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April 19, 2020

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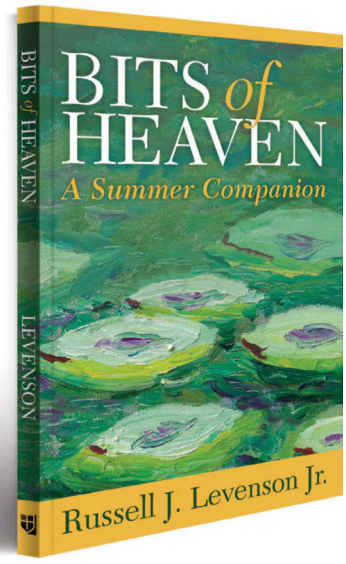

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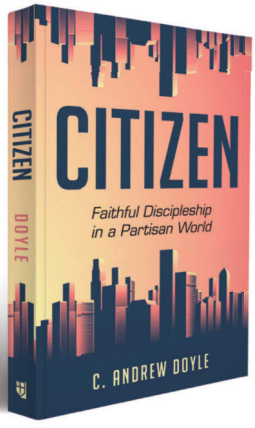

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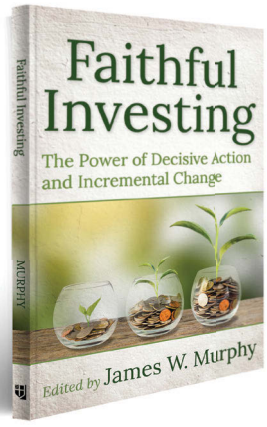

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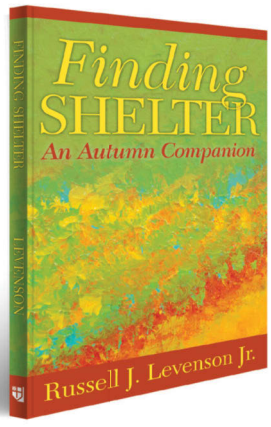

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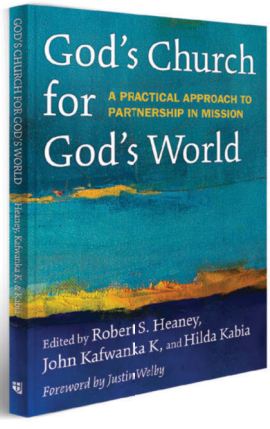

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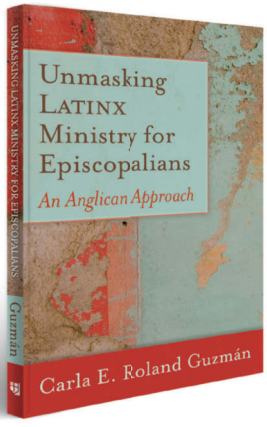

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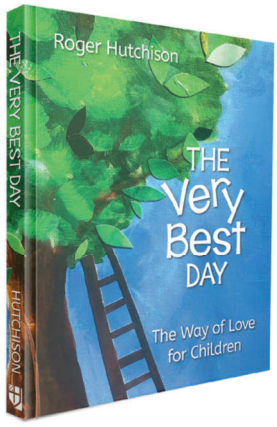

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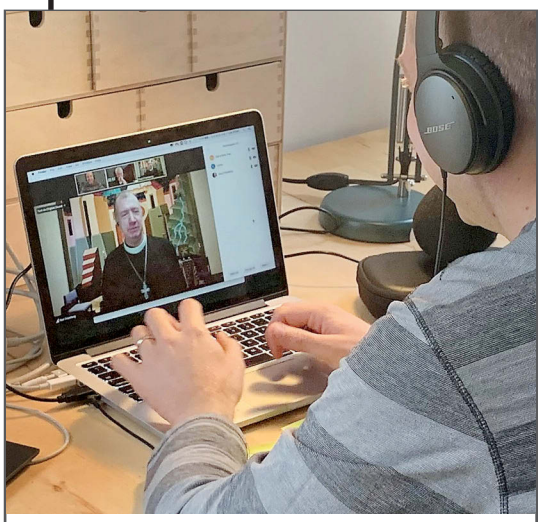

ON THE COVER

At home on March 29, Fr. Kyle Matthew Oliver prepares for online worship at St. Gregory of Nyssa Church in San Francisco (see "Liturgy Online," p. 11).

Photo by Kristin Saylor

The Living Church

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The Living Church is published by the Living Church Foundation. Our historic mission in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion is to seek and serve the Catholic and evangelical faith of the one Church, to the end of visible Christian unity throughout the world.

Pandemic Poses Extra Challenges in Haiti

By Kirk Petersen

Photos by Kindly Pierre

The Rev. Jean Fils Chéry without a congregation at St. James Episcopal Church in Pétion-Ville.

Churches throughout the United States have been scrambling to establish online worship services in the face of lockdown orders. It's fairly easy to do via Facebook or YouTube, and some churches have been experimenting with online services for years.

It's different in the Diocese of Haiti — situated in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti was placed on lockdown on March 19, meaning none of the churches could hold public worship services.

Very few of the 200 churches in Haiti have Facebook pages. The diocese does have a website — which apparently hasn't been updated since 2018. The Rev. Jean-Fils Chéry, a priest in the diocese, told TLC he enjoyed watching Sunday services from the United States on Facebook, but most Haitians are unable to participate in online services.

"Without physical meetings (face-to-face), there is no way for a priest to accompany his faithful in the liturgy, despite technological advances," Chéry said in an email. "As a result, the church is unable to respond effectively to the corona virus. And it is very damaging, because the church is the only institution that covers the entire national territory."

A man watches a woman wash her hands before being admitted to a clinic in Pétion-Ville.

The list of challenges in Haiti goes on and on.

Frequent hand-washing is one of the most basic ways to slow the transmission of the virus. But many people in Haiti do not have running water.

Civil unrest and criminality are common. On March 27, the director of one of Haiti's top hospitals was kidnapped in Port-au-Prince, and the staff at Hospital Bernard Mevs are refusing to accept new patients as a kind of protest.

Electrical service is sporadic at best. Chery said even if a residence has electrical service, power may be provided for only a few hours a month. Many people do have smartphones, which they recharge by paying a fee to vendors with solar power access.

Diocesan leadership has been beset by factionalism and conflict. The diocese is without a bishop, and the standing committee has been exercising ecclesial authority.

The Haitian government responded aggressively after the first two cases of coronavirus were diagnosed, closing the airports and schools on March 19, and forbidding public gatherings of more than 10 people. As of April 2, there were 18 confirmed cases in the country.

"We just hope that the numbers don't go any further than that," said the Rev. Fritz Désiré, president of the standing committee, speaking with *TLC* through an interpreter. "With the education level of the people, and with the lack of infrastructure and economic [hardships] of the people, anything can happen."

Haiti is the largest diocese in the U.S.-based Episcopal Church (TEC), measured by baptized membership, and the fifth-largest based on average Sunday attendance (ASA).

Leadership in the diocese has been in flux for years, going back to conflict between Bishop Diocesan Jean-Zaché Duracin and Bishop Suffragan Ogé Beauvoir. "Clergy and lay leaders aligned behind one bishop or the other," said the Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley, bishop for the office of pastoral development, who oversees the Church Center's relationship with Haiti.

After Duracin announced plans to retire as of early 2019, the Ven. Joseph Kerwin Délicat was elected bishop coadjutor at a convention in June 2018. But more than 40 delegates contested

the election, alleging among other things that Duracin "packed" the electorate by ordaining 17 transitional deacons and 18 vocational deacons in the months before the election. This increased the number of clergy eligible to vote by more than 50 percent.

The challenge triggered an investigation by the Court of Review of Province II of the Episcopal Church, of which Haiti is a part. In August 2018 the court issued a report saying "The allegation that the high number of ordinations immediately prior to the electing convention took place in order to steer the electoral process is credible."

In January 2019 Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry announced that Délicat's election had not received the necessary approvals of more than half of bishops with jurisdiction, nor the approvals of a majority of standing committees, and thus the election was void.

Ousley said the diocese had been moving toward a new bishop election by the end of 2020, but that the pandemic probably would push the election into 2021. He quoted from an email from Désiré, saying "He's happy to inform me that the situation of conflict at the level of the diocese has greatly improved," and that "The priests and deacons of the diocese are convinced that they must work together for the progress of the diocese and for the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth."

Désiré declined to discuss with *TLC* the nature of the conflict within the diocese. "This problem is behind the diocese, in the past now, so we don't really want to speak about things that happen already. We want to move forward."

Chéry, who initially contacted *TLC* with information about the challenges in Haiti, said the lack of online infrastructure in the diocese was in part a result of the factionalism. "I am one of the priests who was punished by Bishop Duracin for using Facebook," Chéry told *TLC* by telephone. "But I told him, it's my time, so I can't give away my right to use the social network."

He said many of the priests in the diocese are leery of using Facebook because of the way he was treated. "I spent three years without getting any salary, any appointment. I was not appointed to any church because I was accused by the Bishop to mismanage Facebook," he said. He said the bishop never explained the nature of the alleged mismanagement.

After Duracin retired, "The standing committee realized I did not do anything wrong," Chéry said. He is now co-rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Pétion-Ville, a southern suburb of Port-au-Prince, the nation's capital. He also serves as operations manager of Food for the Poor, one of the country's largest non-profits.

After a second Sunday without public worship services, churches in the Diocese of Haiti are beginning to make greater use of Facebook. Chéry posted a service on his personal Facebook page, and Désiré posted a service from Epiphany Church in Port-au-Prince, where he is priest-in-charge. As with similar services elsewhere, both videos included a small altar party and no congregation.

English Archbishops Bar Clergy from Their Churches

By Mark Michael

Priests and bishops throughout the Church of England have been questioning the wisdom (or even the legality) of a directive from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York that entirely banned clergy from entering their churches.

The directive is more restrictive than the civil government's own guidance issued on March 25, which indicates that a "minister of religion" is permitted "to go to their place of worship, including to broadcast an act of worship to people outside the place of worship, whether over the internet or otherwise."

But the archbishops' letter from March 24 states: "Our church buildings must now be closed not only for public worship, but for private prayer as well and this includes the priest or lay person offering prayer in church on their own. A notice explaining this should be put on the church door. We must take a lead in showing our communities how we must behave in order to slow down the spread of the Coronavirus."

The directive is also a change in course from the archbishops' letter of a week before, which specifically urged clergy to keep their churches open for private prayer and to offer the Daily Office and the Eucharist regularly in them, while observing appropriate social distancing.

In a column in *The Church Times*, the Ven Edward Dowler, Archdeacon of Hastings in the Diocese of Chichester suggested that the directive violated canon law. "In law," he writes, "church buildings are vested in their incumbents, who, at their induction, take possession of the temporalities of the benefice. It is not clear that the bishops have any legal ability to issue apparent management instructions that incumbents should not pray in their churches. Legally speaking, this is a matter of conscience for individual clergy, in particular those who are incumbents."

Dioceses within the Church of England are interpreting the directive in varied ways. In London, where the coronavirus outbreak has been most severe (*The Daily Telegraph* reports 8,341 cases on April 1), the bishops of the Diocese of London, on the north bank of the Thames encourage clergy who live on church property "to pray in their churches privately and to consider whether they could live stream their services from within the church building." They noted that "many will find comfort, especially in uncertain times, in being part virtually of worship which is taking place in a church building."

In the Diocese of Southwark, on the south bank of the Thames (but still very much within London), Bishop Christopher Chessun and his suffragans have withdrawn earlier permissions, and now interpret the archbishops' directive to the letter. "We know that this will seem especially hard for those of you who live next door to, or on the same site as, your church; but the archbishops believe that it is right that we all share the challenges of these extraordinary times as equally as possible and conduct even private worship strictly in the confines of our own homes."

The Rt. Rev. James Langstaff, bishop of the neighboring diocese of Rochester, has even threatened disciplinary action against violating clergy, stating in an *ad clerum* letter, "I do need to say that for the clergy, failure fully to implement these arrangements could be deemed to be a disciplinary matter — it is that serious."

In response to widespread questioning of the directive, the archbishops issued a follow-up letter to the clergy on March 27, reasserting their former guidance. The two-page letter urged *four times* that the clergy should "stay at home, protect the NHS [National Health Service] and save lives." They continued, "The Church of England is called to model the very best practice. We must lead by example. Staying at home and demonstrating solidarity with the rest of the country at this testing time, is, we believe, the right way of helping and ministering to our nation. Therefore, for a season, the center for the liturgical life of the church must be the home, not the church building."

The restrictions on gathering a congregation for public worship have also opened up longstanding debates about whether clergy should be permitted to celebrate the Eucharist when a congregation cannot be present to receive. Private masses have generally been

Lambeth Conference Postponed Until 2021

The Lambeth Conference, which gathers bishops from across the Anglican Communion about once a decade has been postponed until 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said in a video message released March 23 that he had consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders in recent weeks, including some of the Communion's 40 primates.

Welby said that international travel restrictions have factored into the decision, as well as a need for bishops to be present to their people at a time of crisis. "The place of a bishop at a time of difficulty is a place of a shepherd when the wolf is attacking the flock," he said. "It is to be with them. To be alongside them. To love them. To suffer with them.

"Because of the coronavirus, travel around the world is deeply restricted and the amount of time that we will face these limitations is unknown. For these reasons, so that we may be good shepherds as bishops in the Anglican world, and encourage the church to be there for God's suffering world, we have decided to reschedule and postpone the conference and to put it forward till 2021 at pretty well the same time."

On March 20, GAFCON announced that its Kigali 2020 Bishop's Conference, a gathering designed especially for Anglican bishops from more conservative provinces that would not be attending Lambeth, would also be postponed "until such a time as it becomes practical to reconvene."

In a letter on GAFCON's website, GAFCON's General Secretary Archbishop Ben Kwashi said that the conference organizers "have in mind the need to act responsibly and not risk adding to infections in our host nation, Rwanda, nor risk delegates to the conference becoming infected and spreading the disease in their home countries."

Anglican Communion News Service

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banned in the Church of England since the Reformation, with the rubrics of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* insisting "there shall be no Celebration of the Lord's Supper, except there be a convenient number to communicate with the Priest, according to his discretion."

Bishop Martin Warner of Chichester, however, has authorized all of his clergy to celebrate the Eucharist privately during the time when public worship is not possible. In an *ad clerum* letter of March 26 he gave guidance about how to offer the Eucharist without a congregation. Bishop Warner also cited as instructive the Biblical parallel of Aaron and Moses entering the Tabernacle to intercede for the people of Israel in their time of need. [They] "go into the tent alone, in order to pray for the people. But the people are not passive. They go to the door of their dwellings as witnesses to this work. They stand in the presence of God with them: they watch, and they pray."

Some have also expressed concern about the negative impact of shuttering church buildings completely in a time of widespread crisis. The bishops of London Diocese noted that church buildings in isolated settings could be subject to vandalism (a mounting problem throughout the country) if left unvisited for long periods of time. On March 26, the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Archbishops Council noted that "it may be reasonable for one designated person to enter the church to check that it remains safe and secure."

Archdeacon Dowler noted an even greater potential danger to the church's spiritual witness. He wrote, "It feels like a more Anglican approach to say that, while these buildings have been set apart for a particular purpose, their consecration is sustained by the offering of prayer and worship which continues to be made within them from day to day. Without this offering, the buildings will, in a very recognizable way, go cold.

"To some of their neighbors, empty and uninhabited churches will soon come to seem like spooky castles that haunt rather than illuminate their communities. To others (especially the many who will be quite unaware of the enormous pastoral and spiritual efforts being made at this time), closure will simply signify that the Church of England has shut up shop and abandoned people in their hour of need."

Aspinall Named Interim Primate by Deadlocked Australian Electors

By Mark Michael

The Anglican Church of Australia's Primatial Board of Electors failed to reach a majority after seven ballots in its March 14 meeting in Sydney, and have asked former primate Philip Aspinall to serve as an interim until another election can be held. Archbishop Geoffrey Smith of Adelaide, a moderate who was widely regarded as the favorite to succeed outgoing primate Philip Freier, had achieved a majority among the bishops and lay delegates by the second ballot. But a group of conservatives in the House of Clergy held out in favor of Bishop Richard Condie of Tasmania, a conservative evangelical who is chair of Gafcon Australia. Smith fell just one vote short of a majority in the House of Clergy in four of the seven ballots.

The standoff in the primatial election is shaped by sharp divisions within the

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church over same-sex marriage, which have intensified since last August, when the rural diocese of Wangaratta voted to allow clergy to bless couples who have entered into same-sex marriages. Archbishop Smith, who had been described as "Freier redux" by Australian Christian site Eternity News, had positioned himself as a promoter of unity, and has endorsed Lambeth Resolution 1.10, which reaffirms traditionalist teaching about human sexuality.

But Sydney Anglican blogger David Ould wrote that Smith "has increasingly disappointed conservatives with the way that he has managed the Diocese of Adelaide. Anglicans there have expressed their concern about numerous appointments of revisionists to key posts and a failure to deal clearly with the presenting issue of same-sex marriage and related ethics."

They chose instead to back Condie, who joined Sydney's archbishop Glenn Davies in consecrating Jay Behan last October to serve conservative Anglican parishes in New Zealand under GAFCON's auspices, a decision that was criticized as unlawful boundary-crossing by the primates of the New Zealand church.

Davies has warned that if progressives are not halted, disgruntled Australian conservative parishes could choose to affiliate with Behan, remarking in a September radio interview. "It may well be that the Bishop of the Confessing Anglicans in Aotearoa New Zealand may well become the bishop of the dissenting Anglicans in Australia … that's a great idea, don't you think?"

Philip Freier will step down as primate on March 31, while continuing to serve as Archbishop of Melbourne. This leaves Aspinall with the responsibility of chairing the church's upcoming triennial General Synod, which is set to meet from May 31-June 5 in Maroochydore, Queensland. The synod is expected to discuss same-sex marriage and the authority of Scripture.

African Archbishops Appeal for Help with Locust Plague

By Mark Michael

A group of seven Anglican archbishops, mostly from Eastern and Central Africa, are appealing to fellow Anglicans for assistance in dealing with a plague of ravenous locusts that threatens to destroy crops across their region, as well as in Iran and Pakistan. The primates of the Anglican Churches of Kenya, Uganda, Congo, and Rwanda were joined by GAFCON General Secretary Ben Kwashi and George Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, in announcing the appeal, which is being coordinated by the Barnabas Fund, a Christian aid agency based in the UK.

The United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization warns that the food insecurity of 25 million people across Africa and Southwestern Asia could be endangered by the locust swarms, which had been spotted in 10 countries as of March 10. The insects originated in the "Empty Quarter," a stateless desert region between Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman in 2018. Since then, they have been multiplying and gradually spreading east into Iran and Pakistan, and west into the Horn of Africa and Kenya.

The archbishops' letter said that devastating food shortages were emerging in the Pokot region of Northwestern Kenya, where the locusts arrived on the heels of devastating floods and landslides last November that significantly damaged growing crops. The harvest season for the East Africa's crucial maize crop is March and April, and UN officials are noting a "significant and dangerous upsurge" in breeding activity among the insects across Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya.

The Barnabas Fund also reports that some of the same regions hardest hit by the locusts are now facing growth in cases of coronavirus infection. The situation has been especially severe in the Sindh region of Pakistan, near the Iranian border. There were 394 COVID-19 cases in the province on March 23, nearly half the nation's total, and hospitals in Karachi, the provincial capital, are unable to cope with the influx of infected patients. Some have closed completely. Much of Pakistan is currently in full or partial lockdown, and the army has been deployed to keep the peace.

There are fewer recorded cases of the virus in East Africa, according to April 1 statistics from Covid19live.info, just 25 in Kenya, 29 in Ethiopia, and 81 in Uganda. But there are also very few tests available. Anglican Churches in Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda have all suspended public worship gatherings for at least several weeks to limit the spread of the disease.

Climate change has played a key role in expanding the locust swarms, which have not appeared with such severity since the 1950s, before the advent of effective large-scale insecticides. *The Guardian* reports that since May 2018's

Cyclone Mekunu, the Arabian Gulf has seen an unprecedented series of cyclones. Repeated rainstorms have made the normally arid Empty Quarter unusually fertile, allowing locusts to reproduce at approximately 8,000 times their normal rate. The increase in cyclone activity is associated with the Indian Ocean dipole, a shift in weather patterns in the ocean and the lands around it, which also caused the devastating droughts behind the Australian wildfires.

A cyclone powered by the dipole last December provided a wetter-than-usual breeding season for the insects in Somalia and Southern Iran, allowing dramatic growth in the swarms. Meteorologists predict that seasonal rains across Eastern and Central Africa, also powered by the phenomenon, will be heavier than usual this spring. A local Ugandan Christian leader told Barnabas Fund, "Locusts are going to have soft ground under which breeding is going to triple. As locusts increase, the danger towards destruction of both food and pasture will also triple. If there are no measures to mitigate the awaited calamity, people's lives will get destroyed by hunger."

Conflict and instability in Yemen and Somalia have also figured heavily in the outbreak. Desert locusts are common throughout the year in Yemen, but the UN Food and Agricultural Organization has operated a spraying program for many years to keep the population under control. Since war broke out between the rebels and Houthi rebels in 2015, the program has not been able to operate at full capacity.

The head of the Yemeni locust control program, Adel ai-Shabani told *The Guardian*, "Before the war we had a good ability to reach anywhere in Yemen… In current times we're just able to cover the Red Sea coastal areas – but not all – and some areas in the interior." Similar no-go areas made eradication programs impossible in large parts of Somalia, where the central government lacks effective control of large parts of the country.

The UN estimates that it will cost around $65 million to effectively curtail the spread of the swarms by intensified aerial spraying. But timing is crucial, as the locust breeding season is already underway. If a new generation of locust larvae are able to reach adulthood, costs could increase to $500 million to contain the outbreak.

Guidelines Provided for Parochial Reports During Closures

Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) has long been the gold standard of measuring the size of a congregation. We all pray there will come a time when ASA numbers seem more important again. In the meantime, attendance started cratering on March 15, and God only knows how long that will continue.

Many churches are holding virtual services online, and that practice will grow quickly. Platforms such as Facebook Live, YouTube, Zoom and others all offer different ways to measure viewership. There have been lively discussions on Facebook groups and elsewhere about how churches should keep track of attendance and participation during the pandemic.

The Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe, Executive Officer of the General Convention, oversees parochial report policy (among many other duties). On March 18 he published a one-page set of guidelines for data-keeping.

"Our message is, 'Do not worry about this,'" Barlowe wrote. "Most congregations and dioceses will record the number and kind of worship (Morning Prayer, streamed Eucharist, etc.); and list the virtual attendance separately as "virtual attendance" or a similar designation, using whatever counting their digital media allows. That's all that needs to be done right now."

It would be easy to poke fun at the idea that ASA matters at all in the face of the pandemic. But the Episcopal Church has always devoted an enormous amount of resources — both by TEC and in every church — to keeping track of attendance at worship services.

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Each year, every Episcopal church is required to file a parochial report for the previous year including attendance, membership, plate & pledge income, outreach ministries, and many other items. The General Convention Office aggregates the data and publishes a variety of statistics, usually around the beginning of September.

Secular news stories will almost always talk about a church's size in terms of number of members. But "membership" is counted in a wide variety of ways from church to church. Priests, data geeks and the Episcopal media almost always focus on ASA, which is an objective measure.

Bishop Roundup

Bishop Jeffrey Lee of **Chicago**, who in February announced that he planned to retire in August, has told his diocese that he is delaying his retirement and the election of his successor, which was planned to take place at a special convention in June, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lee has served as the XII Bishop of Chicago since 2008. The election of his successor is now scheduled to happen at the diocesan convention, Nov. 20-21.

* * *

Three dioceses have been notified that their incoming bishops have received the necessary approvals of a majority of the diocesan standing committees and of bishops with jurisdiction.

In **Georgia**, the Rev. Canon Frank S. Logue was elected bishop on November 16, 2019. He is scheduled to be consecrated May 30, and will succeed the Rt. Rev. Scott A. Benhase, who has served since 2010. Logue is a member of Executive Council, a post he will resign to become bishop.

In **Minnesota**, the Very Rev. Craig W. Loya was elected bishop on January 25, 2020. He is scheduled to be consecrated June 6, and will succeed the Rt. Rev. Brian N. Prior, who has served since 2010.

In **Oklahoma**, the Rev. Poulson C. Reed was elected bishop coadjutor on December 14, 2019. He was scheduled to be consecrated April 18, 2020, but that has been postponed until at least May 30, because of the coronavirus pandemic. As bishop coadjutor, Reed will automatically succeed Diocesan Bishop Edward J. Konieczny when the latter retires later this year.

On March 17, Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry announced that no consecrations would be conducted before May 30, and that dioceses have begun to plan for consecrations that:

•can be relocated to smaller venues, preferably church settings that nevertheless provide adequate space for appropriate physical distancing of participants and attendees;

• minimize in-person attendance and utilize live-streaming technology;

• limit, with flexibility, the number of co-consecrating bishops and presenters, yet still satisfy canonical requirements;

• forego social events; and,

• re-imagine media briefings and clergy gatherings as virtual interactions with the Presiding Bishop.

Correction: About that Top Ten List...

By Kirk Petersen

Statistics are so *hard*.

I had this great idea for an article — let's identify the fastest-growing Episcopal churches, interview the rectors, and see if their success stories have anything in common. The story will show that it's possible to grow a church, even though attendance is falling nationally. And maybe other churches will get ideas that help them grow their own average Sunday attendance (ASA).

With impeccable timing, the article was published on the very same day when two dioceses became the first to suspend public worship. It's since become clear that nobody's ASA is going to be growing in the immediate future.

But that wasn't the biggest mishap with the article.

In the following days I received two emails from rectors who told me, respectfully and with admirable restraint, that their growth exceeded that of some of the churches on the published list.

And they were right.

The short version of how it happened: Episcopal Church Center provided a list, drawn from the database of parochial report responses, of the churches whose ASA had grown the most. The list measured growth on a numerical basis — but I believed it to be a list of churches that had the most growth on a percentage basis. (*My bad.*) I added a column to the spreadsheet to calculate the percentage growth, identified the top 10, and started calling rectors.

The list that I *created* overlapped with the list I *described* in the article, but they were not identical. (Yes, that's the *short* version of how it happened. The long version includes lots of excuses.)

In an effort to give due recognition to other churches that had higher percentage growth than those on my list, I asked for data on the highest percentage growth. The resulting list skewed strongly toward very small churches, so I specified that churches must have had an ASA of at least 50 in 2013. The median domestic Episcopal church has an ASA of 53, so setting the cutoff at 50% means slightly more than half of the churches meet the criteria.

So, here are the additional churches that should have been listed in the top 10 for percentage growth, starting from a base of at least 50 ASA in 2013:

- La Iglesia de San Pablo, Seaside, California (153%)
- Indian Hill Church, Cincinnati, Ohio (122%)
- Trinity Episcopal Church, Boothwyn, Pennsylvania (103%)
- St. Paul's Church, Haymarket, Virginia (100%)
- St. Cyprians Episcopal Church, Roxbury, Massachusetts (98%)
- Church of the Epiphany, Oak Hill Virginia (89%)

Congratulations, one and all — you've obviously been doing something right. And no, I'm not going to reconstruct a Top 10 list to replace the one that was published, because all those churches are doing something right, too.

In fact, I'm done with Top 10 lists.

Liturgy Online

Congregations Find Hope in Unfamiliar Waters

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald
Correspondent

On March 15, St. Gregory of Nyssa Church in San Francisco faced the same urgent problem that was testing churches from coast to coast: how to quickly begin offering quality worship online and hold a congregation together without gathering in person.

Heeding a call to help slow the rapidly spreading coronavirus, St. Gregory's streamed its liturgy via Facebook Live, which allows viewers to see and hear worship leaders in real time. Congregants appreciated the results but lamented that they couldn't see one another's faces as they're used to doing in the seating configuration at St. Gregory's.

The next week, a snafu proved providential. In a glitch that foiled countless churches on March 22, St. Gregory's videoconferencing feed from Zoom failed to transmit to Facebook Live. At the last second, everyone was redirected to join worship leaders on Zoom for videoconference-style worship.

"We were worried that that would it would be a little bit overwhelming with having to keep track of mics being muted and all of that," said Kyle Matthew Oliver, a congregant at St. Gregory's and a doctoral student in educational media at Columbia University. "But the benefit was that all of a sudden, we could see each other's faces again! And I think something very familiar happened. People who are used to seeing each other's faces during worship said, 'Oh what a joy!'"

What St. Gregory's discovered at that moment is part of a fast-growing trove of insights gleaned from the virus-induced, mass migration online. For thousands of churches, it's been an unplanned plunge into unfamiliar waters. As recently as last fall, 41 percent of American congregations were not putting any portion of their worship services online, according to a LifeWay Research survey.

Connor Smith photo
Rector Joseph Smith of St. Mary's Church in Wayne, Pa., leads evening prayer from home.

"Before the crisis, the purpose of live streaming was to give outsiders a glimpse of what your worship was like," said Phil Cooke, a Los Angeles media consultant for church organizations. "But now, with 100 percent of your congregation on the other side of that camera, we've started to have to think much more intentionally about how we adapt a service toward an online crowd."

From this forced experiment, congregations are learning that no single tech tool or worship format is ideal everywhere. What's working, practi-

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tioners and consultants say, is to identify the congregation's values, needs and strengths, then create an online experience that leverages a local church's unique assets to accomplish priorities while minimizing unpalatable tradeoffs.

"Your design decisions, whether you realize it or not, tend to be connected to your values," said Oliver, who's also a priest in the Diocese of California. "I would encourage folks to consider, while they're slowing down: what are the most important values that we bring to our worship? And how can our decisions about how we choose to do this draw out those values as effectively as possible?"

In Lincoln, Massachusetts, at St. Anne's-in-the-Fields Church, seeing faces of fellow parishioners wasn't a felt need like it was at St. Gregory's — at least not during worship. Seeing their faces happens aplenty in fellowship time after worship when St. Anne's convenes the congregation for a virtual coffee hour via Zoom.

For the worship service, St. Anne's parishioners said they wanted a calming experience that's grounded in the space of the church, not a homily delivered from a priest's living room, according to curate Greg Johnston.

"People appreciated the closeness to what we were usually doing and feeling that it was something that was stable and provided continuity with their lives pre-coronavirus," Johnston said.

To leverage St. Anne's strengths, a worship team assembles in an intimate chapel space with windows and ample natural light. The visual serenity is enhanced by the liturgy and the talents of two clergy, an organist and a small professional choir.

"It turns out that if we have a choir that consists of just four paid, highly talented singers, they can sing some really awesome music," Johnston said. "We have the resources to put together something really beautiful."

The format also has advantages for St. Anne's congregants in terms of minimizing obstacles. Anyone can view the service either at the church's Facebook page (no Facebook account necessary) or simultaneously at its website. Those who watch on the church site can make their offering right there electronically.

A new sign points worshipers online at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in Houston.

In terms of drawbacks, the Facebook Live format doesn't make viewers voices audible, so congregational singing and unison prayers aren't heard. Zoom isn't much better for those experiences because the standard setting picks up only one person's microphone at a time.

But such tradeoffs can be tolerable in Episcopal settings, Oliver said, because of something he observed in the great migration online in March. Worshipers who might hesitate to ask for prayers aloud, perhaps because they don't want to accidentally cut someone off or interrupt the liturgical flow, can turn out to be refreshingly forthcoming when given a chat box to use.

"In my experience," Oliver said, "in these first couple of weeks [worshiping online], we're finding it very moving to see the depth and specificity of prayer petitions that people are sharing via synchronous chat that they would probably never share out loud in in-person worship."

In Houston, self-described liberal Baptists at Covenant Church have been perfecting a technique that's also been tried lately in some Episcopal congregations: the prerecorded worship service. Director of Communications Jodi Bash organizes congregants to record themselves, say, reading an Old Testament lesson or offering a prayer. A pastor records a sermon; musicians record themselves playing instruments. Bash then collects all the digital files, edits them on Apple's Quick Time software for Macintosh and uploads the finished product to the church's YouTube channel at worship time.

As soon as the service ends, viewers hop over to the church's Facebook page, where the pastor is live and congregants chat with him and one another via the comments.

The format reinforces the strong value that Covenant places on hearing fellow congregants' voices and seeing them, according to William Martin, a Covenant member and director of the Religion and Public Policy Program at Rice University's Baker Institute. Even a parishioner who'd relocated to the United Kingdom could take part by singing a solo.

"My wife and I said, 'Hey, we haven't heard Casey sing in a long time!" said Martin, a scholar of religious broadcasting. "This is pretty neat."

Unlike Zoom, the prerecorded service removes a variable that's been the bane of American life for weeks: anxiety. Because everything has been packaged in advance, worship leaders have none of the fear that comes with hosting a live event that might not even happen if technology fails. Not having to fret can be a treasured value, especially in a time of coronavirus-related stress and uncertainty.

"We aren't worried about glitches

during a live stream," Bash said in an email. "The challenge is getting each new person who is part of worship comfortable with videoing themselves, overcoming technology fears and issues. I have recorded some how-to videos for people that they can access from our website to help them with this."

Because many congregations place a high value on inclusivity, Oliver emphasizes the need to keep technology bars low to encourage maximal participation. For viewers, that can mean putting worship on Facebook Live, which is accessible even to those who don't have Facebook accounts, or using Zoom, which requires only clicking a link and following prompts. For worship participants who record themselves, Oliver suggests letting them email their digital files to a content organizer. Though uploading to Dropbox or Google Drive would be more efficient, efficiency is not as important as inclusivity. Settling for email is worthwhile if it gets someone into worship who otherwise wouldn't be there.

Oliver and Cooke agree that online worship doesn't need to try to replicate the experience of worshiping together in a physical space.

"I hope we can continue to make our worship more and more beautiful without feeling like the way that we do that is by making it more and more perfect," Oliver said. "I think it can be both beautiful and messy… One of the things that I hope is next for us is thinking: How can we bring some dynamic visual beauty into our services?" such as by looking at art together on screens.

Meanwhile, some congregations are finding its worship life can be enriched by adding dimensions that never quite caught fire in their physical spaces. Example: saying the Daily Office together.

At St. Mary's Church in Wayne, Pa., rector Joseph Smith has begun leading morning and evening prayer online from his home since the coronavirus outbreak forced the public to stay home. Before the outbreak, he would have no takers joining him in person for the rites, he said via email. But now, a group of about 40 people will sometimes join him online. Fewer than half are from his congregation.

"People are scared and so they are grounding themselves in worship and prayer," Smith said. "We as a society have gotten ourselves so busy and our priorities so out of whack, that we no longer had time for God. This has been a call back to our roots, and it's been so helpful and calming according to the folks who have let me know."

In terms of the mechanics, St. Mary's assistant rector Lucy Ann Dure said it takes her about 10 minutes to assemble each online bulletin using venite.app, a free resource that Johnston created. Once she's built it, a link gets posted at St. Mary's website. Using two devices makes it all go smoothly for those taking part at home, Dure said. Worshipers will often have the program open on their smartphones while following along with Smith, whom they stream on a laptop, desktop or tablet.

For those experimenting with online worship, the focus on congregational values is helping keep the work grounded and not let it become overwhelming. It might also be helping newly fashioned online preachers stay focused on the emotional connections they need to be making with their congregations at this uniquely unsettling moment. And to rest assured that basic biblical messages are enough right now.

"This is not the time to get too theologically erudite and deep," Cooke said. "This is the time to really give people hope and let them know how to get through this whole thing." ❑

Have you tuned in yet?

TLC's new podcast is free, with at least one new 30-minute-or-less episode most weeks. You can find it on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or anywhere you pick up your podcasts. (Search "The Living Church.")

The new podcast is a service of the Living Church Institute (TLCI), the educational ministry of the Living Church Foundation. We're the same institute that hosts a lot of the conferences and pilgrimages you've seen advertised here in the magazine. We also teach, preach, host conversations, and publish materials for the parish. So why a podcast?

When COVID-19 became a pandemic, a lot of tucked-away ministry ideas in churches and non-profits suddenly felt urgent. We felt the same, and quickly put our heads together and thought, how can we get a lot of fresh, relevant material out to people in a new way? Our goal for the podcast is to meet fellow Episcopalians, Anglicans, and Christians of all types (as well as explorers on the Christian way) where they are right now. How do we worship during this time? How do we step up our discipleship? How do we cope, survive, feed and protect and educate our families? How do we help others do the same? Has the Church ever gone through something like this before? What did they do then? Can we get a laugh once in awhile?

Here's a peek at some of our new and upcoming episodes:

- Worship and the Eucharist: Not the Same Thing
- Just Add Quarantine: Help for Instant Homeschoolers (with Susan Wise Bauer)
- Crisis and Anxiety (with therapist Monique Reynolds)
- Working from Home: A Rule of Life
- Theological and Pastoral Responses to the Pandemic (with Ephraim Radner and Bishop Dan Martins)
- Worship in a Time of Pandemic (with Matthew Olver)
- Classic Texts in Times of Crisis: Thomas Merton
- The State of the Arts
- Music for Worship at Home

Conversation partners include our Covenant blog authors from around the Communion, bishops, priests, theologians, teachers, artists, and lay leaders. And our Classic Texts series will include excerpts from the works of authors like C.S. Lewis, Julian of Norwich, John Donne, and Martin Luther.

Look for new episodes most Thursdays. But check back any day of the week. We will hope to add bonus episodes while this crazy time keeps up, and as long as we all need the extra help.

Then again, when don't we?

Should We Live-Stream Worship? Maybe Not.

By Ephraim Radner

This essay was first published on March 20 on Covenant*, the weblog of* The Living Church.

The COVID-19 virus has churches scrambling. In many parts of the world, including North America, many churches have been closed to public worship. Bishops and clergy have been furiously sending out emails and instructions, plotting responses and strategizing about the days ahead. Lists of "10 Things To Do in Your Congregation" are making the rounds. From my observations, I can generalize about elements in these responses. There are outliers, of course, but not that many.

The first thing I see is the insistent call to comfort and be comforting. People are afraid and uncertain, we are told, and they need to be loved and assured. These directives are aimed mostly at clergy, but filter down from them: you can't hug anybody anymore physically, but you should try to do it in other ways, maybe even "virtually." Call people up; create email chains; issue little daily meditations of warmth and security. This falls into a kind of "motherly" mode. And with it comes another motherly aspect, which is the disciplinary call to behave: wash your hands; don't get too close; obey the rules; remember that other people count; be kind; be responsible. All this represents an almost fierce maternalization of the church and especially of her leadership.

> We cannot, nor should we, seek to give the impression that life "goes on as normal." It never did, after all.

The second aspect of our moment's ecclesial response to the COVID-19 pandemic is a corollary of the first. If bishop and clergy all become "Mom," everybody else becomes "the kids." Thus, with the church's maternalization of leadership comes the Christian people's infantilization. They're scared, worried, need direction and hand-holding (well, only metaphorically). They also need to be told how to behave, how to be nice to others, how to organize their time well.

To be sure, the church as mother and Christians as infants is a well-worn trope. Still, St. Paul and other New Testament writers generally see the "Christian-as-babe" negatively, a mark of immaturity and, however true, something that demands overcoming through learning and growing (1 Cor. 3:1; 14:22; Eph. 4:14; Heb. 5:12-13). Paul as "mother" (Gal. 4:19) or even "father" (1 Thess. 2:11; 1 Cor. 4:14) — though fathers are pretty much absent in the metaphors of the present moment — relates to his churches as do yearning parents who aim, not only at their children's comfort, but especially at their mature witness. Even where the characterization of the Church as a child is less harsh, as in 1 Peter 2:2, the emphasis is on eager and guileless learning — learning of the Word most of all — for the sake of maturity and steady testimony.

First Peter is a good example of how an apostle speaks to a church in the midst of social crisis. This letter is written to a people going through a "season" of terrible "testing" involving persecution, suffering, and death (1:6-7; 4:12-19). The message, for all its nuances, is straightforward: God is sovereign in his will and grace; that grace is divinely offered in Jesus, who calls out and builds up a Church of holiness, obedience, and charitable self-sacrifice; that Church lives in hope for the "salvation" of its people's "souls" and a life shared in the "glory" of Christ. Watchwords of the letter are sobriety, steadfastness, holiness, purity, humility, obedience, suffering, and of course, hope. And despite language of "babes" and "comfort," there is neither clerical maternalization nor congregational infantilization going on: the Church's people are all "living stones," built into a single temple of obedience, praise, and sanctity of life (ch. 2).

How to form such a people for such a time? Peter offers little advice, beyond the Scriptures and the witness of Jesus himself, and the spiritual power that is granted through this witness. He lays out the stark contrast between this power and human resources: "For, 'All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' And this is the word that was preached to you" (1:25-25). The claim is itself a "sobering" reminder of the fragility of human life itself before the eternal glory of God, and the limitation of human resources altogether.

This brings us to the third aspect of current ecclesial directives in the face of the virus that I have observed: what I would call the "siliconization" of the church. Be creative! Innovate! Try new things! This exhortation is actually linked with the maternalization of clerical leadership and the infantalization of the Christian people. This is because siliconization resonates with the contemporary (educated) maternal concerns of busy parents to stimulate their children's development. In my day it was "serious" German toys made of wood; now it is math camps, three musical instru-

ments, and Italian lessons (perhaps also basic computer programming).

In academia (sigh) it is about new forms of pedagogical "delivery," inventive styles of learning, and digital originality. As schools have shut down in the pandemic, and teaching is going "online" (maybe), whole faculties are being asked to spend a week or more later this month being trained in these new methods. You might have thought they already knew how to do all this. It turns out that both faculty and students do not. As some are pointing out, both faculty and students are flailing in the face of having to figure out how to manage Zoom sessions, discussion threads, chat messaging, posting on YouTube, and the rest. Despite Google's metaphorical reach, most people prefer to read books and listen to lectures in person.

Should we live-stream worship at this time? Maybe not. At least we should think about why, to what end, and with what consequences. We cannot, nor should we, seek to give the impression that life "goes on as normal." It never did, after all. Our lives are fragile, vulnerable, and ultimately subject to the power and grace of God who has made us and will finally take us. Their maturity is marked by obediently living into the death of Jesus, with a hope of sharing in his resurrection (Rom. 6:5; 8:17; Phil. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:11). That is the goal of anything that the church seeks to do as a formative and worshipping body. It is also the case that maternalizing, infantilizing, and siliconizing the church probably doesn't add much to this goal.

Fr. Paul Couturier long ago wrote a now-famous "prayer for unity" (often used during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity). It is deceptively simple. The second half asks, "May Your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering caused by division, to see our sin and to hope beyond all hope." The sentiment fits Christian maturity well. What if, in this Time of the Virus, we took this kind of honesty and simplicity seriously? We would "suffer" the fact that we cannot gather for worship; we would experience straightforwardly the burdens of the moment, some of them quite harsh, unveiling our long-standing misplaced commitments; we would tutor hope in a time of stark changes and impositions.

When it comes to worship, we might learn to pray alone. We might learn to use the prayer book with our families, aloud, regularly — using an actual book, turning pages, touching paper. We might learn to sing hymns together, rather than listening to them broadcast through the computer. We might learn to become lonely (or finally to admit that we already are) and to cry out. We might learn to hunger and thirst even for the Bread of Life, for the Body of Christ, as many have done over the centuries in this or that place of desolation or confinement. We might learn to read the Scriptures audibly, for ourselves and with others in our homes. We might — I might! — stop telling everybody what to do, and let them grow up.

We might. But we might not.

The Rev. Dr. Ephraim Radner is professor of historical theology at Wycliffe College in Toronto.

Plague-spell

The village streets abandoned, save for deer
That, brazen, dare to nibble at our trees…

At sunset's hour, a mild, uncanny light
Beckons us to west windows, curious.

Rain pelts the house, as sudden as a strike,
And just as swiftly drains and dies away.

Will we dismiss the strangeness of this year,
When breath or brush of hand might yield disease?

When customary pleasures took their flight,
And modern ways looked thin or spurious?

Calling, a sidewalk child straddles his bike:
Lazarus, Lazarus, come out to play!

Like seeds tucked into earth, we dream rebirth
Beyond all mortal dread of death and dearth.

Death of a Singer

> *So glad to be a part of this before I got cancer. I may not be able to sing now, but at least I can look back at this and be proud.* —Jenny Cooper on singing in Eric Whitacre's virtual choir *(youtube)*

One thread among the thousands, radiance
Lost and found inside a flaring song…
And though you are the ashes in the wind
That sting against a cheek and bring on tears,
Your voice persists in whirling 'round the world,
As if it sang in *now* instead of *when.*

Time knelled your every instant, yet it blunts
Our sense of barbarous grief and devilish wrong—
You're there, but inaccessible. Some ask who sinned,
Our singer, or her kin? Who whipped up fears
And dread? What godly need or yearning hurled
You forth? How did *becoming* turn to *been*?

All questions sink away; the listener hunts
For hints of you, alive inside the song,
Although the myriad of voices blend
The living with the dead, eternity with years…
Such mystery to hear your voice unfurled
And soaring from the far-off realm of *Then.*

You've paid (ah, my sweet Christ!) our mortal price;
We hear you singing "Fly to Paradise."

Marly Youmans is the author of 15 books of poetry and fiction; her most recent book of poetry is The Book of the Red King *(Phoenicia Publishing, 2019), and her just-out novel is* Charis in the World of Wonders *(Ignatius Press.)*

Le Palmier des Jacobins, the central pillar and vaulting of the Church of the Jacobins, Toulouse. Simon Cotton photos

CORNERSTONES

Praying with St. Thomas Aquinas

By Simon Cotton

France is full of magnificent churches, buildings dating from the fourth century onward, used for Christian worship since their construction. So why am I so drawn to pray in a one-time stable, a still deconsecrated building deep in Southern France's Languedoc region?

At the start of the 13th century, the area of the south of France between the southern edge of the Massif Central and the Ariège Pyrenees, centred on Toulouse, was a land with a distinct civilization, united by the *oc* speech. Romanesque art flourished in the region, as seen in churches like Conques, Moissac, Saint Gilles, and Saint Trophime in Arles, as well as Saint Sernin in Toulouse itself.

Catharism also arose there in the 11th century. Followers of this sect saw themselves as Christians, but did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, denying the incarnation as well as Christ's passion and resurrection. The Cathars had their own hierarchy, with Cathar bishops based in Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Albi (the latter gave them the common name "Albigensians").

While the barons of Northern France would march South to launch a military crusade against the Cathars in 1208, a priest named Dominic Guzmán led the Church's effort to convert them by persuasion. A Spaniard, born around 1173 at Caleruga in Castile, Dominic was a brilliant orator, who proclaimed a Gospel of charity, modesty, and poverty. Beginning his work in the rural areas east of Toulouse, he was soon advising the legates responsible for Catharism across Languedoc. In 1207, he founded a monastery at Prouilhe, a community of women who had renounced Catharism and wanted to live chaste Christian lives.

In 1215, the city of Toulouse was reconciled with the Church, and, at the bishop's invitation, Dominic founded a small community there, composed of himself and three companions. A papal bull of 1217 created what was to become the Dominican order, giving them the name of Preachers. Dominic moved tirelessly across France, Spain, and Italy and his order grew. Because their house in Paris was in the rue Saint Jacques, they were often known in the Middle

Ages as the Jacobins. Worn out, Dominic died on August 6, 1221 and was canonised by Pope Gregory IX on July 3, 1234. Just a month later, the Bishop Raymond de Fauga of Miremont, himself a Dominican, consecrated the church of the order's first monastery in Toulouse.

This small church, just 40 metres long, was built of brick, like much of Toulouse, which is known as *la ville rose*. Like other Dominican churches, it featured a double nave: one for the friars, the other for the congregation. This building soon proved inadequate and was extended to the east with a choir and radiating chapels. Beginning in 1275, the choir was raised, so it now overshadowed the nave. To support the vaulted roof, the architect devised an amazing feature, a central column with 22 ribs radiating from the centre, like a palm tree. To this day, it is known as *le palmier des Jacobins*. Next a tall tower, topped by five octagonal stories, rose beside the choir. Finally, the nave was given a new vaulted roof to match that of the choir, and the building acquired its present form, which was praised by Pope Urban V (1362-70) as "the most beautiful of all the churches of our Preacher brethren."

Les Jacobins remained a living monastery until the French Revolution. Closed in 1791, Napoleon requisitioned it for the army in 1810 when it became a dormitory and stables. It served in later decades as a school building. Though now restored, it remains deconsecrated.

I discovered *les Jacobins* on my first visit to Toulouse in 1984. My *Michelin* guide flagged it up as the resting place of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who even then I knew to be one of the medieval church's greatest theologians. But how did he end up here?

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is how much activity he compressed into his short life. He is probably best known as the author of the *Summa Theologiae* and the Office for the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, with its much-loved Eucharistic hymns. He died at Fossanova Abbey, southeast of Rome, while on his way to the Council of Lyon. The monks there cared for his relics for nearly a century.

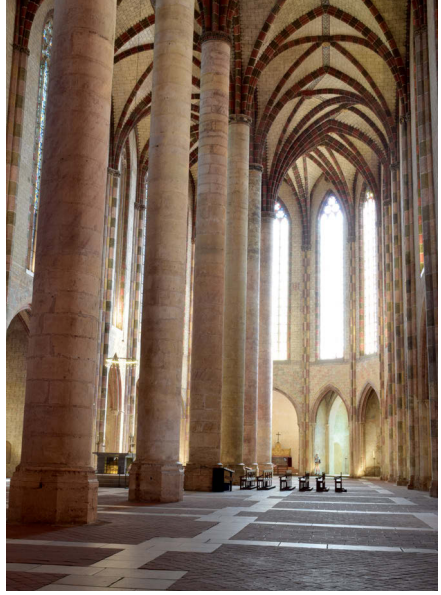
In 1368, Pope Urban V ordered that his relics be transferred to *les Jacobins*. Borne on a donkey led by two Dominicans, they were carried across the Alps at the Great St. Bernard pass and arrived on the outskirts of Toulouse on January 28, 1369. The next day, a crowd of 150,000 people, led by an archbishop, accompanied them to their resting place in a candlelit procession. There they remained until the French Revolution, when for their safety they were moved to Saint Sernin's Basilica, to be finally returned to *les Jacobins* in 1974.

In 1984, I parked under the Capitole square, the centre of Toulouse, and walked for a few minutes along the rue Léon Gambetta, before turning right into rue Lakanal, to be faced by this striking brick building. Diagonally across from the entrance, the modern altar is at the center of the friars' nave, and beneath it is the saint's reliquary casket. I have visited the place several times, following the example of Pope John Paul II, kneeling down to pray.

Thomas Aquinas was not just a great intellectual, but also a man of fervent prayer and contemplation. He is said to have been favored by visions. He attended two Masses a day — the first he would celebrate, as a priest; the second he would just pray.

In his devotions during the second Mass each day, it is believed that he always used two prayers. One was the second portion of the *Te Deum*, from *Tu Rex glorie Christe* ("You are the King of glory, O Christ") to its end. The other prayer was of his own composition, what the Dominican Paul Murray called a "quiet, radiant prayer" to Christ truly present under the forms of bread and wine. We know it as the *Adoro Te*. At one time it was fashionable to doubt that Aquinas wrote this prayer, but the wheel has turned full circle, and he is now accepted as its author.

Not long before his death, while celebrating Mass on 6 December 1273, Thomas had a mystical experience which made him give up his writing. He told his secretary, "All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me." It is said that Our Lord asked him: "Thomas, thou hast written well of me; what reward wilt thou have?" to which Thomas replied: "Nothing but thyself, Lord."



Aisle, looking East, Church of the Jacobins.

His "quiet, radiant" prayer gives us a share in the saint's transforming vision:

O Christ, whom now beneath a veil we see,
May what we thirst for soon our portion be,
To gaze on thee unveiled, and see thy face,
The vision of thy glory and thy grace.

Further reading:

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The Everyday Matters

By Stanley Hauerwas

The virus has wounded us. Life was pretty good. Most of us knew when and from where our next meal or paycheck was coming. We could plan visits to see children or old friends. Spring training was soon to begin. If you cannot trust spring training you cannot trust anything. And that is exactly where we find ourselves. This damned virus has made us unsure if we can trust anything—and that includes God.

Photo by Asher Imtiaz

Years ago during the nuclear crisis, I wrote a little essay entitled "Taking Time for Peace: The Moral Significance of the Trivial." For those who regret you missed reading this little contribution to our common life, it is the last essay in a book entitled *Christian Existence Today* that was published in 1988. What I had to say in that article may be relevant to our current situation.

I called attention to the response by many that all normal activities should cease in the face of the possibility, since Reagan was president, that we might blow everything up. Those taking this position argued we should do nothing that did not have in view the destruction of nuclear weapons. These "survivalists" argued we should subordinate all life to the cause of securing our biological survival.

I found that a profoundly totalitarian sentiment. Survival cannot be an end in itself, but rather we seek to survive to develop ways of life that make survival constitutive of lives worth living. What appeared to be a profoundly ethical position to end the stock piling of nuclear weapons had a logic that created such weapons in the first place. Fear can be an ugly reality.

What does this have to do with ethics? Even more importantly, what does this have to do with being Christian and our commitment to live in the light of God's good care of us? I think this: Ethics is often thought to deal with "big questions" and dramatic choices, but in fact the most important and significant aspects of our lives are found in the everyday. The everyday is made the everyday by the promises we make which may not seem like promises at the time but turn out to make us people that can be trusted. Such trust comes through small acts of tenderness that are as significant as they are unnoticed. It makes a difference that I am told, "I love you" before I leave for the day even though the declaration may seem to be routine. It is often routine and that is why it is so important.

The God that we worship as Christians is a God of the everyday. To be sure, the One that is Lord of time has acted and continues to act in ways that are extraordinary. But God does so that we might live lives shaped by the love found in the cross of Christ. Because of the Cross we can have lives that contain the time necessary to sustain the everyday routines that make peace and justice possible. No routine is more significant than the willingness of the community called Christian to have and care for children, some of whom will be born "different."

The kind of ethics associated with this way of characterizing the moral life is called an ethic of the virtues. A concentration on the virtues, an emphasis that characterized most ancient understandings of the moral life, was lost in modernity. In recent times, however, it has found powerful expression in the work of the philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre. Drawing on the work of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, MacIntyre has helped us recover the significance of our habitual formation that makes possible our everyday exchanges with ourselves, those we love, and strangers.

I have also been associated with his development. I have recently written a book entitled *The Character of Virtue: Letters to a Godson*. The book, as the title implies, are letters commending a virtue I assume is relevant to my godson's age and development. I try to help us see that the virtues are not the result of extraordinary behavior. Instead, they ride on the back of the everyday. Accordingly, the virtues are not the result of my trying hard, for example, to be patient. I become patient by taking the time to learn how to dribble the basketball well. We do discover in times like the present that the moral commitments we had forgotten make us who we are. I am thinking, for example, of the commitment of health care workers who resolve not to abandon the ill even though to remain present may endanger their lives.

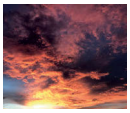
We live not to survive but to be in love with God and those God makes our neighbor.

The wound that the virus has inflicted on us is to tempt us to become impatient with ourselves and others in an effort to return to the "normal." We had not realized how dependent we have become on the everyday habit of going to church and seeing one another on Sundays. We had lost track of the significance of our willingness to touch one another as a sign that we rejoice in their presence. In short, we had lost the significance of the everyday, and we rightly want it back.

But we must be patient. We are an eschatological people. We believe we are agents in a story we did not make up and it is a story that is true. That the story is true makes it possible for us to live truthful lives. Such lives require us to recognize that we are a people who must die. We are not meant to survive this life. That is why we live not to survive but to be in love with God and those God makes our neighbor. We have been wounded by this virus but we have not been morally destroyed. So, let us be patient with one another as God has remained patient with us.

Stanley Hauerwas is Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Emeritus of Divinity and Law at Duke Divinity School and canon theologian of the Diocese of Tennessee.

In the next issue: a photo essay by Asher Imtiaz.



Cæli enarrant

Wanted: Field Guide to Adjudicate Communion Across Distance

I come to the conclusion of my series on the visibility and invisibility of the Church. How to draw things together? Let me propose three, programmatic points that build on one another.

Catholic visibility shared by all

First, it should be clear that the visibility of the one Church is basic to her identity, and so must never be surrendered, set aside, or forgotten. From the beginning, Christians have seen rising up around them a singular, God-given, God-formed Church, sent out like Israel with transformative good news to share with the nations. "This is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Ps. 118:23). To be sure, Jesus advises, "let your light shine before others" (Mt. 5:16). We have some agency in the Church; we are called to protect and propagate the faith and to take counsel. But first and finally the one Church is Christ's own body, and the Holy Spirit will not be stifled. All tribes and peoples, and "all things, whether on earth or in heaven," *will* witness the Pentecostal illumination of the Church. God in Christ *is* "making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). The promise is for the Jew first, but then "for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39).

In this providential, pneumatic light, the existential questions for Christians and churches in every time and place are: *Where* is the Church, *what* is her mission, and *how* may I share in it? Our ability to answer is complicated by besetting divisions, both between and within our churches — one proof of the *mixed body* character of the Church. But the vocation to visibility is not thereby abrogated. The bishops gathered at the Lambeth Conference of 1920 grappled with this problem and left an influential record of their work, writ in a series of appropriately visual images. Adopting "a new point of view," namely, "to look up to the reality as it is in God," the bishops saw that "the one Body exists. It needs not to be made, nor to be remade, but to become organic and visible." By this they envisioned not a "uniform" Church but an appropriately diverse "fellowship of one visible society whose members are bound together by the ties of a common faith, common sacraments, and a common ministry." Beyond "vague federation," therefore, and beyond the "self-will, ambition, and lack of charity" that have led to the "sin of disunion," such a reunited Body could, "so far as this world is concerned," show forth the "fulness of Christian life, truth and witness." This, the bishops concluded, "is what we mean by the Catholic Church" (Encyclical Letter; Resolution 9.1 and 9.3).

The state of the question of the Church's visibility has hardly changed in the intervening century, save in the unleashing of great ecumenical energies that re-made most churches, including the Anglican Communion. We Christians know what to do. We are called by God to "gather up the fragments, so that nothing may be lost" (Jn. 6:12). This is old-fashioned Augustinian Catholicism in the key of patience and penitence.

The inescapability of counsel

With Richard Hooker and St. Augustine, following our Lord, we cannot forget that the Church's perfect unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity are not apparent on this side of glory, as a divine accommodation to human sin and a divine goad to sanctification. Jesus says, "by their fruits, ye shall know them" (Mt. 7:16) and also: "Let both [the weeds and the wheat] grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time *I* will tell the reapers…" (Mt. 13:30). Thus, *God* forms the pilgrim faithful over time, those who are called and given grace to persevere to the end, and God will render final judgment. In such a setting, many Christian communities would do well to understand their life together as "transitional," in the imaginative term of the 1930 Lambeth Conference (see Report IV). We are all waiting for more to be given — revealed and enacted — by God at the proper time. We will want to remain attuned to flexible forms of communion, both for ourselves and for the sake of others, in order to steward what we have been given.

We Anglicans and others, who share a common baptismal faith across the numerous churches of post-16th-century western Christianity, need a field guide for adjudicating visibility and invisibility amid division. Given that our present disarray is, we trust, a way station en route to something better, how can we imitate today Christ's having broken down the wall of division between Jew and Gentile "that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace" (Eph. 2:14,15)? What next steps will help us advance in faithfulness as Christ's members made into "one body through the cross" (Eph. 2:16)? Such questions invoke the sacrificial character of ecclesial life in service of visibility as well as discernment about the fullness of the Church's witness.

On all counts, we come to the inescapability of counsel, that is, the need for constant communication and consultation, which may take various forms, including traditional councils, synods, and so forth. As the bishops gathered at the 1930 Lambeth Conference reflected, perhaps their own decennial meeting "with its strict adherence to purely advisory functions has been… preparing our minds for participation in the Councils of a larger and more important community of Churches. Every extension of this

circle of visible fellowship would increase the power of the Church to witness to its Lord by its unity" (Encyclical Letter). And since the members of the body *cannot* say to each other "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21), they must likewise face each other in love when hard things need to be said (see Paul's confrontation with Peter at Gal. 2:11; cf. Eph. 4:15: "speaking the truth in love"). For Augustinian heirs, a critical question will be: How can our common counsel account for the hidden aspect of the Church, her God-ordained invisibility, and so proceed with proper reserve? How can we leave to God that which is God's, while at the same time discerning, in St. Paul's terms, the difference between sad-but-necessary *divisions* and salutary *diversity* (see 1 Cor. 11:19 and 1 Cor. 12:12ff.)? According to the apostle, each has its place, but they are not the same. The ancient and correct answer is by the Church's own gathering and deciding.

Imperfect communion across distance

Let me finally sharpen the immediate challenge before Anglicans. Seeking to respond to the call of international communion, we have said for over a century that "intensified" life together is more faithful than federation (see the report of the unity committee at Lambeth Conference 1920; Anglican Covenant, Intro. §5). Unless we wish to renege on that vision so as to recast the Communion in a new image — either as relentlessly federalist, or in would-be post-Canterbury guise — our questions will concern the model of intensification and its timeline. Here, I see two proposals on the table, both covenantal in character.

Convened in 2016 by the 6th Global South Conference, a study group "on enhancing ecclesial responsibility" delivered a draft "covenantal structure" to the 7th conference meeting in Cairo last October. As reported in *The Living Church*, the text is full of scriptural and historical riches and deserves careful study. Building on the 2011 report of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order, *Toward a Symphony of Instruments*, the proposed structure seeks to advance Anglican coherence first of all in a global south context, but with an eye to wider application "for the well-being of our Anglican Communion."

From a classical Anglican-cum-Catholic perspective, the call for wider counsel and decision-making about the Church concerning controverted matters rings true; Hooker, and successive Lambeth conferences, would approve. The readiness of the text to set aside "mere geographical location," however, so as to isolate pockets of putative "orthodoxy" signals something else — an over-realized visibilism without qualification, hence without needed restraint (see Executive Summary §4). Who, for instance, will determine when a given bishop's *jurisdiction* has become "unintelligible" and "inauthentic" (1.6; cf. 2.1.6)? Likewise, was the 1552 text on *The Reformation of Ecclesiastical Laws* (cited by the Global South authors) correct when it supposed that "the coming together of all faithful men" is a matter that may be "perceived"? John Jewel would agree, but only by way of dispensing, as we saw, with the invisibility of the Church, thus also with her mixed body character, incorporating even heresy, as Hooker allowed. In this conception, communion becomes an all-or-nothing matter, either "full" or absent, as the text apparently concludes (2.1.6). *Degrees* of faithfulness, so helpful in the pedagogy of communion for distinguishing real progress from *all* that we are called to, are thus removed from the ecclesiological toolbox as well.

The Anglican Covenant avoids these errors by channeling received ecumenical thinking about the Church — that communion is baptismal in the first instance (Intro §§1-3); that even among Anglicans it is both "beauty and challenge" (Intro. § 4); and that, because there's more to the Anglican family than meets the eye, we pray — in the subjunctive, of course — that God "will redeem our struggles and weakness" and "renew and enrich our common life" (Intro. §8; see more fully 2.1.3). This is a reformed summons for an ever-reforming Church. In turn, each section of the Covenant presents a gift and call structure. Affirmations lead to complementary commitments, finally regarding the form of "interdependent life" itself (3.2). When "situations of conflict" arise, "face to face meetings, agreed parameters, and a willingness to see such processes through" are prescribed, in a bid "to uphold the highest degree of communion possible" (3.2.6-3.2.7).

The "relational consequences" of section four of the Covenant (see 4.2.4, 4.2.7) were underdeveloped and perhaps broadly conceived as a kind of social distancing, in current parlance, when what we actually need is physical-distancing-in-love. Call it "walking together at a distance," as Archbishop Welby described a 2016 decision of the primates. When we disagree on matters of importance without a ready solution at hand, some means of honoring the faith we still share without piling on expectations of *fullness* can be both attractive and coherent. We do this all the time with ecumenical partners, as with family members. Communication is maintained and cooperation encouraged, even as some slackening of business as usual is reluctantly accepted as an outworking of freedom and respect. In this way, boundaries may become byways that prepare the passage of pilgrims still learning how best to "wait for one another." When we do "come together" again, we hope "it will not be for our condemnation" (1 Cor. 11:33,34).

Let us pray that Anglicans of all parties and persuasions may at least not seek to prevent the developing of structures for common discernment, so long as these structures also enable patient endurance (Jas. 5:10-11; cf. Heb. 10:36-39). Duly marking the great mystery of our having died in baptism, through which we were "hidden with Christ," let us labor to build up the body in every good work, until the life of each one is "revealed with him in glory" (Col. 3.3,4). Walking together, even at varying paces, we can, Lord willing, look together to Christ, who is first and last, and himself the *way* upon which the Church is drawn. *He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

—Christopher Wells

St. Augustine, One of Us

Review by Mac Stewart

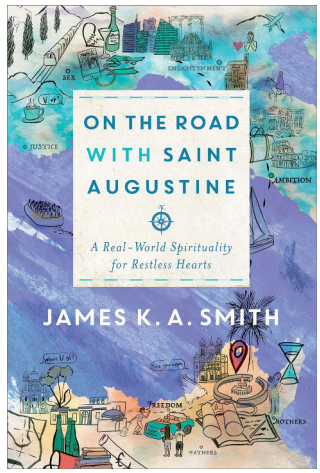
My first patristics class in seminary included an assignment called a "pastoral context paper." I was to craft in the body of the paper an imaginary dialogue between me (as pastor) and a parishioner about a pressing question in the latter's religious life, while giving, in the footnotes, extensive commentary on early church texts and ideas that grounded my pastoral and theological moves. The point was to apply the theology I had been learning in a way that would both provide relevant spiritual nourishment for the lay faithful and be true to the Christian tradition; indeed, to show that it could do the former precisely because it was the latter.

Jamie Smith's new book, *On the Road with Saint Augustine*, is a terrific example of such a genre. Smith has clearly done his homework on the blessed African bishop. His endnotes demonstrate a deep engagement with a wide range of Augustine's work, from the early dialogues and the major theological works (*Confessions, City of God*) to the more directly pastoral literature (letters, sermons, etc.). In that sense he certainly shows his work, and grounds what he is trying to do squarely in the texts.

But the real meat of this book is the way in which Smith shows the fifth-century doctor to be a recognizable contemporary to 21st-century Westerners. Smith attempts to show that this is true not only in the sense that Augustine engages perennial human questions that haunt every age, but also and more specifically in the sense that our modern worldview, molded as it so deeply (and often unconsciously) is by 20th-century existentialist ideals of freedom and authenticity, finds direct touchpoints in the narrative Augustine tells of his own Christian conversion and his lifelong work leading others along their pilgrimage towards their true fatherland. Martin Heidegger, for example, developed his notion of our "thrownness" into the world and his aversion to "inauthenticity" directly through a reading of Augustine's *Confessions* and its account of the power of a vague mass society to absorb us into an impersonal "they" (30).

Augustine's prescriptions, of course, differ from most modern calls for authenticity: Augustinian freedom is not freedom from constraint but freedom for a life well-lived, bound into the lineaments of the body of Christ for the arduous pilgrimage of finding ourselves by losing ourselves. But Smith helps us see that inasmuch as our age is dogged by the same concerns that hounded him, Augustine is an eminently sensitive and reliable travelling companion along the road of modern life. We see it in everything from a memoir by Jay-Z in which he confronts his own inner self-contradictions, to the "Wide Open Spaces" sought by the Dixie Chicks, to those in addiction recovery who discover that rituals shape belief as much as the other way around, to the mythology of superhero movies that seems to resonate so deeply with people seeking a story for themselves. In every case we find that Augustine has been there ahead of us, and has a sympathetic yet confident word of counsel for how we might courageously go on.

Smith is not uncritical of Augustine. He thinks the celibate bishop overcorrected in his views on sex after a deeply unhealthy youth in that realm. He also observes an imbalance in Augustine's account of evil: too much of a Stoic interiorization of the phenomenon (evil is my not accepting the world as it is) and not enough lament about the certifiable injustices all around; he sometimes looks "more like the placid Socrates than the Jesus groaning in the garden of Gethsemane" (184). But Smith rightly balances this with a recognition that often enough (especially in the sermons and letters) Augustine's accent is resoundingly on the victorious solidarity of God in Christ with humanity against evil.



On the Road with Saint Augustine

By **James K. A. Smith**

Brazos Press, pp. 256, $24.99

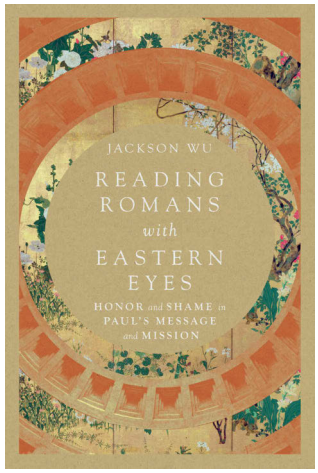
It's also not always entirely clear for whom Smith intends this book. Some comments seem directed towards an unchurched or de-churched audience, inviting them to see in Augustine an ecclesial companion that would recognize and sympathize with their hesitation or disillusionment. Other parts assume a reasonable command of some basic philosophical ideas — the contours of existentialism, the difference between Platonism and Neoplatonism. And all the way through are references to a vast range of contemporary media — movies, music, novels —and even social science.

None of these categories are mutually exclusive, of course, and as Smith is a college professor I imagine that the ideal target audience is something like the American college sophomore with a mild or emotionally-freighted religious background who finds herself searching for deeper meaning in life. But again, part of Smith's point is that there is a college sophomore in most of us in the modern West, and in that respect we would be hard pressed to find a better traveling companion along the road of life than the wise young fool from Thagaste.

The Rev. Mac Stewart is a doctoral student in historical theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C., and a contributor to TLC's Covenant *blog.*

Giving God 'Face'

Review by Neil Dhingra



Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes
Honor and Shame in Paul's Message and Mission
By **Jackson Wu**
IVP Academic, pp. 248, $20

Jackson Wu's *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul's Message and Mission*, winner of a *Christianity Today* award of merit, is wonderfully accessible, with references to films, anecdotes from Asia and America, and a reimagined Patrick Henry declaring, "Give me face or give me death!" It reinterprets Romans through the "Eastern" lens of honor and shame. Thus, the Asian Patrick Henry is more concerned with "face," or reputation, than personal liberty.

For Wu, St Paul imagines that humanity has failed to honor God and "exchanged the glory [*doxa*] of the immortal God" (1:23) for forms of competing group superiority, losing its vocation of servant-kingship in hollow and death-bound pretensions. Paul means to relativize these cultural narratives, whether of Israel or "Greek," so that his readers see how the dishonored Father has recovered "face" in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Through him, in turn, humanity can become adopted members of God's people, an *ecclesia* that is founded upon grace, not nationality; and characterized by a familial love that crosses the divisions of "economics, nationality, denomination, hometown, language, education, gender, or any other measure."

The redirection of honor to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ allows Wu to combine the concerns of Lutheran interpretations of Paul with those of the New Perspective. If the former is anxious about "works-righteousness" and the latter worried about "works of the law" as cultural boundary markers, Wu's perspective identifies both as different forms of human-centered honor, achieved (earned) or ascribed (through relationships), that must be relativized. Wu also brings St. Paul closer to Confucius. His decentering of legal metaphors resembles Confucius' claims about the insufficiency of law and shame, even if Wu says less than Confucius about ritual. Further, Wu's focus on the distorting effects of misplaced honor means that he need not conjecture an evil disposition within individuals and can retain an "Eastern" optimism about human nature.

Wu argues that "we become what we glorify." Giving honor to God instead of the idols of collective identity means changing our perspective. This "worldview transformation" is distinguished by forming relationships beyond the usual divisions of insider and outsider. Drawing on the Chinese concept of *guanxi*— relationships characterized by gift exchange and reciprocity — Wu writes, "Paul redeems *guanxi*." Christians can look for connectedness even in what the world presently judges to be weak and shameful. As Wu provocatively writes, in "East Asian language," "God's people are willing to 'lose face' in order to give God 'face.'"

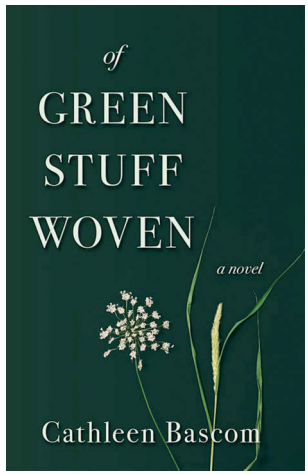
Finding our *doxa* in God alone lets us accept a characteristically Chinese "middle way" of ecclesial fellowship that is neither self-centered contentiousness nor authoritarian uniformity. The importance of norms is that they proceed only from honoring God. We should never eat nor drink in such a way as to construct novel boundary markers, evasions of the realization that, whether "weak" or "strong," "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (14:10). While Wu does not want to erase cultural identities — he asks us to consider the wisdom of our ancestors, he wants us to refuse to invest them with ultimacy. Ancestor veneration crosses the line when it confuses human and divine authority, investing the departed with a power to "transcend death" that is God's alone.

Wu's fascinating book — all this is done in 200 pages — raises questions. The categories of honor and shame, as well as the differentiation of an individualist and status-obsessed West from ancient honor-bound Mediterranean (and Asian) society, come from cultural anthropology. Psychologists would prioritize social dominance, in individual or group behavior alike, which manifests itself in similar forms of comparative evaluation and rank ordering. The difference between West and East is simply that the East is open about dominance through the language of honor while the West is not. If so, Wu's focus on redirecting honor to God may miss an underlying, disturbing reality that tends to pull it away.

Wu movingly speaks of "changed hearts" — a "transformation" that brings about "changed identity," a changed "fundamental sense of honor and worth," so that we seek God. The *nature* of this change may require a discussion of what Michael Gorman has called "Christosis," in which we become like God, a transformation manifested in hospitality towards those whom social dominance would marginalize. Writers like Alexander Chow have written about *theosis* in Sino-Christian theology. It would be interesting to consider the full nature of the transformation — anthropological, psychological, ontological? — needed to experience the "freedom of the *doxa* of the children of God" (8:21).

Neil Dhingra is a doctoral student in education at the University of Maryland and a contributor to TLC's Covenant *blog.*

A Prairie Church Companion



Of Green Stuff Woven
By **Cathleen Bascom**
Light Messages, pp. 272, $16.99

Review by Christine Havens

Of Green Stuff Woven is a remarkable love story. Not a romance, but a narrative that roots itself within Cathleen Bascom's spirituality and love of the prairie as well as her love of the Episcopal Church. The author's love blooms in the voice of the narrator, Brigid Brenchley, as she brings to life a cast of incredible characters who must consider the future of their community, in practical terms and from the perspective of God's economy, as best they are able.

The novel is set in downtown Des Moines, Iowa, at the Cathedral Church of St. Aidan, where Brenchley serves as dean. Surrounded by high-rises, the cathedral has devoted a large portion — a full city block — of its real estate and resources to a prairie restoration project. However, the cathedral building itself is deteriorating. Despite wealthy members, St. Aidan's suffers from financial hardship. Cathedral members and leadership are at odds over whether the prairie restoration should be the priority or whether more attention should be given to building maintenance and serving those in need through their soup kitchen.

If that's not enough to create conflict within the church community, a development company comes to Dean Brenchley, presenting her with an offer of nearly $4 million to purchase the prairie block. They want to build a hotel center. Accepting the offer would mean great financial relief for the church and also for the dean herself, who struggles with student loan debt. Hanging over this is the added tension of an impending flood of the Des Moines and Racoon rivers, yet another "100-year flood," that especially threatens an historically African-American section of the city that has long been neglected by the city government.

Bascom weaves the present events at St. Aidan's with Dean Brenchley's childhood in Denver and in Kansas — a spiritual journey that connects the reader to this woman in an intimate way. At the start of each chapter are "Notes from Dean Brigid Brenchley's Prairie Journal," delightful shoots of contemplative information that ground the novel firmly within Bascom's spiritual and narrative earth.

> This book might be termed "eco-theo" literature as it deals directly with ecology and environment and the theology of creation care.

Characters such as siblings Max and Madge Chase, who are scions of the family responsible for much of Des Moines' downtown development; Phil Morrow, lawyer and love interest; Henry Jones and his grandson, Nick; Grandma Helen; and James "Merlin" Merlinske; to name a few, are drawn with the love of a shepherd for her sheep, even though they stand on both sides of the contested issue.

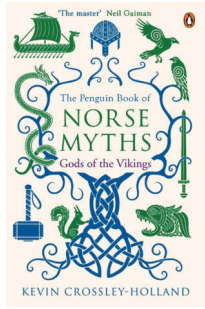
Cathleen Bascom is currently the Bishop of Kansas; prior to that, she served as the dean of the Cathedral of St. Paul in Des Moines. She has been involved in launching initiatives such as Iowa Creation Stewards, which helps parishes establish "postage stamp prairies" and get involved in environmental issues. She's also a member of the Episcopal Church's Task Force on Creation Care. *Of Green Stuff Woven* finds its genesis in her experiences.

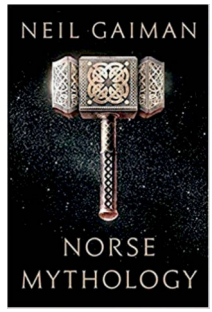
Whether this novel should be considered climate change fiction, or "clifi" to use the term coined by Professor Dan Bloom for this ever-changing genre, deserves some thought. Many of the foundational works of clifi are science fiction or speculative fiction, with some mainstream literary fiction. Examples include Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* and Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* in the SF realm and Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* in mainstream fiction. My thought is that *Of Green Stuff Woven* might be better termed "eco-theo" literature as it deals more directly with ecology and environment and the theology of creation care than with climate change. Eco-theology is a growing genre; the *EcoTheo Review* serves as a great repository of examples.

Regardless of classification, Cathleen Bascom's debut novel is a must read. As a native Iowan and former active member of the diocese, I enjoyed being reminded of familiar places and people, such as Bishop Farnon. There is a recognition and reciprocity in *Of Green Spaces Woven*, however, that will reach out to all who read it and let themselves be overgrown with love of the natural. Bascom does well to remind us of St. Augustine's wisdom, that "we are only fully human when we are engaged with the natural world." Amen to that.

Christine Havens graduated from the Seminary of the Southwest and is administrative and communication assistant at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas. She also works at BookPeople, an independent bookstore, where she curates their clifi display.

Tales to Kindle the Imagination





The Penguin Book of Norse Myths
By **Kevin Crossley-Holland**
Penguin, pp. 320, £12.99.

Norse Mythology
By **Neil Gaiman**
Bloomsbury, pp. 304, $25.95

Review by Hannah Matis

It seemed as good a week as any to read about Ragnarök. Last year, amid his other artistic endeavors, Neil Gaiman released a collection of Norse myths, adapting these ancient stories for a modern audience. It seems likely that the older Crossley-Holland collection was re-released in the wake of the popular success of Gaiman, whose blurb graced the cover of my Penguin copy. I would commend either collection as highly accessible introductions to the classic Norse myths.

Norse mythology has always had a powerful and symbiotic relationship with Christianity, in particular, with what one might call Christian myth-making. This relationship dates back to the very introduction of Christianity into Scandinavia and the British Isles. While it is popular to imagine "paganism" as a colorful and less restrictive alternative to Christian belief, writing entered the early medieval world indelibly associated with the faith. We have these stories of an older world not as real alternatives to the rise of Christianity, but because Christians of their time and place thought these tales were valuable and wrote them down, in a generosity of spirit we would do well to remember today.

Most scholars now date the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* to the eighth century or later; both Gaiman's and Crossley-Holland's collections of myths are reliant upon the so-called *Prose Edda,* a compilation by the Icelandic Christian Snorri Sturluson. Norse mythology had, of course, a huge impact on the Roman Catholic Tolkien, but no less on C.S. Lewis, who described in *Surprised by Joy* the devastating impact on him of the death of Balder, which he describes as a proto-conversion experience. The Norns of *Out of the Silent Planet* are borrowed from the Norse.

Kevin Crossley-Holland may not be as well known in the United States as he is in the U.K., but he trained as an Anglo-Saxonist very much in the tradition of Tolkien. His re-tellings, melding together the *Prose Edda* with a host of other texts, are brilliant works of creative and poetic wordplay, which incorporates many of the "kennings" and phrases familiar to Old English verse.

Perhaps Crossley-Holland's greatest gift to the reader is that of careful editorial arrangement with a novelist's eye: the myths build on one another naturally, from the creation of the world, the deeds (one might say antics) of the gods, the inevitable betrayal of the mischief-maker Loki, and the prophecy of Ragnarök, the end of days. But there is a lot he wants to get in, as well as a significant critical apparatus.

By contrast, Gaiman's prose version of the myths is minimalist and absolutely direct, and ideally suited for someone who has never encountered these stories before. Gaiman is deeply indebted to Crossley-Holland's arrangement of the myths, although he severely abridges the collection. Over the course of a career founded on the power of myth and story, Gaiman has had a complex and rather ambivalent relationship to faith, and he has tended to draw on certain aspects of Norse mythology, in particular, as a way of harnessing the creative power of religious stories without being constrained by traditional belief. For both writers, the most important thing about the Norse gods is their mortality: Odin knows from the beginning how he will die. The myths also offer a tale of ecological interconnectedness and impending catastrophe that is unquestionably resonant today.

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Social Decadence, Creative Mission

The Decadent Society
How We Became the Victims of Our Own Success
By **Ross Douthat.** Avid Reader Press, pp. 258, $27.

Review by Brandt L. Montgomery

Until now, I have mostly thought of the word *decadence* as a positive term. For instance, as a native Alabamian, there are some local foods that I really enjoy. "The fried chicken, green bean casserole, and sweet potato pie were absolutely decadent," I might say, conveying my enjoyment and satisfaction. But I also know that as good as they may be, foods like these can be harmful when eaten too often. Hence a statement I oftentimes hear and say when back down South: "Why do foods that are bad for you taste so good?"

Ross Douthat's *The Decadent Society* has expanded my understanding of decadence in general and its effect upon society in particular. Describing our society's use of the word as more promiscuous than precise, Douthat offers this definition: Decadence "refers to economic stagnation, institutional decay, and cultural and intellectual exhaustion at a high level of material prosperity and technological advancement." In this sense, decadence refers to situations that are more repetitive than innovative, ones in which intellectual life goes in circles, causing all previous developments to give way

(Continued on next page)

PEOPLE & PLACES

Deaths

The Rev. **Daniel L. Banner,** SSC, longtime rector of St. Paul's on the Lake, an Anglo-Catholic shrine parish in Chicago, died March 13, aged 91.

Father Banner grew up in Decatur, Ill., and was a graduate of Millikin University and Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1953, and after a curacy in Alton, Ill., served as vicar of two rural mission parishes in the Diocese of Springfield, St. John's in Centralia and St. Thomas' in Salem. He served as vicar and then rector of St. Joseph's in Southside Chicago, inspiring a season of growth that helped it to reach parish status.

He became rector of St. Paul's-by-the-Lake in 1970, leading the congregation with a steady hand through the unrest created by prayer book revision and instituting an endowment fund to ensure a future of financial sustainability. He served St. Paul's for 22 years, and retired to Quincy, Ill., where he assisted at St. John's Anglican Church.

Father Banner was a great admirer of Queen Elizabeth II and a collector of Royal Family memorabilia, an avid reader, an astute bridge player and a crossword puzzle wizard. A series of faithful canine companions accompanied him to church and on his visits to family and friends. He is survived by a niece and a nephew.

The Rt. Rev. **Edward Mackenzie**, who assisted Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the Diocese of Cape Town before retiring to Los Angeles, died March 13, aged 85.

A native of Graaf-Reinette, South Africa, he studied at Saint Peter's Theological College, part of the Federal Seminary of South Africa, a center for anti-apartheid activism. His mentor there was the Rev. Aelred Stubbs, CR, an influential advocate for black leadership in the South African Church.

He married Sylvia-Rose Pretorius, and they had eight children, two of whom followed him into the priesthood. He was ordained in 1965, and served parishes in Johannesburg and Cape Town. He was an original signatory to the groundbreaking 1985 *Kairos Document*, a text rooted in liberation theology that critiqued the inadequacies of the Church's response to the injustices of apartheid.

Mackenzie was consecrated as bishop suffragan in 1988, assuming responsibility for the diocese's western region, which stretched nearly to the Namibian border. In the closing years of his active ministry, he served several churches in Australia. He and his wife retired to Los Angeles, where he served as bishop-in-residence and assisted congregations in Glendale, Laguna Beach, and Los Angeles.

Bishop Mackenzie is survived by his wife, four daughters, two sons, and 17 grandchildren.

The Rev. Canon Dr. **Richard Marquess-Barry**, an influential community leader in Miami who served historic Saint Agnes' Church for nearly 40 years, died on March 24, aged 79.

The child of Bahamian immigrants, Marquess-Barry was a native of Miami's Liberty City neighborhood. He enrolled at Virginia Theological Seminary in 1965 as its only African American student, and following his ordination, served at St. Simon's, Fort Pierce, Fla. He became rector of Saint Agnes in the Overtown neighborhood in 1977, serving until his retirement in 2016. He was a champion of affordable housing and equal opportunity initiatives, as well as local African-American history. He was a mentor to many younger clergy. In 2015, the local Overtown post office was renamed for him in tribute to his leadership in the community.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Virla, and by his children and grandchildren.

The Rev. Dr. **Federico Serra-Lima**, a professor of Spanish literature who also served several rural parishes in upstate New York, died March 22, aged 90.

Serra-Lima was a native of Argentina, who emigrated to the United States for graduate study. After a stint of teaching at Barnard College, he came to Hartwick College in Oneonta, N.Y., eventually serving as chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages.

He prepared for the ministry at General Seminary, and was ordained in 1984. He served for many years as rector of St. Paul's Church in Franklin, N.Y. In retirement, he led several small parishes around the Diocese of Albany and served on the Commission on Ministry.

He was a member of the Society of the Holy Cross and the Order of St. Luke the Physician, a lover of poetry and chess, and the author of many letters to the editor of *The Living Church*. He spent his final years in Oneonta, and is survived by his wife, Margaret, two children and two grandchildren.

(Continued from previous page)

to stagnation and decay. That is what makes an institution or a society decadent, "a victim of its own success."

Douthat makes his case in a clear and direct way. For example, in the fourth chapter, he points out the lack of major innovations or differences in movies, literature, and music during the years 1992 to 2012. As a self-professed jazz nerd, I can attest to this by pinpointing how from 1925 to 1945 jazz evolved from the orchestral music of Paul Whiteman to the swing of Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Charlie Barnet, to the bebop sounds of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis. But, a quick listen to jazz albums of the past 30 years shows little progress or creative change.

Douthat's overall argument is that unoriginality, though not new, has become standard over novelty and creativity throughout the last generation. It is as if we have "settled," become comfortable with where we are. For things to change, we must first admit and confront our stagnation and complacency as a society.

Douthat's volume is an excellent starting point for Christians to consider how decadence has impacted the Church's place within society and the value of religion altogether. Many denominations have and continue to experience steady decline and Christianity itself is increasingly viewed as irrelevant. This should make Christians think, how we are called to be the Church in this time and going forward? Douthat shows that one can be a traditional Christian, but not opposed to new ways of doing old things. The Church's chief message — Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again — will never change; yet he makes things new. For the Church to shed the perception of irrelevancy, it must become less decadent and, once again, intentionally missionary.

Douthat highlights society's problems caused by decadence without proposing many solutions. I do not, though, find this to be so much a negative. Perhaps this is a good thing, possibly even intended. I can see how this could be Douthat's contribution to the Church's missionary efforts and society as a whole, to call us out of our stagnation, get us talking with each other, and to see and not be afraid of the bright future that still lies ahead. That's the only way that our decadence will end, by pressing onward towards God's altar, to the very God of our joy and gladness (Ps. 43:4). With that, I quote Douthat's closing line: "Start working on that warp drive" (p. 240).

The Rev. Brandt L. Montgomery is chaplain of Saint James School in Hagerstown, Md. and a contributor to TLC's Covenant *blog.*

SUNDAY'S READINGS | 2 Easter, April 19

Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Ps. 16; I Pet. 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

Perceive and Know

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when he stood among his disciple, alive from the grave, showing his wounds? Were you there when he ascended into heaven? No, you were not. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29). "We walk by faith not by sight," says St. Paul (2 Cor. 5:7).

The distinction, however, between the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who saw him, and all subsequent disciples, who have not seen him, blurs significantly as the Spirit of the Risen Lord fills the Church and her members and gives the Church a full range of sacraments and sacramental signs by which we see, touch, taste, smell, and hear the Real Presence of Christ — water and oil, wine and bread, readings and music, preaching and processions, incense and bells, candles and embroidery, color and texture, days and weeks, season of feasting and fasting, art and science, culture and nature.

In a sense, we are not so different from the first disciples. Faith must be drawn out of us, and only the power of Christ can do that. Mere physical sight is not enough. It was not enough for the first disciples, who often did not recognize the Risen Lord, and it is not enough or even possible for us.

Notice a detail in St. John's story. "When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'" (John 20:19). Jesus passed through locked doors and appeared alive from the dead! Our natural expectation is amazement and belief solely at his appearing. Instead, leading them beyond mere sight and into the mystery of his suffering — that is, his anguished and yet victorious love for them and the whole cosmos — he showed them his hands and his side. "Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). Seeing his wounds, the disciples recognized the Lord. Remembering their betrayal and fear, they recognize the one whom they pierced, and yet they behold him transfigured and flowing with love and peace.

Notice too that doubting Thomas needed, just like the other disciples, something more than mere sight. Hearing from the other disciples that Jesus appeared to them, Thomas did not say, "Unless I see him, I will not believe." Instead, he insisted, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Eight days later, appearing again to the disciples, Jesus addressed Thomas with a series of imperatives: Put out your finger. See my hands. Reach out your hand. Put it in my side. Do not doubt, but believe. The wounds of Jesus open the eyes of faith.

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Believing, however, is spiritual seeing and knowing. By the gift of faith, we see, hear, touch, taste, and even smell the sweet odor of Christ's Real Presence. Put forth your hand and take his body. Drink the blood of his love and sorrow. Do not doubt, but believe. The one who died for you is alive and making all things new with a visceral love. Go to him with all your heart.

Look It Up

Read 1 Peter 1:6.

Think About It

The Risen Lord has his wounds, and we have our various trials. Tested by fire, we are receiving the outcome of our faith and waiting for salvation to be revealed in the last time.

THE LIVING CHURCH
VOLUME 260 • NUMBER 7

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $55 for one year; $95 for two years. Canadian postage an additional $10 per year; Mexico and all other foreign, an additional $63 per year.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE LIVING CHURCH, P.O. Box 510705, Milwaukee, WI 53203-0121. Subscribers, when submitting address changes, should please allow 3-4 weeks for change to take effect.

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

MANUSCRIPTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS: THE LIVING CHURCH cannot assume responsibility for the return of photos or manuscripts.

Published since 1878

SUNDAY'S READINGS | 3 Easter, April 26

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Ps. 116:1-3, 10-17; I Pet. 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

A Threefold Plan

Peter raised his voice and addressed the people. As they listened, the people "were cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). They were troubled and shaken, moved to ask questions, and to take action. "What should we do?" they asked. Peter answered, giving them, as he is giving to us, a comprehensive plan for conversation and all Christian living.

1. Repentance: "*Repent and be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). Turn from the living-death which demanded the crucifixion of Christ; turn from betrayal and viciousness; turn away from sin, the flesh, and the devil; let the dead bury the dead and come forward to life itself. Come to the river of life where the heavens open, and the Spirit comes down, and the Father speaks of a beloved Son in whom all are beloved. Turn to life and hope and love.

2. Forgiveness: "Be baptized . . . *so that your sins may be forgiven.*" Water sanctified by the mere touch of Christ has the power to wash away sin, to release a human life from the sediment of guilt accumulated over days and years. Baptism is a new birth, the sacramental means by which babes in Christ emerge into the world. "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12). Addressing the newly baptized, St. Augustine says, "My sermon is for you, infants just born, little ones in Christ, new offspring of the Church, grace of the Father, fecundity of Mother [Church], a holy seed, a new colony of bees, flower of our honor and fruit of our labor, our joy and crown, all you who stand in the Lord" (Sermon 8, *In Octave*, author's translation). Forgiveness is newness of life and a new beginning.

3. The Holy Spirit: "Be baptized . . . and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and the Spirit teaches us how to pray, and the Spirit leads us into all truth. Life in the Spirit is the whole life of a Christian. By the Spirit, we are grafted into the Son, and through the Son, we know and approach the Father, crying "Abba." In a word, we become partakers of the divine nature, and because the divine nature is inexhaustible, our own lives become a continual pilgrimage of growth and discovery.

Living in the Holy Spirit, our lives are continually open to Christ. He lives with us, remains with us, stays with us (Luke 24:28). He opens our eyes to behold him in consecrated bread and wine, and in all his redeeming work. He opens the Scriptures to us and reveals everything about himself. He warms our hearts and pierces them too. We turn to him, and he forgives us, we are made new in the Spirit as the newborn children of the Most High God.

We may ask, "How shall I repay the Lord for all the good things he has done me for me?" (Ps. 116:10) And we have an answer, "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. 116:11). Repenting, we call upon the name of the Lord. Baptized in the name of the Lord, we receive the forgiveness of sins. In the Holy Spirit, we take the cup of salvation and the bread of heaven as our daily and sacramental nourishment.

Look It Up

Read Luke 24:29.

Think About It

He stays with you, is with you always.

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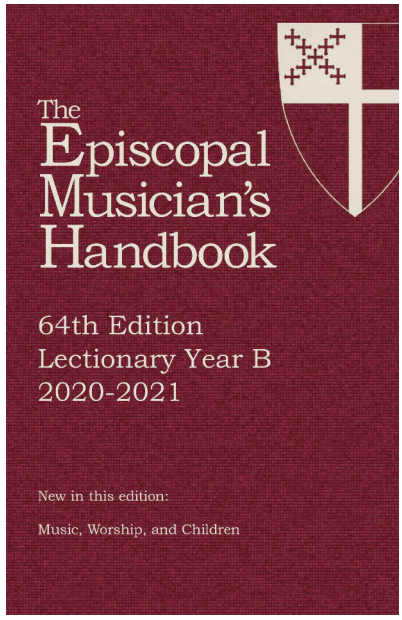

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