, there is a need for churches to recognize the collective and personal darkness that groups and individuals may experience in the season of light. One response has been alternative "Blue Christmas" liturgies that express the Christmas message with a sensitivity to those who may be feeling depression, sadness, or grief. For those many participants, these services offer a much-needed adaptation of Christmas traditions.

Information about the CDs and Christ Church's lessons and carols services is available at [christepiscopalballstonspa.org](http://christepiscopalballstonspa.org).

*David Palmer is a rock and jazz musician living in southwestern Ohio.*

# Bearing Witness to These Things



Ken Jennings performs “The Gospel of John.”

Maria Baranova photo

By Retta Blaney

When actor Ken Jennings was going through a rough patch two years ago, he began to memorize St. John’s gospel as a way to take his mind off of his troubles. He saw this exercise as a form of prayer and a way to follow the guidance of the Jesuits who taught him at St. Peter’s Prep and St. Peter’s College in Jersey City, New Jersey. They had said, “No matter what happens in your life, always remember to pray.” He followed that advice.

“It was a process,” he said. “I started to memorize not knowing if I was going to complete the task. I was not worried about a time frame. Then I started to realize, ‘I’m getting this under my belt.’”

Reciting the gospel — all 21 chapters — was so healing he decided to offer it free to churches. The reactions so moved him that he began to envision a larger forum. In what he calls “a gift of the Holy Spirit,” he turned to

a priest friend to get connected to the Sheen Center for Thought & Culture in Greenwich Village where he can now be found six or seven times a week through Dec. 29 presenting “The Gospel of John.”

An award-winning Broadway actor who has performed alone in clubs and poetry readings, Jennings, 72, had never done a one-man play. And he doesn’t consider that he is doing one now. Other actors have taken the gospel to the stage, most notably British actor Alec McCowen, who took his “St. Mark’s Gospel” to Broadway and was nominated for a Tony Award. McCowen called his work a play and took on the different characters with voices and accents as an actor would. Jennings, who has watched the DVD of McCowen’s performance, chose another approach.

*(TLC reviewed American actor Tom Bair’s memorized performance of the Gospel of Mark in the December 23, 2018 edition.)*

“I thought, ‘What can I do that’s different?’” he said during a telephone interview from his Manhattan home while the production was still in rehearsal. “I memorized it as a prayer, not a performance. I thought, ‘I’m going to do this as a prayer, even now.’ John himself wasn’t an actor. He was a witness, so he’s not telling to entertain as an actor would. He’s saying, ‘Look, I saw these things. I was there.’ That’s what I hope to do. I just do it as if I’m John. The audience will realize they are seeing something different, not showbizzy at all.”

Since he’s being John, he doesn’t use accents to distinguish the other characters featured in the narrative.

“I let the story tell itself.”

But unlike in church performances when he had only “a chair and an old Bible,” he now has a lighting designer (Abigail Hoke-Brady) and set designer (Charlie Corcoran). Jennings told costume designer Tracy Christensen how he wanted to look.

(Continued on next page)

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“Normal street clothes. I should look like I just walked in off the street.

“All that’s going to help me tell the story as well. The lights have to be evocative to me and the audience to be the sights and sounds John is telling the audience about.”

The efforts have already made their mark. DCMetro TheaterArts named “The Gospel of John” the No. 2 Christmastime show in New York, beating out such established favorites as “George Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker*” and “The Radio City Christmas Spectacular Starring the Rockettes,” which is interesting considering John’s gospel doesn’t include the nativity.

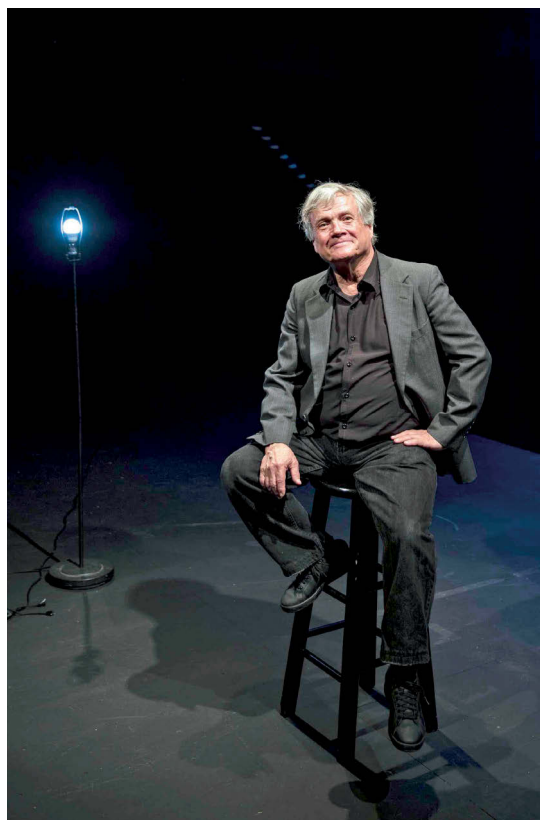
Jennings turned to John’s gospel in his time of need because it seems more firsthand, eyewitness than the other gospels. He quotes from John’s conclusion: “This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things and we know that this testimony is true.”

“This was really said by a guy who was there. He’s very specific.”

Using “an incremental process” over the last two years, Jennings read and pondered the first chapter and when he had committed it to memory, he moved to the second and did the same thing. Then he went back to the first chapter and added the second. He proceeded to do the same with all the chapters, always going back to the beginning.

“That’s why it took so long. I probably would have been able to do it faster if I knew I was going to complete it. I just did it as daily prayer.”

In preparing for the theatrical run, he read nearly a dozen scholarly treatises on John, and incorporated some phrases into his script, used the Revised Standard Version and several other Bible translations and substituted some of his own wording to



“So much of theatre can dominate your life. This is different. In essence it becomes the prayer it began as.”

—Ken Jennings

Maria Baranova photo

make it more conversational. Realizing he would be on stage for hours if he used the entire gospel, he made some cuts to keep the show at 90 minutes with no intermission. Rehearsals were intense — just himself with a director and stage manager — and unlike anything he had ever done in terms of breadth and depth. But he felt ready for the challenge.

“So much of theatre can dominate your life. This is different. In essence it becomes the prayer it began as. It flows around my life. In some ways that makes it easier, but it’s still tiring.”

Since he felt uneasy about cutting the gospel to fit to stage time, he showed the script to a friend, the Rev. Tony Azzarto, SJ, who gave his approval.

“I thought, ‘That’s only one Jesuit.’” So he asked the Rev. John Beddingfield, rector of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, the church in his Upper East Side neighborhood where

he first performed this work. Again he was given the go-ahead. Expanding his base, he sought out the opinions of the Rev. Scott Stearman from Metro Baptist Church, where Jennings now worships, and his friend Sr. Eve Kavanaugh. He was told by both to proceed.

Jennings said there has been some talk of finding a way to take his performance on tour, which he hopes will happen. Asked if he speaks or prays to John for help, he offers a resounding yes.

“I ask him to help me be more you. To be a better person and to help me perform you.”

*Retta Blaney is an eight-time award winning journalist and author of Working on the Inside: The Spiritual Life Through the Eyes of Actors, which features interviews with Kristin Chenoweth, Edward Herrmann, Liam Neeson, Phylicia Rashad, Vanessa Williams and many others.*

# England's Controversial Queen of Heaven

Review by Mark Langham

In 2011 the General Synod of the Church of England debated *Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ*, a document prepared by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. The discussion reflected the troubled history of the role of Mary within the Church of England, with warm affirmation from some countered by tetchy and implacable opposition from others — amply demonstrating the tormented history of Mariology within the English church.

The figure of Mary occasioned some of the most ferocious attacks on religious imagery during the English Reformation; reformers who abhorred the perceived idolatry of her medieval cult ritually burned the image of Our Lady of Walsingham as a heretical idol. Following the breach with Rome, Marian devotion became a badge of religious allegiance. Roman Catholics were extravagant in the devotion paid to her; Protestants determined to limit her role to that warranted by scripture.

The complex pattern of post-Reformation attitudes to Mary is examined in this intriguing book, which looks in turn at her treatment in the hands of a range of religious affiliates in England, from those inspired by Geneva-based Calvinism to recusant Jesuit poets. Lilla Grindlay focusses on the rich literary and visual tradition of Mary as Queen of Heaven, showing how it was manipulated for devotional and propaganda purposes.

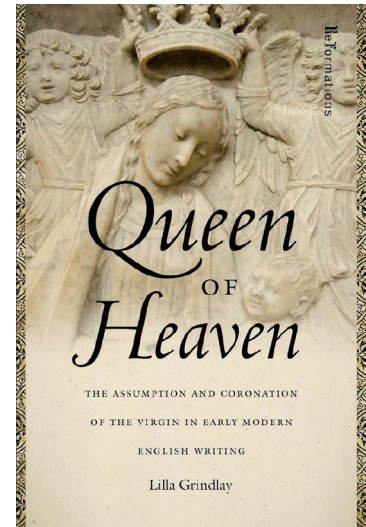
Unsurprisingly, the Queen of Heaven receives less sympathy from the 'hot Protestants,' 'featuring in the *Faerie Queene* as the wicked temptress Lucifera, or the idolatrous 'sham queen' of Curione. For these authors, in usurping the rightful role of the Church, Mary's idolatrous claim to the title of Queen of Heaven equates her with the Whore of Babylon. The linked tradition of the "Mother of God" was manipulated in a hostile light to show Mary perpetually infantilising Christ, whereas sounder authors portrayed her

instead as the ideal Protestant housewife, "silent, chaste and obedient."

Yet the role of Mary is more nuanced than traditional polemics would have us believe. Even if the notion of an actively interceding queen of heaven offended Protestant theology and Puritan housemaking, some within the English church contrived a more instrumental role for Mary. Through her suffering, Mary is counter-intuitively empowered. No mere passive observer of the drama of redemption, her unique sharing in the suffering of her son allows her some role in his saving acts. Her very tears become, beyond a sign of weakness, a potent cleanser of Christ's blood for those guilty of having crucified him by their sin. We seem to be close to her intercessory role in Catholic theology, but Grindlay points out that in fact such imagery enables good Protestant women to see in Mary a model of their unmediated connection with the divine.

Other writers and poets were, however, willing to go further in attributing to Mary a divine role as queen of heaven — an image both charged and perilous in an age when Queen Elizabeth presented herself as the focal point for the aspirations of her subjects. Most strikingly, the image of the *Virgo lactans*, the Virgin feeding the Christ-child at her breast (an implicit criticism of the childless Queen Elizabeth) is not only an image of motherly humility, but places her alongside her son, allowing that her milk, like Christ's blood, assuages spiritual thirst. The rosary, lampooned by Philip Sidney as a token of Catholic superstition, became a powerful — and discreet — underpinning of Mary's role. Its mysteries draw together the themes of the obedient and suffering virgin who is ultimately crowned as queen of heaven. The figure of Mary was especially invoked by the persecuted Catholic minority, who believed that martyr priests would not merely unite their own deaths to the suffering of Christ, but also aspire to the glorious assumption of his mother.

This book challenges the notion that



## Queen of Heaven

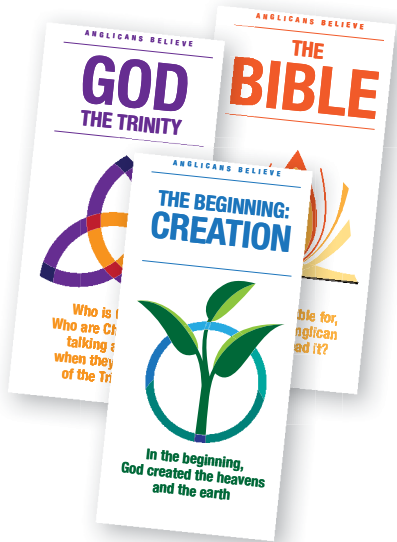
By Lilla Grindlay

Notre Dame Press, pp.318, \$100.

Mary was simply erased at the Reformation, although it perhaps underplays the extent to which she did disappear from public liturgy and devotion. Nevertheless, while her role was less exalted, the figure of the queen of heaven was still potent, employed by different authors to affirm or subvert traditional religious and gender roles.

Grindlay's careful selection of authors might be placed in the wider context of some famous divines of this period: Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne struggled to do credit to the role of Mary, allowing her a powerful intercessory role while professing no diminution of Christ's primacy. Other authors, at the turn of the seventeenth century, struggled valiantly to keep Mary from being undervalued or 'unblessed'. In the end, a bold agnosticism as to her role prevailed, expressed by George Herbert ('I would address/ My vows to thee most gladly, blessed Maid ... But now, alas! I dare not'). This formed the basis of the ambiguous attitude to Mary within the Church of England that continues to this day.

*Mark Langham is a chaplain at Fisher House, the Roman Catholic chaplaincy of Cambridge University.*



## INTRODUCING Anglicans Believe

The Living Church is pleased to announce the release of **the Anglicans Believe** collection of pamphlets.

Anglicans Believe is a new series of pamphlets developed by the editors and contributing writers of The Living Church. The collection is focused on classic topics in Christian teaching, such as the Holy Trinity, the Eucharist and faith in Christ.

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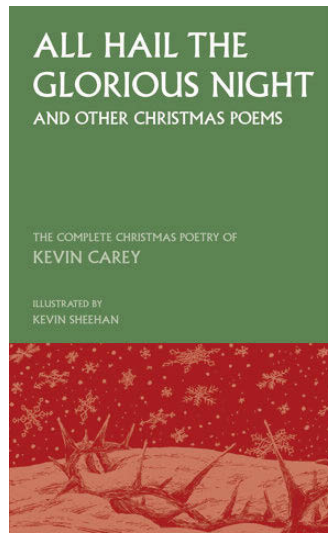
This series has been written with the needs of parishes in mind and can be put in the hands of newcomers, those preparing for baptism and confirmation, or anyone interested in deepening their faith. The back panel includes space for adding parish contact information.

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## BOOKS

# Fresh Carols for a Global Christmas



## All Hail the Glorious Night (and other Christmas poems)

By Kevin Carey  
Sacristy Press. pp. 377, £16.99

Review by Phoebe Pettingell

In his preface to this collection of five volumes of poetry, Kevin Carey voices his hope that some of his verses will inspire contemporary composers to set them to music as new carols. In fact, the late Alan Smith, British like Carey, set a number of the earlier works here. The author has been a chorister, and was thus well-exposed to the Christmas repertoire. Here he expands it, as did the medieval mystery plays, along with a certain tradition in pageants, to include the Annunciation, Advent's prophecies, "no room at the inn," the Magi as well as the shepherds, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the flight into Egypt.

Although Carey tends to use the traditional rhyme and meter, even a somewhat traditional vocabulary, on occasion he comes up with some delightfully fresh perspectives: the Infant Jesus adored not only by ox and ass in the stable, but by koalas, kangaroos and wombats in the Australian outback; by enslaved people in the sugar plantations of the colonial Caribbean, who recognize in the Incarnation a story of the downtrodden and abused with whom they can identify; Mary as envisioned in Indian and

Japanese cultures. He also revisits certain favorite medieval themes: Mary as the new Eve, the Incarnation set not in far-away Bethlehem but among the down-and-out in contemporary inner-cities and among refugees fleeing persecution, together with *felix culpa* — the paradox that the Fall prepares the way for the Incarnation.

This is a book to be dipped into, rather than read straight through, representing, as it does, a decade of work. It might be a valuable resource for choirmasters and clergy since, even without fresh compositions, many of these poems could be set to tunes already available. Carey is apprehensive that commercialism and secularization are overtaking the Christmas story, as the culture begins celebrating in, or even before, Advent with orgies of shopping, seasonal music, and parties. This is preaching to the choir, since those who consider the time to be "Seasons Greetings" are unlikely to read this book. Nevertheless, Carey helps refresh our celebration of "the Glorious Night" of the Incarnation, along with its prologue and aftermath.

*Phoebe Pettingell is the editor of Ave, the magazine of the American region of the Society of Mary.*

## PEOPLE & PLACES

### Ordinations

#### *Diaconate*

California: **Dani Jeremiah Gabriel, Ariane Lee Wolfe, Anna Marie Grace Hoos.**

Chicago: **Catherine Anthony, Jaime Briceno, Ruth Ann Gaston, Brenda Kilpatrick, Sandra Siegel Miller.**

Eastern Oregon: **Ray Jeff Spreier.**

Hawaii: **James Shire.**

Indianapolis: **William Morris, Charles Russell, Samuel Vaught, Allan Wallace.**

Iowa: **Elizabeth Walters Gillman, Stephanie Anne Ruth Jones, Jennifer Briggs Latham, Catherine Harriet Mears, Kevin Thomas Powell.**

Maryland: **Jill Williams** (Memorial, Baltimore).

Massachusetts: **Gayle Pershuse** (Epiphany, Winchester, Mass.).

Michigan: **George Lane Dischinger, III, Christine Fentress-Gannon, Annette Marie Mileski, Jean-Pierre Martin Seguin.**

Milwaukee: **Michael Robert McElwee, Michael Wesley DeLashmutt.**

New Jersey: **Shelton Nkhrumah Radix, Thomas John Szczerba, Jr., Catherine J. Lane Wiczorek, Douglas Stewart Worthington, Luke Daniel Zerra.**

Pennsylvania: **Yesenia Alejandro.**

Southern Virginia: **Emily Zimbrick-Rogers.**

West Missouri: **Melissa Roberts George** (All Saints, Nevada, Mo.).

Western Louisiana: **Andrew Armond, Laurent De Prins.**

Western North Carolina: **Jared Grant.**

### *Priesthood*

Alabama: **Paul Goldman** (deacon-in-charge, Christ, Fairfield, Ala.).

California: **Aaron Earl Klinefelter** (associate rector, Trinity, Menlo Park, Calif.), **Peihan Peggy Lo** (assistant priest, St. Chrysostom's, Chicago), **Nicole Lynn Wood.**

Central New York: **John William Rohde** (assistant, St. John's, Marcellus, N.Y.).

Chicago: **Shawn Andre Evelyn** (associate, St. Paul & the Redeemer, Chicago).

East Carolina: **Michael Babcock** (curate, Trinity, Newtown, Conn.), **Edward Lowe** (associate rector, Holy Trinity, Fayetteville, N.C.), **Nanette Woodworth** (associate rector, Calvary, Fletcher, N.C.).

Long Island: **Mary Beth Mills-Curran** (curate, St. John's, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.).

Maine: **Lauren Kay** (rector, St. George's, Sanford).

Massachusetts: **Sarah Brock** (St. John's, Beverly Farms, Mass.), **Paul Shoaf Kozak** (curate, Grace, Medford, Mass.).

Mississippi: **Randy Sellers** (Incarnation, West Point, Miss.).

Ohio: **Stephen Neel Ashby, Rachel V. Harrison** (priest-in-charge, St. Paul's, Mount Vernon, Ohio), **Anna Sutterisch** (canon for Christian formation, Diocese of Ohio).

Pennsylvania: **Barbara Ballenger** (associate rector, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Philadelphia), **Laura Palmer, Jessie Thompson** (priest-in-charge, St. James, Prospect Park, Pa.)

and St. John the Evangelist, Essington, Pa.), **Christopher Exley** (assistant rector, St. Peter's, Malvern, Pa.).

San Diego: **Christopher Craig-Jones** (assistant rector, St. Michael's, Carlsbad, Calif.), **Hannah Wilder** (assistant, St. Mark's, San Diego).

South Carolina: **Charles Jenkins** (associate rector for pastoral care, Christ, Greenville, S. C.).

Tennessee: **Charles Hall** (assistant, St. Bartholomew's, Nashville), **Brad Bates** (rector, St. Michael's, Cookeville, Tenn.).

Washington: **Brit Bjurstrom Frazier** (associate rector for liturgy and formation, All Saints, Chevy Chase, Md.), **Larry Todd Thomas** (interim young adult missionary, Diocese of Washington).

West Missouri: **Joseph Anton Pierjok** (associate rector, Grace, Carthage, Mo.).

### Retirements

The Very Rev. **Rich Demarest** as dean of St. Michael's Cathedral, Boise, Idaho.

The Rev. **Sue Lederhouse** as rector of St. Peter's-on-the Canal, Buzzards' Bay, Mass.

The Rev. **Dwight Helt** as rector of St. John's, Norman, Okla.

### Deaths

The Rev. **Magdeleno Bacagan**, a pioneering leader in Asian American ministries, died October 8, aged 87.

A native of the Philippines, Bacagan was a graduate of the University of the Philippines and St. Andrew's Theological Seminary. He was ordained to the ministry of the Philippine Independent Church, and served as a hospital and school chaplain there before coming to the United States in 1972 to serve at the Church of the Atonement in Washington, D.C.

He came to the Diocese of Los Angeles in 1976 to study the possibility of establishing a mission to Filipinos. His work resulted in the formation of the Church of the Holy Child in Wilmington, California, a congregation of the Philippine Independent Church under the supervision of the Bishop of Los Angeles. Fluent in Spanish and Chinese as well as English and Tagalog, he was appointed by Presiding Bishop John Allin as commissioner of EAST, the predecessor to Episcopal Asian American Ministries. Following service in several diocesan roles, he became vicar of the Church of the Holy Communion in Gardena, Calif. Bacagan served as an interim in several diocesan parishes after his retirement in 1998.

The Rev. **Alice Bassett-Jellema**, who served the Church of the Guardian Angel in Baltimore's Remington neighborhood for 22 years, died November 2, aged 62.

Bassett-Jellema was raised in Western New York, where her faith was formed at St. Paul's Church in Harris Hill. She was a graduate of Colby College and General Seminary, and became rector of Guardian Angel in 1992, after serving as an associate rector in Hampton, Va. and Townson, Md. She called herself the pastor of Remington, and poured herself into social justice and community development work while developing a broad network of relationships.

Former Maryland Suffragan Bishop John

Rabb told *The Baltimore Sun*: "Alice was something of a holy eccentric with her high-top red sneakers, but she could relate to people. She knew how to talk to them. She established a compassionate ministry and relationships with the most vulnerable and high-risk people. She had a beautiful and effective ministry." Retired Bishop Robert Ihloff said, "She cared about drug addicts, pregnant teens, pregnant mothers and alcoholics. And the programs she instituted at Guardian Angel were just marvelous."

Bassett-Jellema served for many years on the boards of the Episcopal Housing Corporation and St. Mary's Outreach Center, and taught for many years in the Diocese of Maryland's Exploring Baptismal Ministry program. At Guardian Angel, she started a reading camp, a food pantry, and several much-loved outreach programs. Ill health forced her to resign as rector in August. She is survived by her wife, Christine, three stepchildren, and two siblings.

"Alice was an amazing fit for the unusual nature of our congregation and mission, and no one could step in to do all the things she did in the way she did them," her parish vestry wrote on her retirement. "Alice is a hard act to follow; God's work must continue and, with God's blessing, it will continue at Guardian Angel."

The Rev. **Ed Farmer**, who devoted his life to serving rural communities in Northeastern Wyoming, died November 9, aged 68.

He grew up in Meeteetse, Wyo., and after serving in the Navy, he returned to make a life there after his marriage in 1974. He worked as a truck driver and was deeply involved in community life, serving as a volunteer fireman, baseball coach, town councilman, and mayor. Farmer was ordained to the priesthood in 2006, and served for five years as the rector of his home church, St. Andrew's in Meeteetse before answering a call to serve as rector of St. Alban's Church in nearby Worland. He served there until forced to retire by declining health.

Ed passed on his love of hunting and fishing to his two sons and loved to look for arrowheads. Neighbors remember that "when anyone in Meeteetse was branding or taking cows to the mountain, Ed was ready without hesitation." He is survived by his wife Rita, his mother, three siblings, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Sister **Olga Gonzalez**, OSA, died October 9 at the Order of St. Anne's Bethany Convent in Arlington, Mass. She was 93, and was in her 67th year in religious life.

A native of New York City, she graduated from Hunter College before entering the convent, where she received the name Maria Dolorosa. She served at St. Anne's School in Arlington and in the Order's mission house in Upi, Mindanao, Philippines. She was mother superior of the order's former house at Lincoln, Mass. In retirement, she assisted with clergy recordkeeping for the Diocese of Massachusetts. A tribute recalled that "Sister Olga was a lover of nature and poetry. Her wit, her unfailing sense of wonder and the welcome she offered, especially to children, touched the lives of many."

Sister Olga is survived by four sisters in religion and a large extended family.

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The Rev. Canon E. Mark Stevenson, Hamilton, N.J.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. George Sumner, Dallas, Texas

Dr. Muthuraj Swamy, Cambridge, England

The Rev. Kino Germaine Lockheart Vitet, Brooklyn, N.Y.

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SUNDAY'S READINGS | 4 Advent, December 22

Isa. 7:10-16; Ps. 80:1-7, 16-18; Rom. 1:1-7; Matt. 1:18-25

## Below and Above

The prophet Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord to Ahaz, the king of Judah, at a time when Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel had entered into an alliance against the southern kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem was threatened, and the Davidic line's succession in peril. Isaiah spoke for God, saying, "Look, a young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). This may have been a promise that the wife of Ahaz would bear a son, Hezekiah, and so carry on the Davidic line.

Over time, this prophesy was followed by others, suggesting something more. In the prophet's words God was promising a final deliverer, a true Messiah. Indeed, in proclaiming Christ, St. Paul sets Jesus the Messiah within this historical record: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:1-3). The first verse of the Gospel according to St. Matthew says this, "An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Jesus is written all over the pages of the Old Testament and he is its hidden hope. He is the culmination of a sweeping saga.

While it is true that Jesus comes forth from a long and revered human lineage, there is another sense in which Jesus is not from us. He was with God in the beginning, and from God, and so, is "true God from true God." This is dramatically portrayed in the account of his conception. "When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18).

Here a two-fold mystery of faith is worked in the one person who is Christ our Lord. He assumes our nature from his mother, and so enters

human life and human history where salvation must be worked out. He takes our nature in its fallen and frail condition, though he himself remains without sin, and assumes and transforms it into a new humanity.

There is, in this mystery, a great purification, a putting to death of the old human being and the birth of the new, which is why the Incarnation is inextricably linked to the cross. Jesus suffers our condition and the consequences of sin while, in his divine power, he transforms the old humanity into something new. He confers upon humanity his divine grace and by that grace we are drawn into the obedience of faith, an obedience born not of fear but of the joy and privilege of "belonging to Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:5-6).

A theological master is at hand, Leo the Great. Listen. "Unless the new human being (*novus homo* — this is deliberately inclusive and universal), made in the likeness of the flesh of sin, had received our old nature, and being consubstantial with the Father, deigned to be consubstantial with his mother, and being alone free from sin united our nature to himself, the whole human race would be held in captive under the yoke of the devil, and *we would not be able to use the victory of the one who triumphs, if it had been won outside our nature*" (Leo the Great, Letter XXXI). This is not beyond your comprehension! Your salvation is accomplished by the Son of God in you. He is with you and he is transforming you into his divine likeness.

### Look It Up

Read Ephesians 2:15.

### Think About It

Jesus reconciles a divided humanity and humanity divided from God. He is the Son of God and the new human being.



## Beauty and Light

How can this be? How can a human life be the home of God? “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy, he will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The mystery of Mary and the mystery of her Son whom she accepts in absolute faith and bears for the world reverberate in the life of the whole church and world. We are overshadowed by the Spirit of God. We are swaddled in bands of affection that fall from the heights of heaven. We are clothed in God.

Speaking to the people of God exiled in Babylon, the Prophet Isaiah gives hope in words about clothing and beauty and a burning torch. God is near and shining. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10). For whose good pleasure do we wear such beauty? “You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isa. 62:3). God delights in what God has done. Our lives shine like the dawn and our salvation like a burning torch (Isa. 62:1).

We have put on the Lord Jesus, and we are bearers of his light and beauty in the world. We are not the one true light, but are witnesses to the light. Our lives are not impeccably beautiful, but we are, nonetheless, by the love and mercy of God, bearers of divine beauty in the world. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word [Jesus] was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people . . . The true light that enlightens everyone, was coming into

the world” (John 1:1-2,9).

Just as we are bold to say “Our Father” by the Spirit of the Son in our hearts, we may boldly bear light in the world, not to our own glory, but to the glory of God. “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16).

God has given the light of his Son. God has given his Son as the beautiful garments and adornments we put on. We are a burning torch; we are vested with a robe, a garland, jewels, a crown, a diadem. So, in the light and beauty of God, we go forth to do all such good works as we have been prepared to walk in. We build and gather and heal. We bind up and lift up. We give thanks and sing. (Ps. 147)

May I help you with your unbelief? May I battle the voice of doubt well known to you and me? As if singing for God, these words, especially as interpreted by Ray Charles and Joe Cocker, tell the truth we need to hear: “You are so beautiful to me. Can’t you see?”

### Look It Up

Read Isaiah 61:10.

### Think About It

See yourself as you are in Christ.



## Abundant Life

St. George’s Church, Nashville, is a growing and vibrant parish committed to a gracious expression of Anglicanism within the Episcopal Church. Our reason for being is to “receive, live, and share the abundant life of Jesus Christ.” This tri-fold purpose of worship, discipleship, and mission is embedded within every parish ministry.

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Jer. 31:7-14; Ps. 84 [Ps. 84:1-8]; Eph. 1:3-6, 15-19  
Matt. 2:13-15, 19-23 or Luke 2:41-52 or Matt. 2:1-12

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The image of the remnant of Israel returning home from Babylon foreshadows the gathering of all families, languages, peoples, and nations into one new being in Christ. Israel can only be itself by being a blessing to all nations, and this most ancient promise is a promise fulfilled in Christ. Compelling, though sometimes difficult theological language may be used to describe this new humanity. To augment our understanding and to edify, stories and images must be employed. We need ways to see and feel this gathering together into Christ.

So we imagine with the prophet Jeremiah, giving time and attention to his word, "See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (Jer. 31:8-9).

As they return home, their tears give way to consolation, and consolation gives birth to joy. "They shall come and sing aloud ... their life shall be like a watered garden ... the young women rejoice in the dance ... the young men and the old shall be merry ... I will turn their mourning into joy" (Jer. 31:12-13). To this streaming mass of humanity, Jesus says, "I came that you may have life and have it abundantly" (John. 10:10). Jesus is our final destination. He is our country and homeland.

There is a city within the nation, the city of God, and within the city a temple where God is especially present. The returning exiles would work and weep while restoring their ancient temple. Here too we have an image of Christ. Longing for the

temple is an inner ache for the One who is the temple of the Father. "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:18). The Psalmist speaks of our longing for the Lord Jesus, "My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord ... Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praises ... For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" (Ps. 84:2-8). We, like Jesus, are in the Father's house, doing, in him and by the power of his Spirit, the Father's business (Luke 2:49). Jesus is the Holy of Holies, and where he is, we are, by adoption and grace.

All the people of the earth are gathered together in Christ. Without revoking their special gifts and unique languages, the nations become one new humanity in Christ. This new humanity is a temple where the presence and glory of God is. Jesus, the Son of the Living God, the temple of the Father, shares his divine life with all who are drawn into him, to all who cleave to him, to all who long to touch the hem of his garment. (collect) This migration home is a call to the only home we ever had. "For God alone my soul in silence waits, from him comes my salvation" (Ps. 62:1).

Jesus Christ is a country, a city, a temple, and a fount of divine being.

### Look It Up

Read the collect of the day.

### Think About It

We are drawn to the center, where Christ is.

Isa. 42:1-9; Ps. 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matt. 3:13-17

## Baptism of One and Many

The finite and the infinite overlap in everything said about Jesus and the life we share with him. Addressing God the Father, today's collect begins, "Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit." This revelation is a concession to space and time, our need to behold and listen. We see Jesus anointed of the Father, and hear him proclaimed the beloved Son, but we also know, by the faith imputed to us, that what we behold and hear has been true from before time and forever. He is the Son of the Father; he is one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

St. Matthew's telling of the baptism of Jesus stresses the public nature of the vision and voice from heaven, "the heavens were opened to [Jesus], and [John the Baptist] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on [Jesus]" (Matt. 3:16). John, and perhaps the crowd with him, and by implication, all readers of this passage, hear a voice saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). What was witnessed and heard in time is a truth about God the Eternal Son, for there was not when the Son was not. Jesus did, of course, have an earthly ministry, but its origin is the unsearchable depth of God.

In meditating on the Baptism of Jesus, we do well to meditate on our own. Though we may not remember the moment, we may with gratitude trust the good intentions of parents or guardians, sponsors and godparents, and a surrounding congregation who made solemn vows and entrusted our lives to God. And we may trust that a ceremony which in some ways marks the solemn joy of parents welcoming a new child into their lives has not entirely lost its deeper meaning.

Baptism is baptism into the Lord Jesus. The connection of the baptism of Jesus to our own vocation is drawn

out in in the baptism account in the Acts of the Apostles.

"You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Act 10:36-41).

Though mentioning only the Baptism of Jesus, we know from other passages that "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

In union with him, our vocation unfolds. They put him to death; the Old Adam dies in the water of baptism. God raised him on the third day; we are raised at the triple invocation of One God in Trinity of Persons. He appeared alive; we appear alive as his witnesses. He ate and drank with chosen witnesses; we are chosen to do the same in Eucharist and fellowship. Our entire vocation is hidden in God with Christ, for "He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

### Look It Up

Read Isaiah 42:1-9.

### Think About It

We are the servant of God; we are upheld, chosen, and loved.

## Making and Growing Disciples for Christ

Archbishop Justin Welby recently offered these wise words: "The best decision anyone can ever make, at any point in life, in any circumstance, whoever they are, wherever they are, is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ." This quote fully sums up the core mission of St. Martin's: to "make and grow disciples of Christ."

Carved into St. Martin's pulpit are the words from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "for I resolved to know nothing while I was amongst you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2).

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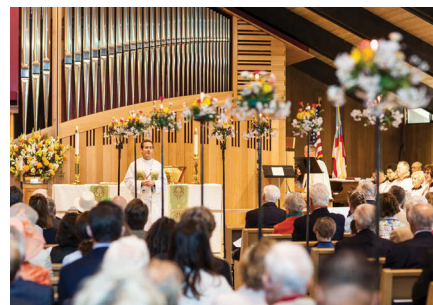
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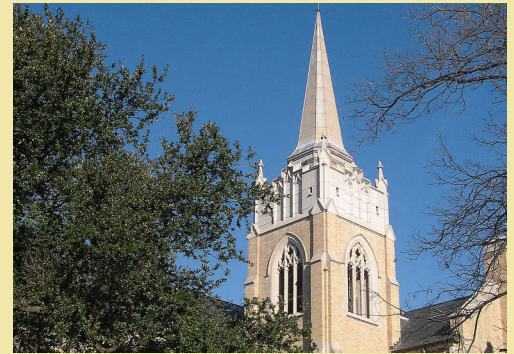
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THE LIVING CHURCH seeks to build up the body, urged on by the love of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5).

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