

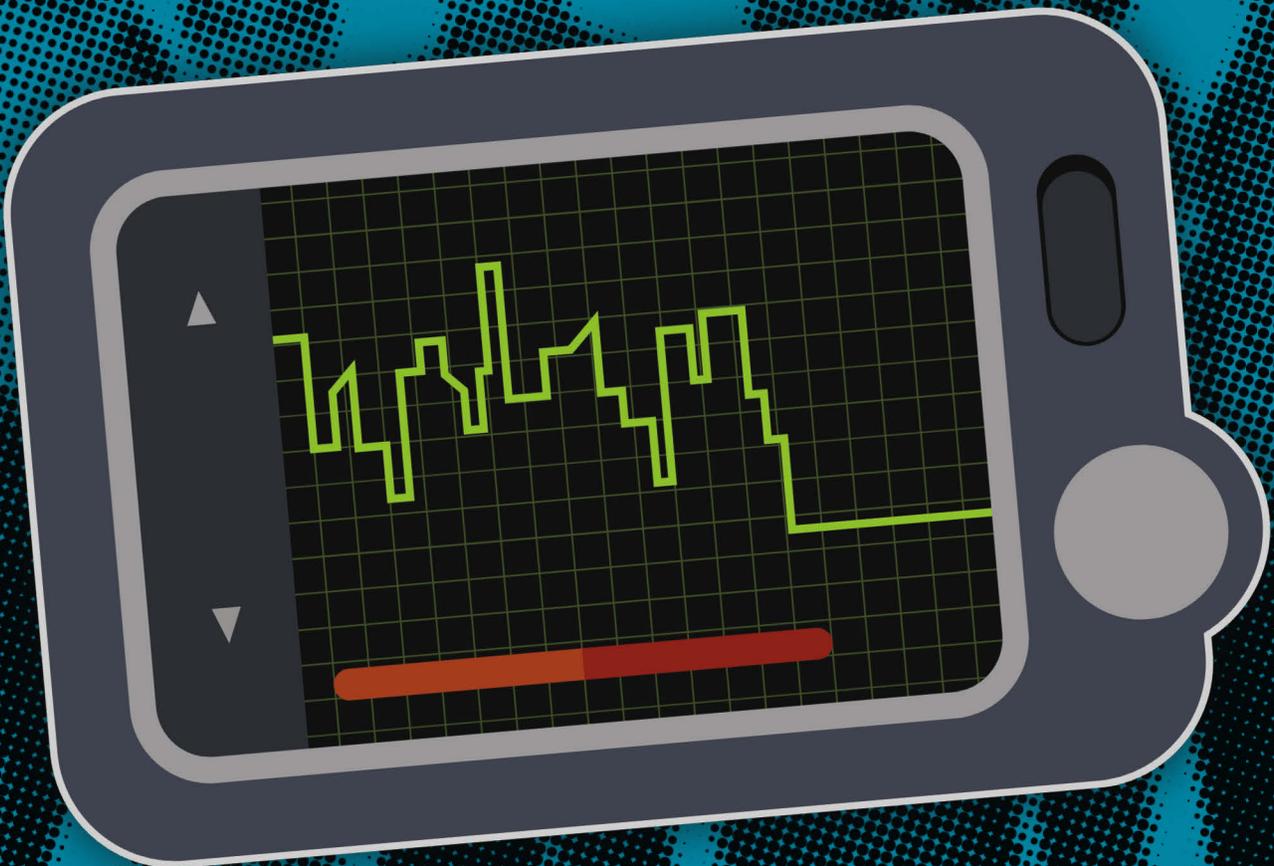
May 17, 2020

THE LIVING CHURCH

CATHOLIC

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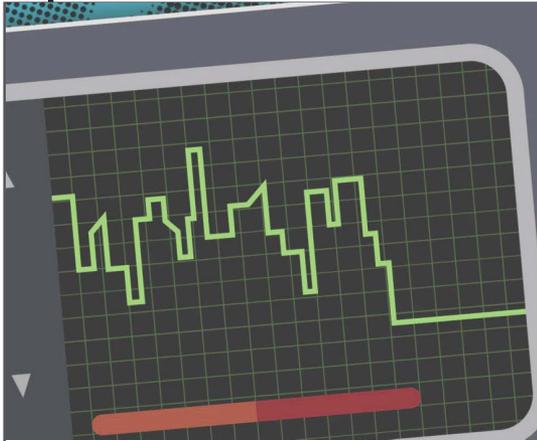


Economics and COVID-19





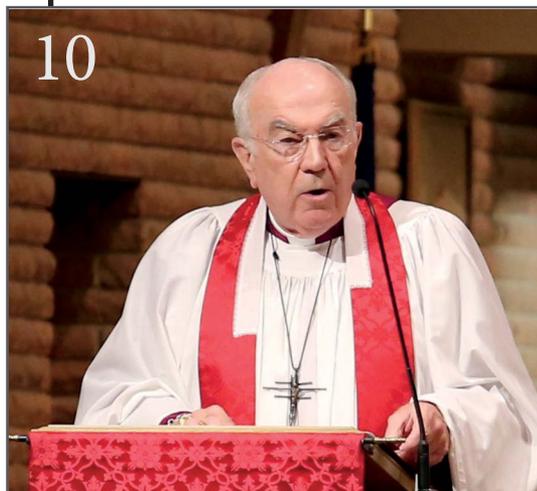
More than 600 far-flung people formed a virtual choir and orchestra for Easter (see page 16).



ON THE COVER

Elisabeth Rain Kincaid: “The solidarity to which Jesus calls us requires us to look beyond our own desires and political preferences and to ask which approach prioritizes caring for and protecting the most vulnerable: both physically and economically” (see “Economics and COVID-19,” p. 20).

Geoff Strehlow illustration



THE LIVING CHURCH

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Being the Gap

Chaplains are finding ways to be close even if not physically near others.

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald
Correspondent

Until recently, the director of spiritual wellness at St. Luke's Health System in Kansas City had not seen her staff chaplains equip nurses to perform sacred rituals at the bedside. Such measures hadn't been needed before now.

But these are not normal days at St. Luke's, where about 200 beds at the downtown hospital were set aside in April for patients battling COVID-19. Bracing for rising death rates among contagious patients who can't have visitors, suburban chaplains now fill paper bags with prayer cards, cotton balls and scented oils for nurses to use.

"If a chaplain is not available at the time of death, a nurse could go ahead and do something for the patient — say a prayer or maybe anoint them with some oil," said the Rev. Susan Roberts, an Episcopal priest who oversees chaplaincy for the 18-hospital health system. "That's new. It gives them something else they can do in the time of death when they know there's not family" present for comfort or support.

Chaplains are finding new ways of being a non-anxious presence in healthcare settings, often without being physically present at all, as they guard against contracting or spreading the virus themselves.

Such an endeavor — to be present but at a distance — involves incorporating physical items into their ministries, from masks and gowns to candles and iPads, in attempts to create barriers and bridges alike. They're hoping such physical tools will allow them to minister effectively despite restrictions at a time when suffering and isolation are surging along with COVID-19 cases.

"I see the weariness on some of my chaplains with the emotional weight



Photo courtesy of Sarah Byrne-Martelli
Chaplain Sarah Byrne-Martelli on rounds at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

that they are carrying," said Roberts, who is president of the 250-member Assembly of Episcopal Healthcare Chaplains, a professional association. "It's from their concerns about their own families and from filling the gap for families that can't be together. We are the gap."

At Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), palliative care chaplain Sarah Byrne-Martelli is wearing a mask and gown for the first time in her 17 years in chaplaincy. On the COVID-19 floor to which she's assigned, she stays outside patient rooms most of the time. That's for two reasons: to avoid the virus and to conserve the hospital's personal protective equipment (PPE), which is needed for nurses and others who must attend to patients directly.

Such barriers are necessary, chaplains acknowledge, but it's still hard to feel close to a patient without being physically near. And it's hard for even the most intuitive to interpret what family members are longing to say or

do when facial expressions are hidden.

"We're all wearing masks now," said the Rev. Gretchen Steffenson, a staff chaplain at Tucson Medical Center in Arizona. "It used to be that how someone set their mouth or the way their nose wrinkled meant you might be able to anticipate [a family member's need]. Now you can't see those things. The nonverbal cues that used to be guideposts are different now. A lot of chaplaincy is nonverbal, but we've had to shift that."

For safety's sake, even the recently deceased now have their heads covered during final rites. The Rev. David Flenor, director of clinical pastoral education and a chaplain at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City, notes how ministry in the morgue has changed. On a recent morgue visit with a chaplaincy student, he kept the cover over the face of a woman who had died of COVID-19, while he said prayers and gave the Commendation from the Book of Common Prayer. That was for two reasons: her adult son, who had requested the visit, was with Flenor only via telephone, which meant he couldn't see her anyway; and Flenor had been advised by a pathologist to take precautions in case the corpse had a high virus count and might still be contagious.

He recalled what the son said after the prayers.

"The son was apologizing to his mother that he couldn't be there," Flenor said. "He was saying that he loved her. He thanked her for all that she had meant to him. It was just a really interesting moment where I'm standing there with my student, holding an iPhone with this son on the phone, grieving."

Flenor was mindful that he ordinarily would have been looking at the

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woman's face with the son by his side for such a ministry moment. But nothing has been routine lately.

"Under normal circumstances, we would uncover the head of the deceased person as a way of personalizing and honoring the dignity of this person," Fleenor said. "This time, we laid the rosary on top of the woman's body, which was covered. But we didn't actually see her face."

Chaplains say their hospitals sound very different as well. Visitors used to be a constant presence; now the hallways are eerily quiet. COVID-19 patients are generally allowed no visitors. Instead, hospital staff act as proxies for family members, even if death is imminent. Other patients face strict limits, such as 15-minute durations or just one visitor at a time, among other constantly changing guidelines. The quiet stands in stark contrast to the heightened pace and intensity of the medical work.

These restricted environments take a toll even when a patient's illness is unrelated to COVID-19. Byrne-Martelli recalled finding a young wife alone at the bedside of her nearly unresponsive husband who was dying of cancer. "Normally she would have been there with her mother-in-law and father-in-law," Byrne-Martelli said. "Thankfully I was able to be with her, to sit with her and to pray. I encouraged her to put on their favorite church music. At one point, the singer sang, 'alleluia,' and the patient squeezed her hand really hard. The wife just burst into tears. It was really heartbreaking."

Chaplains find they need to "be the gap" for staffers, too. At MGH, they're highly trained health professionals serving at a level one trauma center, but they haven't ever dealt with anything like this.

For example, before the pandemic, nurses on Byrne-Martelli's COVID-19 floor had seen almost all their patients recover. They would leave the hospital feeling better and expressing gratitude. Now death is all too frequent. In one recent 18-hour stretch, one-third of all patients on Byrne-Martelli's COVID-

19 floor died, she said.

To help staffers cope with the magnitude, Byrne-Martelli and her colleagues established a structured time in the afternoons for nurses to gather for 30 minutes, read the names of patients who had passed, and share from their experiences of caring for each one. Chaplains at MGH have also created new "serenity spaces" where staff members can sit with candles and other soothing accoutrements.

"It's almost like a little break room, but we're making it nicer than usual with readings, snacks, and that kind of thing," Byrne-Martelli said.

Creative chaplaincy initiatives are helping family members as well. Because Tucson Medical Center is a one-level facility, Steffenson encourages loved ones to make use of the courtyard, where they can find a patient's room from the outdoors and have conversation through a closed window. If anyone has trouble hearing in that set up, cell phones can be used for amplification.

And in institutional settings where COVID-19 has been kept at bay but precautions have been nonetheless disruptive, chaplains are doing what they can to transform physical spaces where residents can no longer gather.

At Saint John's on the Lake, a retirement community on Lake Michigan in Milwaukee, chaplain Jana Troutman-Miller set up a YouTube channel to deliver morning prayer from the chapel. She also delivers uplifting and encouraging videos filmed at other familiar, comforting spots around the St. John's campus.

In a dining area that's now closed for meals, Troutman-Miller has laid a floor covering with a labyrinth design on it. Now residents who drop by for the majestic lake view aren't as saddened by the empty space that they've long associated with meals among friends and family. Individuals now walk the labyrinth's winding paths to feel grounded and connected.

"It looks like the labyrinth should be there," Troutman-Miller said with a chuckle. "It's taking a space that otherwise wouldn't be used and really being able to utilize it in a special way during this time."

COVID-19: Responses Around the Church

The following are brief versions of stories that can be found in full online at livingchurch.org



Alexander Travis photo

A eucharistic procession in Schenectady

Taking the Eucharist to the People

If stay-at-home orders prevent people from coming to the Eucharist at Easter, thought the Rev. Matthew Stromberg, why not bring the Eucharist to them?

The rector of St. George's, a historic Anglo-Catholic parish in Schenectady, New York's Stockade neighborhood, decided to follow his Easter Day service with a traditional eucharistic procession, carrying the Sacrament through the quiet streets of the neighborhood in a gold and silver monstrance — a vessel for displaying the elements. He was assisted by the parish's organist, Brian J. Taylor, and David Kennison served as master of ceremonies.

"I wanted to bless the neighborhood and bring people the Eucharist in an appropriate way during the quarantine," Stromberg said. "Neighbors really responded. People waited in their doors and on the corners." One parishioner, he said, had strewn the sidewalk in front of his house with flowers, and brought out icons and candles to be blessed. "It was a lovely afternoon," he added. "Although people could not gather for Mass, they at least adored our Lord's sacramental presence from a distance."

—Mark Michael

Spreading Love in Wyoming

The Foundation for the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming has responded to the COVID-19 crisis by sending each of the diocese's 46 churches \$10,000 to allocate where they felt the greatest needs were in their own communities.

And that \$460,000 is just the first phase of the distributions. The foundation committed a total of \$1 million in financial assistance for churches in the diocese to allocate to their communities. The second phase distribution of \$540,000 will come later.

"Our hope is that you will dream of ways you can make a love-spreading difference in the lives of those negatively impacted by this crisis," the Rt. Rev. John S. Smylie said in a letter to Wyoming's parishes.

With about two Episcopal churches in each county in Wyoming, "it's kind of like having 46 affiliates," Press Stephens, executive director of the foundation, explained in a telephone interview with *THE LIVING CHURCH*. "The Episcopal Church is known as a giving community," he added. "Even congregations of only 10 to 12 members play a big role in providing financial resources in their communities."

None of the funds can be allocated for operations or capital expenditures. To aid in the discernment process, the foundation board accompanied the checks with a letter from Smylie that outlined four broad areas of potential use, Stephens said. These were child care, especially for hospital and front-line workers unable to stay home with their children; vulnerable adults, including help for senior centers and individual senior citizens; food insecurity, which Stephens says is "unbelievable" on the sprawling Wind River Indian Reservation and across the state; and unemployment issues and "general assistance for families who are suffering from lost wages."

—Mike Patterson

Grants for Deacons in Need

The Fund for the Diaconate is stepping up with emergency grants for Episcopal Church deacons. In a groundbreaking move, the Fund has created a

special Emergency Grant Program to aid deacons affected by COVID-19.

"For more than 90 years, we have only given out grants to support aged and infirm deacons who were in financial need," said fund president the Rev. W. Keith McCoy. "But we have been reconsidering our mission and our resources lately, and the board agreed that this was a special time and that we had the resources to do something."

McCoy added that the pandemic jump-started the new initiative. "In 2014, the Fund board went on a two-

day planning retreat, and developed a 10-year road map. Our ultimate goal was to become more engaged with, and to do more for, the TEC deacon community. The first few years were about infrastructure, but lately, our discussions have turned to 'how can we help deacons beyond our current grants?' And then the pandemic hit — and we knew what we could do."

The grants are designed for all deacons in good standing in the Episcopal Church, vocational as well as transi-

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tional, who have been laid off, furloughed, or otherwise had their employment hours cut back or eliminated.

—Neva Rae Fox

A Resilient Church: St. Peter's, Seattle

Founded in 1908 as a Japanese mission of the Episcopal Church, St. Peter's in Seattle constructed a building during the Great Depression. A decade later, the church was closed when by action of the federal government, the members of St. Peter's and thousands of other Japanese Americans were relocated to concentration camps throughout the nation. Together with other Episcopalians, members of St. Peter's continued to be the Church during their time of captivity.

When St. Peter's opened again after the war, its mission became rebuilding and reclaiming damaged lives. A practice that has continued throughout the years is caring for one another in good times and bad and maintaining threads of connection that reach back to past generations and forward to future ones.

The current congregation is diverse in many respects. Because members of the community have experienced racism and exclusion, St. Peter's affirms that it strives to "stand in solidarity with those who are still outsiders, and to be a place of wholeness and healing."

St. Peter's is now closed for the second time. Parishioners are not interned in government camps but are sheltering from a pandemic. The coronavirus came early to Seattle, but the crisis is not yet over. Once again facing genuine hardship, St. Peter's remains very much alive. The parish offers a virtual Sunday Eucharist followed by a popular Zoom coffee hour.

The rector, the Rev. Edmund Harris, has established small care groups, each with a "shepherd." These leaders are repeatedly inspired by the oldest members, whose comments are characterized by faith, strength, and hope. "I am praying," says one. "We gotta do what we gotta do," says another.

— Charles Hoffacker



A volunteer brings food to a food pantry client at Ascension Church, Dallas.

Richard Hill photo

Dallas Food Pantry Shifts Outdoors

The Elaine Kadane Food Pantry at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Dallas has adjusted its 28 years of food service by moving the pantry outdoors to reduce the risk of spreading the highly contagious coronavirus. They've also had to reduce the choices that clients once enjoyed.

"We have implemented a drive up, get loaded and drive out policy," Hope Harbeck, Ascension's food pantry leader, said in an email to THE LIVING CHURCH. "Clients stay in their cars and we load in their trunk or back seat. So they don't get to choose much. We do have a couple items where they choose. We ask them and load it into the car."

It's been an adjustment for a service that has been offered by Ascension since 1992. The idea for the food pantry originated with Ascension parishioner Elaine Kadane, hence its name. At the time, she was volunteering at a non-profit organization that offered a food pantry and a clothes closet and suggested to then-rector Rev. Michael Harmuth that the church launch a similar effort.

"His one requirement was that the pantry provide food to anyone who came," noted Harbeck. "The first day they gave out three bags," Harbeck said.

Ascension obtains most of its food for the cost of handling from the Sharing Life Hub of North Texas Food Bank and sometimes purchases additional items not available through the food bank. Parishioners and community members make donations, plus the Ascension Day School and the nearby Presbyterian Hospital have done food drives for the pantry.

The food pantry is normally open from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. the first and third Tuesday of every month. They added an extra pantry day on March 31 due to the Covid-19 crisis and "it was a month with five Tuesdays. Our clients are welcome to come to both of those pantries. We do not restrict them to coming once per month," Harbeck said. Bags of food are also distributed through the church office as needed said the Rev. Paul Klitzke, Ascension's rector. "This has been a helpful as we are always able to offer food as we try to respond to the needs of our community."

"In the early days of the pantry it was mostly seniors on limited incomes," Harbeck said. "But over the years it has become more varied. We have young families, seniors, homeless people, immigrants and refugees."

The COVID-19 pandemic has

increased the demand for food by up to 20 percent. “We have probably had more than 20 or 30 cars lined up sometimes,” Harbeck said.

—Mike Patterson

Bishop Buchanan Dies

The Right Rev. John Clark Buchanan, who served as Bishop of West Missouri for 11 years and later as a bishop in other dioceses, died April 15 at his home in Charleston, South Carolina. He was 86. Under his leadership, the Diocese of West Missouri expanded its Latino ministry, launched church plants in growing suburbs, and opened Bishop Spencer Place, an affordable retirement community in Kansas City.

A native South Carolinian, Bishop Buchanan practiced law and worked in the insurance industry before answering a call to the priesthood. He prepared for ministry at General Seminary and returned to the Diocese of South Carolina, where he served as rector of three congregations. He was serving as rector of St. Andrew’s, Mount Pleasant, a large congregation just outside Charleston, when elected coadjutor to West Missouri Bishop Arthur Vogel in 1988.

After resigning as diocesan bishop in 2000, Buchanan served as parliamentarian of the House of Bishops for ten years, assisted in the Diocese of Texas and served as interim Bishop of Southern Virginia. After the Bishop of Quincy, Keith Ackerman, and the majority of the diocese’s parishes voted to leave the Episcopal Church in 2008, Buchanan was elected provisional bishop of the Diocese of Quincy. He shepherded the nine parishes that chose to remain part of the Episcopal Church through a time of discernment that resulted in Quincy’s merger into the Diocese of Chicago as its Peoria Deanery in 2013.

After a year of further ministry in the Diocese of Chicago, Bishop Buchanan retired to Bishop Gadsden, an Episcopal retirement community in Charleston, where he continued to participate in the community’s worship life. He is survived by his wife of 55



Buchanan

years, Peggy, two daughters, and two grandchildren. A public memorial Eucharist will be conducted when social distancing restrictions are lifted.

Vanuatu Anglicans Respond to Cyclone Damage

The Anglican Diocese of Vanuatu and New Caledonia in the South Pacific has set up an emergency operations center in Luganville, the largest town on Vanatu’s island of Espiritu Santo, where approximately 90% of residents are homeless in the wake of a devastating cyclone. The Red Cross has described the situation as “catastrophic.”

Diocesan Bishop James Tama wrote in an April 10 pastoral letter, “Tropical Cyclone Harold has wreaked havoc upon our communities in Santo with over 500 households completely destroyed and others in dire need of repairs and renovation. Our villages have been left without water [or] communication, and food shortages are expected in the coming weeks. Over 5,000 people are homeless.”

The cyclone, which formed over Eastern Papua New Guinea on April 1, moved slowly southeast across the Pacific, passing over the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Tonga, before dying down 10 days later. It reached Category 5 strength just before striking Espiritu Santo, the largest island in the archipelago of Vanuatu, a nation whose 272,000 people are dispersed across 61 inhabited islands. Cyclone Harold brought winds gusting up to 170 miles per hour and 10 to 18 inches of rain to Espiritu Santo, and

was only the second category 5 cyclone in the nation’s history.

Luganville, Vanuatu’s second-largest town, was suffering from water shortages, and relief efforts were hampered by flooded roadways and a nationwide COVID-19 lockdown. Nearby, less-populated islands of Pentecost and Malo were even more severely impacted, with 68% of structures on Pentecost Island damaged by the cyclone.

Bishop Tama said that in addition to dispensing direct aid, the diocese was organizing teams in each affected parish to clear debris, and that clergy were serving as members of widely deployed health emergency teams who were offering spiritual consolation and information about preventing the spread of COVID-19. The Diocese of Vanuatu and New Caledonia is part of the Anglican Church in Melanesia, whose other eight dioceses are based in the nearby Solomon Islands.

These local efforts are especially important because Vanuatu, one of the world’s only nations without any coronavirus cases, has banned the deployment of foreign aid workers into the affected regions. Civic officials fear that the nation’s underdeveloped health care infrastructure would be incapable of managing an outbreak of the virus.

—Mark Michael

Furloughs in Liverpool

The Church of England’s Diocese of Liverpool furloughed a number of its curates for four weeks, beginning April 27, to help manage revenue shortfalls

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resulting from the UK's nationwide lockdown, which began on March 23. Clergy stipends are paid by the diocese in the Church of England, but are mostly funded by parish shares, large assessments paid by local congregations. The decision is part of a diocesan-wide plan that also includes furloughing staff at St. James House, the diocesan headquarters, which is expected to save a half-million pounds over the next three months.

Curates, mostly newly ordained priests who serve as assistant ministers in parishes, were slated for furloughs, the diocese said, because of "the technical, legal status of their ministry." Furloughs will be entirely voluntary, and those who decide to participate in the plan will be eligible to participate in the UK's Job Retention Scheme, which pays furloughed workers 80% of their salaries, up to £2,500 per month. Starting monthly salaries in the Diocese of Liverpool are £2,116 (\$2,616), among the lowest of all Church of England dioceses.

The diocese, which was formed in 1880, is relatively small for a Church of England diocese, with only 211 parishes. It lacks the large endowments possessed by some of the Church's ancient dioceses. Liverpool diocesan officials expressed thanks to some parishes who had offered advances on their parish share payments, and noted that they are in talks with the Church of England's central authorities about receiving direct assistance.

The Church Times reported that Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby had convened a working group in late March to address financial pressure across the church. Officials expect that local parishes will suffer seriously from the lack of Sunday collections, though the growing use of standing bank orders for individual giving may mitigate this to some degree. The Church Commissioners manage a £8.3 billion investment pool, which has been seriously impacted by short-term declines in financial markets.

—Mark Michael

Bishop Roundup

Albany

The ecclesiastical trial of the Rt. Rev. William Love, the Bishop of Albany, has been postponed because of the pandemic. A five-member Hearing Panel had been scheduled to hear arguments in a public hearing on April 21 in an Albany hotel. Nancy Davidge, the public affairs officer for the Church, said it is likely that the hearing will be rescheduled as an online event.

Love is the only remaining domestic bishop who has refused to make any accommodation for same-sex marriages within his diocese. He stands accused of "failing to abide by the promises and vows made when he was ordained, specifically the Declaration he signed at his ordination as bishop in which he promised to 'conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church.'"

The 2018 General Convention eliminated the right of diocesan bishops to veto same-sex marriages, mandating that bishops opposed to the practice must arrange for a bishop from a nearby jurisdiction to exercise episcopal oversight over such marriages.

In January 2019, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry temporarily restricted the ministry of Bishop Love. It remains in force, but sources have told *TLC* that no same-sex marriages have yet been conducted in the Diocese of Albany.

Chicago

Bishop Jeffrey Lee of Chicago is delaying his planned August retirement for an indefinite period. The election of a successor was to have taken place at a special convention in June, but is now scheduled to be a part of the diocesan convention on November 20-21.

Lee has been bishop of Chicago since 2008.

Pittsburgh

The Rt. Rev. Dorsey W.M. McConnell, the VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh, told his diocese on April 16 that he is postponing his retirement and the election of his successor by five months.

McConnell, bishop since 2012, now plans to retire on Sept. 18, 2021; the election has been slated for April 24, 2021.

Fund Honors Bishop Bruce MacPherson

'He was a disciple of Jesus and you knew it.'

By Neva Rae Fox

Leader and listener. Spirit-filled and sassy. Educator and educated. Humorous and humble. Administrator and advisor. Priest and disciple. Bishop and parishioner. Friend and colleague.

The Rt. Rev. D. Bruce MacPherson has been described in many ways by the people who knew him best. What clearly emerges is a portrait of a man dedicated to God, to his faith, and to his family and friends.

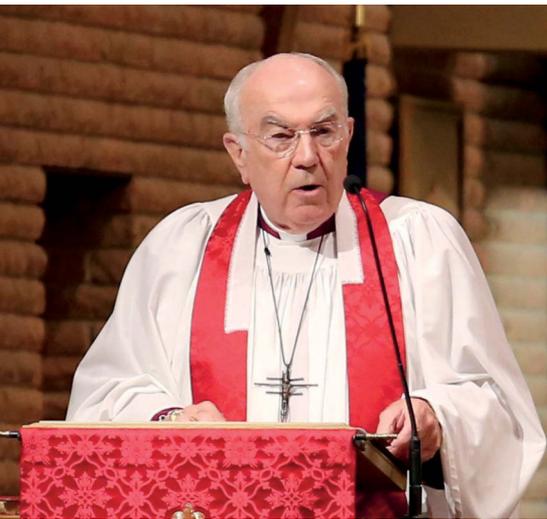
The legacy of MacPherson, who died in 2017, continues. The Living Church Foundation has recently created the MacPherson Fund as a fund within its larger endowment, designated as a resource for teaching and learning across the Church.

MacPherson served 18 years on the board of THE LIVING CHURCH, five as president. He once shared his feelings about supporting the ministry of *TLC*: "Together in partnership, and in a faithful response to the Gospel of Christ we are called to proclaim, you and I have an opportunity to share in a wider mission of this important ministry to the glory of God."

The MacPherson Fund

The MacPherson Fund will be focused on raising up young leaders in the Episcopal Church — "the best and brightest of their generation, to serve as clergy, teachers, and lay leaders serious about the Christian faith and Christian tradition," said Christopher Wells, executive director of *TLC*.

The decision to establish a particular fund has been welcomed warmly. The Rt. Rev. James Stanton, retired Bishop of Dallas, said that MacPherson



MacPherson preaching All Souls Church, Oklahoma City photo

“showed a deep interest in education. The fund is an important expression of him and his ministry.”

The Rev. Chris Yoder, rector of All Souls’ Church, Oklahoma City, believes the MacPherson Fund offers “a good reflection of his legacy. In his retirement he took teaching the Scriptures as a central part of his vocation as a priest.”

The Rt. Rev. Ed Konieczny, Bishop of Oklahoma, agreed that the fund is a true legacy for MacPherson. “He was a statesman. He spoke with authority. And when he said something, it was grounded with a clear understanding of his faith and conviction and his walk with Jesus.”

The Rt. Rev. Edward Little, retired Bishop of Northern Indiana, cited MacPherson’s “three primary gifts — pastoral care, administration, teaching.

Bruce rose high in the ranks of the church, but he remained first and last an encourager and teacher.”

Diocese of Los Angeles

MacPherson was a lifelong influence on Konieczny. “The MacPhersons and my mom and dad were founding members of St. Joseph’s in Buena Park, California,” he said. “Bruce was an integral part of my journey into ministry. Bruce was canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of Los Angeles when I entered holy orders.”

Little recalled, “In 1975, when I was a curate, he was at St. Joseph’s as the senior warden. He interviewed me. I got the job. He served as my warden. I didn’t know how to run a church, and Bruce taught me how to do it.”

MacPherson was a career professional with the Times Mirror Co. when he was called to ordination, attending the School of Theology (Bloy House) in Claremont, California. Ordained deacon and priest in 1980, he was named by Bishop Frederick Borsch to serve as the Diocese of Los Angeles’s canon to the ordinary in 1988, a post he held until 1993.

The move to Dallas

Upon his election as Bishop of Dallas in 1992, Stanton remembers calling MacPherson. “I said, ‘I want to pick your brain. I need a canon to the ordinary. Who would you recommend, unless you want the position?’ He prayed on it. He accepted it. And I felt extremely blessed.”

Stanton spoke of MacPherson’s dedication. “He was an indefatigable worker. MacPherson was elected suffragan bishop of Dallas in 1999, and third bishop of Western Louisiana in 2002. “It didn’t surprise me at all,” said Stanton. “It was a joy to participate in his enthronement.”

House of Bishops

When MacPherson joined the House of Bishops, he was among his own. Little laughed: “From senior warden to clergy colleague, and then a colleague in the House of Bishops, Bruce remained a great friend and beloved brother in Christ. Our lives were truly intertwined.”

“He was highly respected by his colleagues in the House of Bishops,” Stanton said. “He was a steady voice and steady influence all the way.”

MacPherson and Little were among the founding members of Communion Partners. Little explained, “Communion Partners are clear about convictions and rooted in the church with a high commitment to maintaining relationships. Bruce helped to create a structure for traditional voices to remain in the church, and stay in positive relationships with all. That was really important.”

Even in times of conflict, Konieczny said MacPherson was never adversarial. “His was not the same as the popular stance. But he was not demonizing or disenfranchising to others. He was clear about his understanding of things. Bruce didn’t stand off and say, ‘I am not going to share communion with you and not talk to you.’ He openly invited and engaged in conversation. He did it with dignity and grace.”

Retirement years

After retiring as Bishop of Western Louisiana, the MacPhersons moved to Oklahoma City where Bruce served as an assisting bishop in the diocese and joined the clergy team at All Souls’ Church. During this time, he remained as energetic as ever in love and service of Christ.

The Rev. Patrick Bright, then rector of All Souls, said he met MacPherson at a Communion Partners meeting. In turn, MacPherson called him and, “in

(Continued on next page)

Gifts to the Bishop MacPherson Fund

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(Continued from previous page)

that wonderful deep voice,” said he would like to join the congregation. “He asked if he could baptize his grandchild at All Souls’ and we were thrilled.”

He taught his friends

When asked what MacPherson taught him, Stanton pondered. “I think more than anything to be clear, be firm. Be consistent and that is what Bruce did. Bruce helped me to focus attention. He provided a great model.”

Konieczny said he learned from MacPherson’s “commitment, his trust in Jesus. I was with him when he was told that he had leukemia. It was an incredible depth of faith and faith in Jesus. He believed that this is where Jesus was taking us. Just his witness of being a disciple of Jesus. He lived that every day.”

Yoder speaks fondly of the impact MacPherson made on All Souls’ Church. “I can see his mark. The congregation valued his teaching and pastoral side. He taught his Bible study course very meticulously. It took three years to go through Isaiah.”

Christ-centered

MacPherson’s sense of humor “was very dry, but always welcome and always wholesome,” recalls Stanton. “I knew him as a friend and as a colleague. Our relationship is a cherished aspect of my own life.”

Konieczny recalled a fond memory the week before MacPherson’s death. “I went to visit Bruce in his home. He was in hospice. I was about to have hip surgery. I asked if I could pray for him, and then he asked if he could pray for me. I prayed for him, and he prayed for me. It was a very profound moment.”

MacPherson’s death “was a blow,” said Little. “He was a wonderful godfather to my children. He was a profoundly Christ-centered man, so his love for Jesus came out of every pore. That love for the Lord infused his ministry. He was a disciple of Jesus and you knew it.”

Neva Rae Fox served as the Episcopal Church’s public affairs officer for more than a decade, and now works as a communication consultant and teacher of journalism. She is a member of the Living Church Foundation.

CORNERSTONES

The Works Remain Shadows Falling at Holy Comforter

By Stephen Herbert

Above the central archway of the grandest building of a grand university I once attended was engraved the pithy Latin phrase, *Cedunt Horae, Opera Manent*. Your correspondent was once a Latin student, which means he was once also a Latin snob. No “pachem” for him, *sacerdotes* — hard “c” all the way, or there will be no peace.

However, the Latin snob finds humility if he teaches high school Latin. Under the benign disregard of school administrators,

the subject often dwells in a ruined Forum sparsely peopled either by eager students headed for the *Foedus Hederā Obsitus* and, *ad reliquam*, by less-talented students fulfilling a foreign language requirement who think the class will be easier than Spanish because “no one actually speaks Latin.”

Of the two groups of *discipuli*, the Latin teacher, faced with the Herculean labor of grading translations, may come to appreciate the latter group of students more than the former, who will argue for an additional half point to raise their test score from 101 to 102 by noting that the grammatical construction highlighted by the teacher wasn’t just ablative but *ablative of means*.

The latter group, simply trying to survive, will complete the exercise with the fallback of the panicked — the “false cognate” translation — and hope for the best. The teacher’s amusement at their translations is just compensation for the merriment of the *adolescentes* who joyously embrace the pronunciation of the hard “c” when the common verb *facere* is introduced.

Hence I know well that if I had

pronounced and written *Cedunt Horae, Opera Manent* on the board and asked for a translation, those living *metū Latinae* would have written “Give way to whores so the Opera has manual labor.” Well quite, and perhaps opera companies in several cities might find an increase in attendance as a result.

However, the phrase actually translates “The hours fall; the works remain.”

* * *

The hours have fallen on an evening in late winter in a southern mill town. As weak light glows in the colored glass windows of a former Episcopal church, a group comes together for an evening prayer. They begin with a familiar antiphon:

God, grant me the serenity, to accept the things I cannot change . . .

Folding tables form a distended oblong pattern that fills up much of the former nave, with caterer-style vinyl padded chairs placed every few feet or so. Generous helpings of candy form table centerpieces along with boxes of Kleenex and hand sanitizer. The chairs have split tennis

balls like bright green booties on their feet to protect the stunning hardwood floor.

Teaching Latin to teenagers is one path to humility. The program here is another. Both paths require accepting a degree of anonymity.

What of this church building, though? Its incarnation as an Episcopal Church is nearly a century old. Like a dig on the Forum, a search of its interior reveals clues to its past since that time: a broom closet appears behind a drywall door on the backside of the former chancel. A flashlight and a few steps reveal a full baptistry decked in light blue, waiting for the reborn. A sign with spiritual principles now hides the baptistry from the nave, and the meeting space. Not very Episcopalian, my dear.

If a knowledgeable Episcopalian casually surveyed this church and the town's demographics, she might conclude that this was the "old" Episcopal church, replaced by the larger, fancier one in town. However, this was one of *four* Episcopal churches in a town that (at the time) had ten thousand souls. Since it is a southern town, one of the churches was the "colored" mission church, two were missions in the mill village for white mill workers, and the fourth was the original parish. Holy Comforter was one of the mill churches. There was also — *mirabile dictu* — a hospital run by the main parish.



Like many former churches, this one, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, now serves as a community center.



Baptism of Callaway Mills employees at Southwest LaGrange YMCA, LaGrange, Georgia, 1930s.
Troup County Archives photo

The church building survived because the mill owners, rather than the diocese, held title. The successor foundation for the mill company still holds the title. As all Episcopalians should know by now after years of litigation, the Episcopal Church is a pyramid franchising company when it comes to property: individual missions become parishes, with little support from the diocese for programming, building, or clergy. They spend years paying off their mortgages, only to surrender title to their diocese and, successively, through an "implied trust" to the national church.

In fact, calling the Episcopal Church a pyramid franchising scheme is a little unfair to pyramid franchising schemes: at least with the real thing you get to keep the unsold product — makeup, baskets, candles, whatever — instead of surrendering it.

Reflections on ecclesiastical property law come to mind when your correspondent remembers that he is the youngest member of his rural parish of 30 souls. He is 51. *Homo senex in corpore* if not *per virtutem*. As congregational numbers fall in rural parishes throughout the country, why should the Episcopal Church hold on to its buildings?

* * *

As I write this, most of the meetings have stopped at the old mill church as pandemic silences the world. The old mission church is as quiet as every other ecclesiastical structure in the old mill town. The meetings there may be anonymous, but their social side serves a real purpose in the spiritual program they promote. Their members are as

anxious as any parish congregation to meet again, as soon as possible. Their lives depend on it.

Episcopal churches are no strangers to such meetings. They take place in basements and parish halls across the country. However, few naves are full-time meeting spaces. The solution for Holy Comforter saved one building; it is unlikely to save others. Anonymous spiritual programs don't pay much rent, and are not supposed to own property. Mill companies and their successor foundations aren't common. The churchgoing population as a whole is declining. The Methodist church at the end of my country road is for sale already.

The tipping point is near for many rural and small-town congregations as their Boomer members begin to fall quiet. "Mission" is from the fourth principal part of the Latin verb *mittere* — to send. In other words, to send out, not to franchise in a pyramid. That model works for the affluent *rentier* class, but not for evangelism. *Res ipsa loquitur*.

The hours have fallen now, along with the shadows, which are also lengthening. The meeting ends and so does the antiphon, not with mere acceptance of conditions, but also . . .

*The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

*Cedunt horae; Opera manent. Amen.
And so be it.*

*Stephen Herbert serves the church in
rural Eastern Alabama.*



Detail, painting of John Donne, c. 1595. Artist unknown.

What an Early Anglican Can Teach Us about Sickness

By Angela Heetderks

This essay first appeared on Covenant, the weblog of THE LIVING CHURCH, on April 16, 2020.

It's tempting, in times of scientific uncertainty, to think we have nothing to learn from Christians in the distant past. We would not wish to consult Christians from earlier eras on questions related to germ theory or the treatment of a novel coronavirus, but Christians in earlier times faced much more uncertainty and fear of disease than we do now. Physicians, midwives, and other healers often made inaccurate diagnoses. Many of the remedies available ranged from useless to downright injurious. Because earlier Christians lived in contexts in which the limitations of scientific knowledge and ability were glaringly obvious, their writings can teach us a great deal about

how to think about sickness in situations in which science can't answer all our questions or assuage all our fears.

John Donne, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in the 1620s, published a series of 23 meditations following his recovery from a near-fatal illness. In these meditations, entitled *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, Donne leads the reader through the experience of being suddenly taken ill, being examined and treated with doubtful success by physicians, and recovering only to be seized by the fear of relapse.

Donne wrote his meditations in a time in which nearly every person, regardless of age, would have experienced the death of close family members. Donne himself lived through the stillbirths of two children; the early deaths of three more of his children; and the death of his wife, Anne, following her twelfth childbirth. During Donne's lifetime, early death was

common throughout Europe, where historians have estimated that child mortality before age seven in some regions ranged from 40 percent to as high as 68 percent.

For many readers of Donne today, until we became used to hearing the word "pandemic" in daily conversation, it may have been easier to think of serious illness as a remote possibility. I have watched my students gape when I've cited statistics on infant and maternal mortality from earlier centuries. Taking health for granted was a mindset simply unavailable to Renaissance writers. In an era without antibiotics or many other effective treatments, sickness and death could overtake the healthiest of people at any time — a reality Donne portrays vividly in *Meditation 1* of the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*:

We study health, and we deliberate

upon our meats, and drink, and air, and exercises, and we hew, and we polish every stone, that goes to that building; and so our health is a long and regular work; but in a minute a cannon batters all, overthrows all, demolishes all; a sickness unprevented for all our diligence, unsuspected for all our curiosity; [...] summons us, seizes us, possesses us, destroys us in an instant.

Donne’s metaphor of sickness as a cannon aimed at the sufferer suggests both the power of disease and the urgency of throwing off any assumption that the attack will never come. Later, Donne extends the idea of sickness as conqueror when he writes, “The disease hath established a kingdom, an empire in me.” His portrayal of sickness as a conqueror that vanquishes and colonizes healthy bodies directly challenges the 21st-century tendency toward complacency.

Perhaps because we have become complacently accustomed to the many benefits of modern medicine, the COVID-19 pandemic inspires fear today; many of us are unused to being told that preventive medicine has limitations and efficacious treatments are not readily available for the diseases that may infect us. For Christians living in the 17th century, this state of affairs was common. Donne’s *Meditation 12* describes how his physicians “apply pigeons, to draw the vapors from the head.” This treatment would have involved splitting a live bird in half and applying the bloody parts to the patient’s feet in an attempt to reduce his fever. Unsurprisingly, the next meditation tells us, “It is a faint comfort to know the worst, when the worst is remediless.”

While readers today can be grateful that the remedies for our ailments are unlikely to involve bloody pigeon poultices, it is valuable for us to let Donne remind us of the limitations of our knowledge and abilities. The many technological advances available in the 21st century will not always save us. For Donne, suffering engenders skepticism of physicians’ abilities: To cure disease is good, “but to cure the body, the root,

the occasion of diseases, is a work reserved for the great Physician, which he doth never any other way, but by glorifying these bodies in the next world” (*Meditation 22*). Donne counterbalances his hope of bodily redemption in “the next world” with a clear-eyed view of the pervasiveness of bodily suffering in this world.

Despite his gloomy outlook on disease and the uncertain prospect of receiving efficacious treatment, Donne highly values the lives of the sick and the poor. While it is not uncommon for modern readers to assume that earlier people must have become inured to illness and death, literature by Donne and his contemporaries shows us otherwise. Donne particularly acknowledges that the poor lack access to health care and, in their sickness, suffer more acutely than he does: “How many are sicker [...] than I, and laid on their woeful straw at home [...] and have no more hope of help, though they die, than of preferment [promotion], though they live?”

One of the best-known members of the clergy in his day, Donne writes of the value of the lives of the poor, who remain anonymous to him: “For they do but fill up the number of the dead in the bill, but we shall never hear their names, till we read them in the book of life, with our own” (*Meditation 7*). Here and throughout the meditations, Donne shows how human knowledge is characterized by limitation. But those in the “book of life,” he tells us, are known fully, equally, without prefer-

ment of rich over poor, greater over lesser.

It is in the context of his firm belief in the ubiquity of sickness and the equality of the sick that Donne writes the most famous passage of the *Devotions*, a meditation on hearing funeral bells ringing while in his sickbed:

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less. [...] Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know [inquire] for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee” (*Meditation 17*).

It is a rousing call to care first for our community as a whole, rather than our individual interests, as Meghan O’Rourke has beautifully written in a recent essay on social distancing and COVID-19 in *The Atlantic*. And it is more. Amid a series of meditations on sickness as a sudden assailant, the uncertainty of treatment, and bodily misery, it is a call to value and cling to every human life — including the lives of the sick and dying. It is a call, not to brush aside the fear of death, but to let fear and suffering spur us toward a greater love.

Dr. Angela Heetderks is a specialist in English literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. She has published on The Book of Common Prayer and hymnody in the plays of Shakespeare.



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— Ron Rolheiser

A Virtual Choir & Orchestra for Easter, 600 Strong

By Kirk Petersen

Social distancing made for a less festive Easter than usual this year, but the Episcopal Church managed to bring hundreds of far-flung singers and musicians together virtually for a joyous hymn.

As part of the National Cathedral's live-streamed Easter Sunday worship, the Office of Communications debuted a video that blended individual performances by more than 600 people into a seamless rendition of "The Strife Is O'er."

More than 55,000 people viewed the service on the live stream, and more than half a million people have seen the video since then, either on the National Cathedral site or on the Church Center's social media platforms. If you haven't seen it yet, go to episcopalchurch.org/virtual-choir right now and watch. Then come back for the story of how the video was made.

Six key people on the project team sat down with The Living Church later in April for an hour-long Zoom meeting to describe the effort.

The project started with a daunting deadline.

On March 15, Natalee Hill went to Facebook to watch the live-streamed Sunday service for the National Cathedral, which she had enjoyed in the past. But this time she found it deflating. The Diocese of Washington had just become one of the first dioceses to suspend in-person worship in all its churches, and the live stream featured a skeleton altar party and four singers.

"I just knew in my gut we were not going to look any different from that for Easter," said Hill, who runs communications for the Church of St. Martin-

in-the-Fields in Philadelphia. "What are we going to do? Easter can't look this sparse."

She remembered seeing videos of virtual choir performances, a technique pioneered a decade ago by composer Eric Whitacre. Hill thought it would be a great way to bring together choir members from throughout the Episcopal Church.

From the Episcopal Communicators organization, she knew Jeremy Tackett, head of creative services for the Church. On March 16, just under four weeks until Easter, "I sent a message to Jeremy and I said, hey, I have this crazy idea, and the only people I can think of to make this happen are your team, whaddaya think?"

"One of the things I love about this team," Tackett said, "is that we specialize in doing the crazy and impossible on very quick turnaround times." He conferred with Mike Collins, manager of multimedia services, and they sprang into action.

They had worked on other projects with Kory Caudill, a producer with a recording studio in Nashville, Tennessee. "I texted him and said, hey, I've got another project that can't be done, when do you want to start?" Tackett said. "We had no idea then, what it took to do."

As they blocked out the timing for the project, they realized "we're going to have about four or five days to get submissions," Tackett said. "If we push really hard, maybe we can get 100 people to do this."

There was a lot of work to do before they could even ask for submissions. The first task was to pick a hymn, and to research that, they turned to another collaborator, Erik Meyer, minister of

music at St. John's in Salem, New Jersey.

"The best thing to do would be to be as inclusive as possible, so we took a fairly traditional hymn out of the hymnal 1982," Meyer said, "knowing that a majority of Episcopal congregations have sung it." They chose "The Strife is O'er," a hymn in the public domain that has roots in the 16th century.

Meyer used *Sibelius*, a leading musical notation program, to create "a giant score for every common instrument," as well as separate sheet music to support a six-part harmony – soprano 1 and 2, alto, tenor, and bass 1 and 2, as well as for singers who wanted to stick with the melody.

Each instrument and singing part had its own "click track," an instrumental recording of the part for each musician and singer playing softly in the background, while the clicks kept a ONE-two-three pattern at 144 beats per minute. Performers were instructed to listen via earphone while they played or sang, to keep everyone on the same cadence.

When they were ready to solicit people to participate, there was no time to make a formal news release, so "we just used a series of tweets and Facebook posts on the Episcopal Communicators page," Tackett said. The first post was shared 600 times, which hinted at the roller coaster to come.

"I just want to give a shoutout to the Episcopal Communicators," said Hill, who is on the organization's board of directors. "They respond fast, and they can get the information right to their people," to their music directors and clergy.

Meanwhile, Collins was setting up to manage the workflow, not yet realizing that there ultimately would be 777 vid-

eo files to manage. (Some of the 600-plus participants submitted multiple videos, singing more than one part or playing more than one instrument.)

Rather than create a database to manage the files, he created a project in *Wistia*, a video-hosting platform, and devised a standard naming convention, with all files to be named *Your_Name_Your_Part*. There was a separate *Wistia* “receptacle” for each voice part and instrument, so performers could drag and drop their files.

Then the files went to separate team leaders for video and audio, and the real grunt work began, with “these guys touching every single file,” Tackett said.

“Even though I’ve been editing for 32 years now professionally, I’ve never attempted anything like this before,” said Tom Verga, a video freelancer who works with the Episcopal Church and other clients. “I knew it was possible,” he said, but he had to figure out how.

The files were all submitted in the standard 16:9 aspect ratio (16 units wide by 9 units tall). Working with two freelancers, he started by cropping each file to 1:1, making them square.

He then used Adobe Premiere, a powerful video-editing program, to line up all the videos at a common starting point, using the click track as a guide. “A lot of people thought I used *AfterEffects*, but there was no time,” he said, naming an even more sophisticated post-production platform.

Meanwhile in Nashville, Caudill was wrangling the audio files using *Pro Tools*, a digital audio workstation. He worked with two colleagues, and “we were absolutely floored with every single performance, it blew my mind that these were from folks who were not professional musicians,” he said.

While the performances were great, there were some issues with sound quality, as most of the videos had been made on laptops or smartphones. “I would look for any ambient noise, page turns, coughs during rests, those kind of things, and I would get rid of those,” he said.

He and his team processed the recordings one by one, starting with the sopranos, again using the click track to line them up at a common starting point. There were about 100 sopranos, and “when I hit unmute on all of them, it was one of the coolest moments of my career,” Caudill said. “Something happened when they were all going together that would just make the hair stand up on your arms.”

TLC asked each member of the team to estimate how many hours they had spent on the project. Nearly 300 person-hours went into the project. Verga alone accounted for about 120 of those hours, wrangling video files for 12 straight 10-hour days.

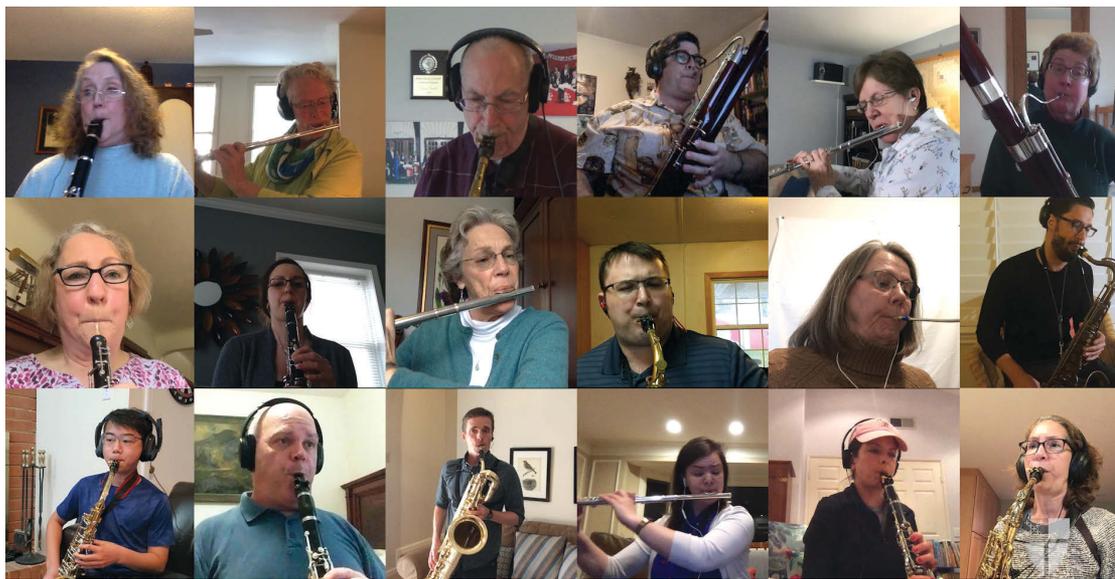
That of course doesn’t include the time spent by more than 600 volunteers who made their individual recordings. Tackett said submissions came not just from the United States, but from Europe, Asia, South Africa, and South America. “It’s a very intimate thing to

he said. He wasn’t ready to reveal details, but for an encore, the team plans to produce something for Pentecost, which is May 31 this year.

The video has touched off conversations in a variety of clergy and church music circles, with people wondering if they can do “a Zoom performance” for their own choir. (The video visually resembles an intricate Zoom meeting, but Zoom is for real-time meetings, and had nothing to do with the project. Differences in latency and network speed make it impossible for even a small handful of people to sing together over Zoom.)

Despite all the technical expertise and expensive equipment and software behind this project, Tackett said it would be possible to do something on a much smaller scale with a Mac computer running the *GarageBand* app.

“We had to figure out how to do this, too,” Collins said. “Somebody else can figure out how to do it in a setting and



share” a recording that will be put under a microscope, Caudill said. “The fact that so many people had the courage to do that, and took the time to do that, was just incredible, knowing that a stranger was going to be listening to their audio.”

Tackett said the project cost about \$12,000 to produce, including staff time. “We want to measure what the cost is related to the impact, and by that measure this was certainly one of the cheapest projects that we’ve ever done,”

scale that works for them.” Virtual worship “is a new ballgame for everybody.”

Tackett said people may not be able to reproduce the same quality production, “but you can certainly do it in the same spirit.” As the five other team members nodded, he said “if you’re gathering people together, and they’re connecting in some way around something that’s common in a time when we’re all apart, then you’ve already done the part that we care more about than any of the technical stuff” □

Cruciform Generativity

Wisdom for Life After Retirement

By Phil and Carol Harrold

Recently one of us overheard a conversation between two women in a local coffee shop that offered a kaleidoscopic view of post-retirement. Soaring healthcare costs had forced one of the women back to a career she had long despised, and the Alaskan cruise she had planned would have to be canceled. Her friend was struggling with separation from family after having relocated to a warmer climate. The prospect of returning home was bleak, given that her family's insistence on a more settled grandmotherly role intruded upon her hippy nostalgia for carefree hitchhiking down desert highways. The new chapter of life was not turning out as planned for either woman.

Modern society places great emphasis on individual fulfillment and accomplishment. This, for many of us, is primarily lived out through various callings or careers. How do we self-identify when we are no longer an engineer or accountant or parish rector? The general advice for post-retirement is to take it easy and do only what we enjoy. We have stepped off the treadmill and out of the rat race so we should enjoy whatever life has to offer.

Parker Palmer cites three problems with this popular prescription: "(1) it robs older folks of sources of vitality, meaning, and purpose; (2) it robs the world of the gifts elders have to offer; and (3) it's ridiculous." Certainly it is not inevitable, especially if we take seriously the unique possibilities offered in retirement. Henry S. Simmons, the director of the Center on Aging in Richmond, Va., suggests a more thoughtful approach. "The same questions that one had to answer at the end of adolescence and the end of formal schooling need to be asked again: Who am I? What will I do? With whom will I do it?"

The enormity of these questions may prompt a great deal of self-examination, but also some delightful ex-

changes with friends and loved ones in which heretofore unimagined possibilities come to light. Given the average American life expectancy of almost 80 years, we may very well be blessed with plenty of time to pursue a very different course in life. Whatever route we take increases in importance when we realize there is a reasonable expectation that the active phase of our post-retirement years could last nearly as long as our pre-retirement work years. So, the

of God's involvement in human existence, a relationship that addresses the human condition at its core, and redeems it in the passage from death to life. In baptism and "cruciform," or cross-shaped, faith we learn what it means to die to self as we live for the sake of others. This wisdom is all grace and all-encompassing as it unfolds in the daily "learning to love" that the apostle Paul describes throughout his letters. Such generativity forms new re-



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passage of time is a tremendous gift as it stretches out before us.

Theologian Ephraim Radner and Christian ethicist Oliver O'Donovan offer helpful insight about post-retirement from a distinctly Christian point of view. Let's explore two prominent themes from their recent writings that show us how to turn experience into wisdom during the senior years: generativity and hope.

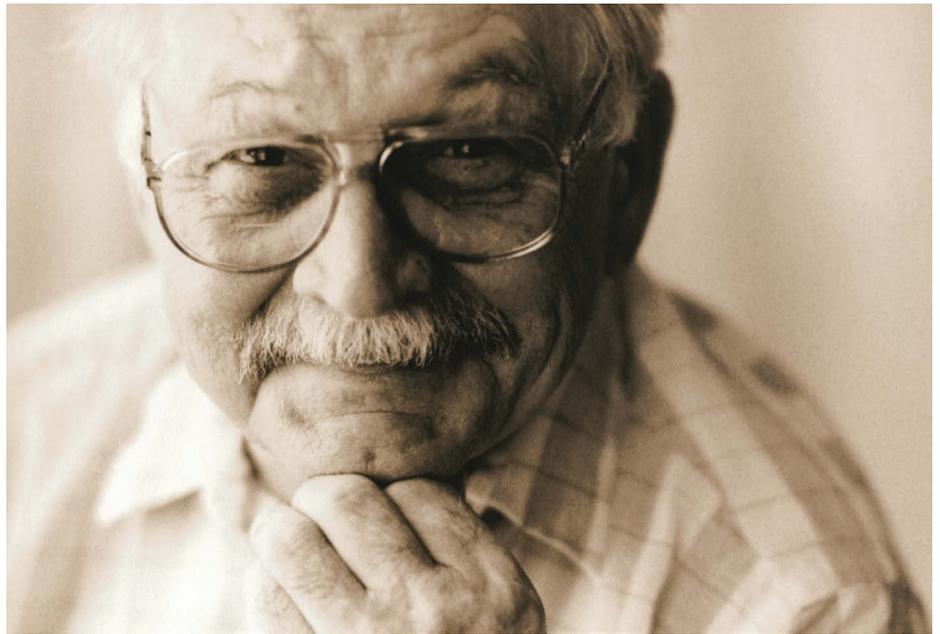
Radner urges a deeper consideration of the "shape of the Christian life" in terms of the "shape of wisdom" offered to us in Jesus Christ. Most conspicuously, this shape features a self-giving or generative capacity symbolized by the cross. Here we see the ultimate act

of generativity that is especially beneficial when we venture into uncharted territory or down bumpy roads.

Hope, the second theme of wisdom for the post-retirement years, gives strength and focus to this generativity, opening our minds and hearts to God's ultimate purposes. In its day-to-day operation hope trains our thoughts and actions on the fulfillment promised to us from the beginning which, according to O'Donovan, is "to be in fellowship with [God], freely directed by him to share his work and enjoy his glory." Nothing sanctifies our journey through life more than the hope that God has set before us in the ascended

Lord Christ. Our experiences of temporality, especially at critical moments of disorientation, realize this horizon of meaning and opportunity most palpably in the “special proximity of old age.” This means that our post-retirement years can be, as O’Donovan suggests, a testament to “how God protects and upholds his righteousness in a world where righteousness is constantly contested.” Reflection on previous life experiences gives wise older adults a uniquely hopeful perspective on God’s leading during times of transition. We do well to remember the psalmist’s words, “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging bread...” (Ps. 37:25).

And so, generativity focused by hope constitutes the peculiar wisdom of our post-retirement years. When this wisdom pauses in reflection, it considers the accumulated experiences of this journey in relationship to the shape of life in Christ’s resurrection from death, individually and corporately. When it moves forward in love and service to others, it does so with a confidence nourished and sustained by daily dependence on the grace-filled promises of God. We share whatever wisdom we have received along the way as a witness, or perhaps, O’Donovan suggests,



as “the dreams of the old that have been prepared for over a lifetime.” There may indeed be room for Alaskan cruises and hitchhikes down desert highways in these dreams, but we can also take delight in those opportunities that bear something of the cruciform weight of divine glory.

Centuries ago St. Augustine of Hippo’s spent his final year in post-retirement reviewing his successes and failures. Biographer Peter Brown describes the venerable bishop’s *Retractationes* as “the invaluable remarks” of an old man

intended for readers who might benefit from the lessons he had learned. But Augustine’s mind was set as much on the future as the past, a future that opened in a powerful witness that would influence Christian thought for centuries to come. At the center of that witness was the cross-shaped wisdom of Jesus Christ. Perhaps, by God’s grace, we might also pass on such wisdom as our journeys through the post-retirement years continue.

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Dr. Phil Harrold is a semi-retired church historian (Ph.D.) and formerly an associate professor at Trinity School for Ministry, in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. He now lives near Montrose, Colorado with his wife, Carol, who is the assistant medical director (M.D.) at the local Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).



Economics and COVID-19

By Elisabeth Rain Kincaid

In 1958, the great Jesuit theologian, John Courtney Murray, lamenting the loss of common ground in American life and politics, wrote:

“The fact today is not simply that we hold different views but that we have become different types of men, with different styles of interior life. We are therefore uneasy in one another’s presence. We are not, in fact, present to one another at all; we are absent from one another. That is, I am not transparent to the other, nor he to me; our mutual experience is that of an opaqueness. And this reciprocal opaqueness is the root of

the hostility that is overcome only with an effort, if at all.”

The onslaught of COVID-19 has revealed that this opaqueness characterizes our relationships today. The trauma of the pandemic has not erased our differences, but has instead revealed how deep-seated our differences are, and how deeply they divide us. We are united in fear, anxiety, and the staleness of being stuck in our homes, but light years apart in our experiences and understanding of what this time means. Old/young, male/female, white/black, children/no children, single/married, employed/unemployed, urban/rural, conservative/liberal: each of us is going

through the pandemic differently and each is telling a different story of what this experience means.

Of course, this difference is illuminated most clearly in the stark mortality numbers trailing in the virus’s wake. The difference between being old and young, healthy or with pre-existing conditions, essential worker or non-essential, has become at times a literal and immediate difference of life and death. However, the divisions between us are also illustrated by the stories we are telling and the terms in which public debate is being conducted. Put most crudely, at times it seems as if we are forced to choose between saving lives by keep-



ing the country shut down and saving livelihoods by starting business back up. Although this division does not do justice to the complexity of claims which many are making, it does illustrate how we are as opaque to each other in our understanding of what constitutes the common good and which authorities to trust as we are in our personal experiences. This not only characterizes our political and civil discourse, it also splits our churches. We are opaque to one another and the fact that we are physically apart does nothing to abate our hostility.

What can Christian ethics — and Christians ourselves — contribute to this debate? What story can we tell our broken country so that, in the words of the prayer book, “unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair”?

To begin with, we should approach these questions with humility. We cannot replace the experts: the scientists and epidemiologists tracking the disease’s spread and searching for cures and solutions; the doctors and nurses laboring on the front lines; the economists seeking to staunch the fiscal bleeding; or even the politicians whom (we pray) are using practical wisdom to direct the resources of government towards the common good.

We can, however, remind other Christians of the value of their labors. In pointing towards the good of natural knowledge, of *techne*, and of the natural virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, we should seek to remind other Christians that secular skills and natural virtues do matter and can point us towards the good and the limited peace which both the City of God and the City of Man both depend upon.

We can also remind others of the limits of these types of natural knowledge as well. Science cannot give us all the answers as to how to live and how

to die: the heart-rending nature of the debates in bioethics about how to ration scarce life-saving resources has made that all too plain. Economics and business savvy cannot teach us how, as Christians, we are called to care first for those within whom we see the face of the Christ: the weak, the poor, the suffering, the hungry, and those in jail. While the sources of natural knowledge are good and necessary, they do not tell the entire story.

As Christians, we should refuse the dichotomy of life/livelihood which these

approach prioritizes caring for and protecting the most vulnerable: both physically and economically. It requires us not to ask “how to get back to where we were before” but rather, how can the tools of science, economics, and politics enable us “whenever we have an opportunity, to work for the good of all” (Gal. 6:10).

In some Christian circles, talk has flown quickly of the pandemic as God’s judgment. Instead of engaging in theologically dubious reads of God’s motives, churches, theologians, and all Christians would perhaps be better

Put most crudely, at times it seems as if we are forced to choose between saving lives by keeping the country shut down and saving livelihoods by starting business back up.

options seem to present us. Rather, we should seek to retrieve anew an expanded, shared concept of the common good which can transcend these divisions, illuminate our opacity, and teach us again to see each other as children of God. In one of his encyclicals on economics, *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI rejects the dichotomy between love and justice, rather reminding us that the common good includes both. “The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them.”

Our ability to remove the opacity through which we see each other requires therefore a replacement of the opacity with the solidarity to which Jesus calls us. This solidarity would require us to look beyond our own desires and political preferences and ask which

served by looking at the ways in which the disease has revealed our distance and societal failures, as one example of God’s severe mercies. The many ways in which we fail to love the poor, the old, the weak, the destitute, those in prison, and those suffering from entrenched oppression because of their ethnicity or the color of their skin lie open before us. The opacity which lies between us can now only continue if we choose it. The story we can choose to tell is not “when does this end” but, rather, how should we be part of God’s redemptive action in the world in what happens next.

Dr. Elisabeth Rain Kincaid is assistant professor of ethics and moral theology at Nashotah House Theological Seminary and a Covenant contributor.

Surrender and Wonder

Review by Mark Harris

Cancer, seen primarily as a very unwelcome guest, takes up residence not only in our bodies, but more dangerously in our minds and spirit. It is bad enough that cancer kills the body with alarming frequency and often with great pain; sometimes it is a spirit killer as well. We cancer people know this.

People who live with cancer as part of their life story are those who Alec Hill describes as “living in bonus time.” Working through post treatment (apparently successful) and now three years out, I found his reflections wonderfully on target and germane to my own experience.

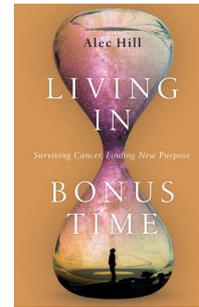
Often called survivors, we cancer people know this is not necessarily so. Having been visited, now we always have one eye on the door, wondering if the unwelcomed visitor is back again, or if not the same terror, maybe another member of the Cancer Mob. Hill knows all too well the return of the unwelcomed. He has dealt twice with cancer and draws on that experience in ways that are reflective of multiple encounters.

The book is divided into three sections: Descending into the Pit; Navigating New Realities; and Living in Bonus Time. There are helpful questions at the end of each chapter, and interesting use of the Psalms as the basis for meditation. This book is written primarily for Christians, drawing generously on biblical reflection and Reformed faith

traditions. It does not draw much on the sacramental aspects of Christian faith. Hill had a good deal to say about surrender to God’s presence and will in our lives, but less to say about how that presence and will is made real (incarnational) in the outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. Still, to be fair, Hill is wonderfully honest about the need to both surrender to God and at the same time be surrounded by God’s care and love, mostly found in the love and dedication of others, particularly caregivers and medical personnel. Surrender does not mean giving up, but giving in, and Hill charts this difference carefully and well. “Giving in” involves seeing in others the presence of God’s care for us and, in our own suffering, God’s presence with us.

I have thought often of my own experience and how the sacramental life forms my sense of healing. When I first heard of my cancer’s presence, I went for healing prayers at a side chapel in the church where I serve as an associate priest and sometimes a “regular” parishioner. The priest asked what I was there for, and I said, “I have cancer and pray for just a shred of dignity that I might suffer well.” The blessing I received was that God would be with me in the suffering. It was not that God would heal me. That was already assumed because, sacramentally, I was a participant in the risen body of Christ. The priest knew that I knew that. What I needed to do was remember that. And his blessing was that I remember God’s presence in my

suffering (which was surely to come.) I had no idea what was to come with the radiation and chemotherapy, but while most of my dignity went up in smoke, I largely suffered well.



Living in Bonus Time

By Alec Hill

InterVarsity Press,
pp. 216, \$17

As people living in bonus time, cancer people are more acutely conscious of living in the present as if it were more important than living for the future. The present turns out to be a place of great blessing, opportunity and meaning. But to know this requires what Hill finally calls “putting ourselves in wonder’s way.” The spiritual awakening for many of us cancer people is precisely to live with a heightened sense of wonder. Lawrence Ferlingetti spoke of this in his poem, *I am waiting*, in which he writes, “I am perpetually awaiting a rebirth of wonder.”

This will be a fine book to give to those we know who are embarking on the cancer journey and for those who, in small groups, may be reflecting on being cancer people. It is particularly of value to Christians muddling through the realities of cancer’s presence. It is a useful starting point also for that conversation about how cancer’s presence is less important in our spiritual lives than the Real Presence, known in all visitors, welcomed or not. How odd that this strange and awful visitor might also be a sign of God’s presence as well.

Then again, not so odd, after all. We cancer people develop an odd sense of humor, which is good, since faith brings both laughter and tears. Alec Hill’s reflections bring me closer to knowing that what is going on is a mystery finally of the light, not of darkness.

The Rev. Canon Mark Harris has served as a missionary, a college chaplain, and the Episcopal Church’s director of overseas missions, and is currently a priest associate of St. Peter’s, Lewes, Delaware.



No Less Present

Review by Richard Kew

Kenneth Carder's *Ministry with the Forgotten* is an incomparable gift to the Church. I usually read a book for review fairly quickly, but this was different because it overturned long-held assumptions shaping my attitudes and behavior.

Kenneth and Linda Carder were together for nearly 60 years, a couple for whom marriage and serving Christ were inseparable. Kenneth is now a retired United Methodist bishop, while Linda had nurtured their family as mother, spouse, and grandmother. She was also a Christian educator. Everything changed for the Carders on a wet November day in 2009 when Linda was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia. They were embarking on what Carder calls "a treacherous and unwelcomed journey that altered every area of our lives." Linda died almost exactly 10 years later.

While intensely personal, Bishop Carder's book is best described as one veteran pastor's sympathetic and thoroughly researched exploration of dementia, the damage it does, but also the possibilities it presents. As Linda Carder set out down what might be called Dementia Road, Kenneth set out to educate his pastoral sensitivity through reading, prayer, studying Scripture, and grappling with the available literature. While grief was seldom far away, "The journey with dementia is a weighty spiritual journey with experiences of profound joy, deepened and expanded love, and heightened attentiveness to the presence of God."

Ministry with the Forgotten is far from academic theory, more a heartfelt report from the front line. The chapters provide an overview of dementia, the manner it impacts sufferers, families and congregations, but the final reference point is always the living God.

I kept returning to the chapter, *Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood*. Dementia's relentless hollowing out of a human's memory appears to strip them of their very personhood.

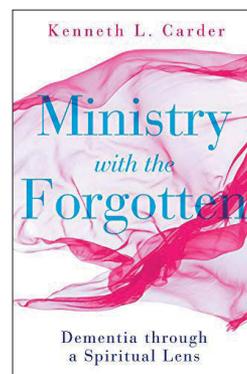
While carers, practitioners, pastors, and loved ones may readily accept this diagnosis, Carder submits that we have fallen for the Cartesian conviction of mind/body dualism. This is reflected in comments like, "She's only a shell of a person" or "He's just not there anymore" or "There's no use visiting her; she's no longer there."

Those treating dementia patients are tempted to see them as a collection of symptoms with no past, no meaningful future, nor any story at all. However, this is not God's way of thinking. We live as beings who are body-souls, not a mere collection of molecules. Carder writes, "I am more than my capacities to think, to initiate action, to produce, to relate... But theologically, I am even more (than that)! I am part of the transcendent story of God's mighty acts of creation, redemption, and transformation."

The bishop's starting point is Genesis 1-2, leading to a robust grasp of our being made in the image of God, the *Imago Dei*, climaxing in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. "Our hope lies in the fact that we are living in the memories of God. As long as God remembers us, who we are will remain. 'I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands' (Isaiah 49:15-16)."

The Meaning of Personhood was my wake-up call. I plead guilty that, when making pastoral calls in the hospital, hospice, or nursing home, I have talked across patients as if they are not there, disregarding their value to God. I am ashamed to say that I did something like this with my own mother in her dementia. Descartes has too often won out over the God who is our Creator and Redeemer.

Bishop Carder writes as a husband who loves and cares for his wife with dementia. During her long journey he developed close relationships with care professionals and medical personnel, as well as families and loved ones. He presumes a person with dementia should be part of a loving community involving friends, family, congregation,



Ministry with the Forgotten

Dementia through a Spiritual Lens

By Kenneth L. Carder

Abingdon, pp. 192, \$22.99

and medical and care professionals. He encourages churches to work out how to be "dementia-friendly" and understand that those with dementia have gifts to share in the body of Christ. "Caregiving constitutes a national health problem in the United States," he writes, and churches have a significant role to play in providing support.

Dementia never figured in my seminary training. Even 25 years ago, in major works forecasting the approaching "age wave" of which I am part, mental health issues were little more than footnotes. This age wave is upon us — an expanding senior population a significant proportion of whose later lives will be blighted by dementia.

Kenneth Carder's name is on the cover of this book, but Linda Miller Carder must be seen as co-author. Her obituary, in October 2019, tells us that after diagnosis, "she taught by being rather than doing and by receiving the love and care of others." The great gift of Linda and Kenneth Carder is a significant resource for Christians to better understand and minister among the forgotten and forgetting in coming years.

The Rev. Richard Kew has served parishes in England, Massachusetts, New York, and Tennessee, and is currently a priest associate of St. George's, Nashville. He is also a contributor to the Covenant blog.



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Christian Faith in Times of Crisis

At the outset of Holy Week this year, my brother and I received the news of our 81-year-old Mom's testing positive for COVID-19. Diagnosed as a mild case, she has so far remained symptom-free, save perhaps for an increase in dementia, itself a possible symptom. Other positive cases have cropped up at her assisted living facility in San Diego, and one of the staff died from complications associated with the virus. The staff have remained amazingly kind and caring amidst it all, faithful to their sense of "call" to this work, as the executive director expressed it in an email to families of residents. As she often says, they "love" those in their care, and we know this to be true.

The experience has been, and remains, a powerfully personal Way of the Cross for me and my family, and stretching into Eastertide I am contemplating sin, death, and resurrection as a continual crisis of encounter with God for those "who believe" (1 Pet. 2:7). *Crisis* in Scripture connotes a



Photo by Dejan Livančić on Unsplash

decisive moment or turning point set within a divine horizon, often gathering with it God's judgment and justice. Consider Jesus' confrontational word early on in the Gospel of John, enunciating a prophecy of resurrection in the key of crisis. As he says, "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God" — and not just some of the dead, but "all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out: those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (*krisis*)" (John 5:25,28-29). Easter hope, to be sure, but joined with judgment. Similarly, Jesus warns the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew not to neglect "the more important matters of the law — justice (*krisis*), mercy, and faithfulness" (23:23).

Our time here is short, and, for the faithful, set within a great drama of creation and redemption that plays out unstintingly before our eyes and within the secrets of each of our hearts. Unlike God, and unlike the Son of God, there is a time when each one of us were not. We *were* made, not begotten. But

our physical death will not be the end. And we are given a gospel to guide us into perpetual conversation with the living God, in order to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17) and to listen unceasingly to his words in reply. The whole Church year serves this end, and the centerpiece of each season is simultaneously true. Jesus *is* born, *is* crucified, *is* resurrected, *is* ascended, and *is* coming again all at once. These are bits of his biography, but we celebrate them as present and future facts for all who would live in and faithfully follow him.

We believe that passion and resurrection are inseparable and mutually determining. "In the midst of life we are in death" (1979 BCP, p. 484, drawn from the 1662). This struck me during a wonderful Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament on Maundy Thursday, beamed into my home by webcam from the altar of repose at my parish in a virtual vigil. Devotional aid in hand, I recalled again God's presence in my life "at all times," confessed my sin, threw myself upon Jesus' love and mercy, and subjected my prayers — for the world and the peoples of the world, for my country, for all Christians, for the Church and my parish, for those near and dear, for my enemies, and for the departed — to the will of the Sacred Heart of Jesus "that wrought our salvation." Then, turning to my own "spiritual needs" (distinguished from "earthly gifts which I may desire"), I asked God "for light and grace to live faithfully," "to develop in his service; to grow more and more like him; to meet the temptations and difficulties of life; to persevere in the Christian life to the end; and for the grace to die a good and happy death" (all from "The Holy Hour" in *Saint Augustine's Prayer Book* [1947]).

This is the pattern of Christian faith in times of crisis, which is to say in the ordinary-turned-supernatural course of birth, sin, grace, conversion, obedience amid trial, and reparative suffering that is the daily bread of Christian hope and Christian love. This is *our* calling, enabled by God himself in the sacrificial gift of his Son. *In him*, in his strength, this age and the next are joined.

Lord Jesus, make us faithful disciples, and call us home to you when our work here is complete. Amen.
—Christopher Wells

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EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 510705

Milwaukee, WI 53203-0121

Shipping Address:

816 E. Juneau Avenue

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Phone: 414-276-5420

E-mail: tlc@livingchurch.org

www.livingchurch.org

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PEOPLE & PLACES

Deaths

Canon **Francis Banks**, an educator and entrepreneur who served as a lay leader in several parishes and as treasurer of the Diocese of Los Angeles, died on March 30, his 92nd birthday.



Banks grew up in New York, the son of an Episcopal priest, and served in the U.S. Army, moving to California to study at Cal State Los Angeles and the University of Southern California. He worked for 30 years for the Los Angeles Unified School District and was a successful real estate investor. He loved travel, antiques, and jazz and classical music.

Banks served as a churchwarden at Saint James Church in Los Angeles, as well as on the parish school's building committee and the board of its retirement community. He later served in several roles at All Saints Church in Pasadena. He was elected treasurer of the Diocese of Los Angeles in 1989, and held the role for 16 years, while also serving on several diocesan committees. He was named an honorary canon of the diocese in 1994, in recognition of his decades of service to the church. He is survived by a daughter, a granddaughter, and four great-grandchildren.

The Rev. **Dennis "Joe" Dunlap**, who served parishes in New York, Ecuador, Wisconsin, and Illinois, died shortly after Easter, aged 71.

A native of Bloomington, Illinois, he was a graduate of Illinois State University and Nashotah House, and was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood by the Rt. Rev. Albert Hillestad, Bishop of Springfield. After a curacy on Long Island, Dunlap served as a missionary in two parishes in Ecuador. He became a canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in 1977, and was then rector of St. John's Church in Wisconsin Rapids from 1983-1996. He returned to his native state for his final pastoral assignments, in the Dioceses of Springfield and Chicago. He was a dedicated organist, and a member of the Society of Catholic Priests and the Guild of All Souls.



The Rev. **Richardson "Dick" Libby, Jr.**, an enthusiastic historian who devoted his life to parish ministry, died April 2 at his home, aged 88.

Following his graduation from Trinity College, Hartford, he served as a first lieutenant in the Korean War. He prepared for the ministry at General Seminary, and following a curacy in Bath, Maine, he served as rector of several churches in Connecticut. He was rector of Grace Church in Newington for 18 years, and served Trinity Church in Branford for nine, where he was active as a Rotarian and volunteer firefighter.



He and his wife retired to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1997, where he served as an interim

and supply priest in several parishes, and as a chaplain at Washington National Cathedral. He organized the cathedral's annual Kirking of the Tartans Service, a celebration of his beloved Scottish heritage, and served on the race committee for the Naval Academy's Sailing Squadron.

Libby had a passion for history, and a special interest in the flags of the American Revolution. The design of the Shaw flag that flies over the Maryland State House in Annapolis was corrected at his urging, an accomplishment that particularly delighted him. He was a member of the Society of King Charles the Martyr, the Societies of St. Andrew and St. George, and the American Vexillological Association. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Kathryn, two sons, and four grandchildren.

The Rev. Canon **Sabi Sarkissian**, who established an Arabic-language ministry in the Diocese of Missouri, died April 17, aged 83.

A native of Palestine, Canon Sarkissian studied for the ministry at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, and was ordained in the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, where he served in several parishes. He became a canon of Saint George's Cathedral in Jerusalem in 1983. He moved to Missouri in 1999, and established Arabic ministries at Church of the Good Shepherd in Town and Country and St. Timothy's in Creve Coeur. He is survived by his wife, Feryal, and three daughters.



The Rev. **Clarence Sickles** died April 14, aged 99, at the Clarence Sickles Health Care Center at Heath Village, a retirement community he founded in the course of a long ministry in Hackettstown, New Jersey.

A native of New Jersey, Sickles was a graduate of Columbia University and General Seminary. Following his ordination in 1948, he served as curate and mission priest of several parishes in the Diocese of Newark, and as Episcopal chaplain at Rutgers. He moved to Hackettstown in 1953, where he and his wife, Jean, raised their eight children. In addition to serving as rector of St. James Church, he coordinated shelter and food for transients in the community, sometimes feeding them at his own table.

When he saw a need for eldercare in his community, Sickles formed a nonprofit corporation that eventually built Heath Village. He served as the retirement community's first executive director, earning a degree from Columbia in gerontology to guide him in his work. He was awarded a Doctorate of Divinity by General Seminary in recognition of his service to the elderly.

Sickles wrote several books for children, and a study of the Ten Commandments, and he and his wife volunteered extensively in retirement while he assisted in several local parishes. He is survived by Jean, his wife of 70 years, and his four daughters and four sons, as well as 13 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.



A Vertical Line, Concentric Circles

We read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. We pull out dictionaries, lexicons, and commentaries. Reading scripture is slow and patient work in which insights come like sparks, though usually after considerable work and reflection.

Today's lessons inspire two simple drawing assignments. The first is a vertical line with an arrow at the bottom and top, symbolizing the descent and ascent of Christ, which is the saving work of Christ as described in First Peter. The second drawing is a bull's eye, set within three concentric circles. The bull's eye, the center, is the Holy Spirit. The space between the dot and the first circle is humanity (you); the next area is God the Son, and the next space is God the Father. Beyond the area of the Father is nothingness, for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the source of all being. This picture is drawn from John 14. It shows how we know and love God. The two images are related. We are rescued and saved so that we may know and love God.

We are to explain our salvation when a defense of the faith is "requested" or "demanded" (1 Pet. 3:15). The case is to be delivered with "gentleness" and "reverence" (1 Pet. 3:16). Additionally, when facing abuse, we are to defend the faith and shame our persecutors by "[our] good conduct." Living godly and peaceable lives, speaking with gentleness and reverence, we are to tell of the great work of Christ in coming to be among us, suffering for us, dying for us, and descending into hell to deliver the captives.

"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, and made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:18-19). This calls to mind the phrase from the Apostle's Creed, "He descended to the

dead," as well as a sentence from the Easter *Exsultet*, "This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell and rose victorious from the grave" (BCP, p. 287).

On scriptural evidence alone, the precise meaning of the descent of Christ to "the spirits in prison" may be debated, but the pulpit is not a debate stage. It is the place where the *consensus fidelium* is announced with confidence, though with a spirit of gentleness and reverence. Christ sets the captives free! "If he did not assume it, he did not save it." This remark, aimed at those who denied that Christ had a human will, is more broadly true. If Christ did not break the bonds of death and hell, which he did, then he is not the Savior. He went to the depths, even to hell, to complete his saving work. He went down to draw us up. He is a vertical line.

After our rescue, Christ poured his Spirit into us. The Spirit is the love of the Father that eternally generates the Son and the absolute love of the Son for the Father. Their shared love freely proceeds into creation and uniquely into those who, by adoption and grace, are united to Christ as a New Creation. The Spirit is in you, the center of your being. The Spirit bears witness to your spirit that you are a child of God. You are embraced by the Son, who is embraced by the Father. Moving from the center outward: The Spirit is in you, and you are in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. In this way, we love and know God.

Look It Up

Read John 14:20.

Think About It

Overlapping.

Formed for Salvation

"As they were watching, [Jesus] was lifted up" (Acts 1:9). The heavens received him, but also appeared to hide him: "and a cloud took him out of their sight." The Son ascended to the glory he had with the Father before the world began, the glory of their shared love who is Holy Spirit (John 17:5). We, on the other hand, stand upon earth where, despite seasons and moments of blessing, we face a "fiery ordeal" (1 Pet. 4:12). So, God is everlasting love in heaven; and we suffer here below? Yes and no.

Jesus ascends to his Father and their shared glory, that is, the Holy Spirit. This Trinity of love — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is one God and one love. Jesus ascends, however, as the Son of God in whom human nature has been inseparably united in one divine person. Ascending, he takes our humanity with him, and so we are called "to set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2-3). Elsewhere in the corpus of St. Paul, we hear that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). In a sense, we are already in heaven.

The old humanity, however, nailed to the cross of Christ, dies the slow death of our transition from one mode of being to another. The new being in Christ comes both as a flash of purifying grace in baptism and as a process of renewal and testing. We have, as the Scriptures promise and experience verifies, anxieties and trials, disciplines to undergo, an enemy to resist, suffering that cannot be avoided. Nonetheless, the God of grace "will restore, support, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Pet. 5:10). We lift up our hearts and set

(Continued on next page)

Acts 2:1-21 or Num. 11:24-30; Ps. 104:25-35, 37; 1 Cor. 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21;
John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

Gifts of the Spirit for Our Time

our minds on things that are above, but we do not for a moment neglect the works we are to walk in, the obligations of love we owe, nor the joys we are presented or the consolations given.

How does the new humanity emerge? In perfect love, God reaches out to each person according to their need and capacity. St. Irenaeus, using verbs indicative of a process, insists that salvation is profoundly personal and adaptive in its application. "So, in the beginning, God formed (*plasmavit*) the human being on account of his own munificence, but chose patriarchs for the sake of their salvation; and was in truth preparing (*praeformabat*) a people, teaching (*docens*) the unteachable to follow God, and was raising up prophets on earth, fitting (*assuescens*) humanity to bear his Spirit and to have communion with God ... In a variety of ways, composing/adjusting (*componens*) humanity to an agreement/harmony with salvation" (*Against Heresies* 4.14.2). God is forming, preparing, teaching, fitting, and composing each person for the goal of salvation.

I suggest we see this work for a moment in the action of a beautiful young woman caring for her younger siblings. "In the vestibule, six children, ranging from age eleven to two years old, were crowded around a beautifully formed girl of medium height . . . She was holding a loaf of black bread and cutting for the little ones around her slices appropriate to their age and appetite: and she handed over each one with such amiability, and each child cried out 'Thank you!' so affectionately, stretching out its little hands high into the air even before the slice was cut" (Goethe, *The Suffering of Young Werther*). The saving grace of God is a beautiful young woman cutting a loaf of black bread.

Look It Up

Read the collect.

Think About It

We need strength first. Then, we will be exalted.

This reflection was written during a world-wide pandemic, a circumstance that makes even words of promise and comfort strangely haunting. "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all gathered together in one place" (Acts 2:1). The gathering of the faithful is now, in many places, prohibited. In the appointed collect, we pray that the promised gift of the Holy Spirit will "shed abroad throughout the world . . . that it may reach the ends of the earth." Yet we sense also that other forces are at work in a fallen world, a viral attack upon human life that may cover the globe. In the face of this, people are afraid and anxious; many are also doing whatever they can to slow the spread of this disease, to treat the ill, and to save lives.

In this context, we might listen more deeply with the inner ear of faith, to what, or rather, to whom we have in the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, we hear that the disciples received the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. "At this sound, the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in their native language of each" (Acts 2:6). They heard the mighty and manifold works of the Lord (Acts 2:11; Ps. 104:25). The disciples spoke words, but their many words bore witness to the one eternal Word of God, Christ our Lord. "This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being, therefore, exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you see and hear" (Acts 2:33). The Spirit Jesus received and poured out is "the Lord, the giver of life." Pentecost, then, is the gift of nothing less than God poured into our hearts and speaking a language of love we recognize and understand. God is with us. We are not alone.

God has not left us comfortless in

this present crisis. Indeed, God has given every person a unique ministry for the common good. In this time, we need *gifts of learning* from the scientific and medical community, but also governments and local communities. We need to learn because we do not know enough, and the crisis is urgent. Learning requires humility, diligence, and cooperation. We need *gifts of right judgment* in determining what to do and what not to do. We need *a holy comfort* to strengthen us and to restrain our worst fears. We need *gifts of wisdom and knowledge, healing, and miracles*, a great convergence of nature and grace for the healing of humanity. Dispersed as we are by "social distancing," we desperately need *the gift of the one Spirit* that makes us one body wherever we may be. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12).

At this moment, many of our churches sit empty. The Church, however, is not merely a building or only an assembly. The Church is a sacred society, a living body that cannot be rent asunder. Wherever we are, we have God and the gifts of God. Live in hope and trust. Pray for the Church and the world.

Look It Up

Read Matthew 6:6.

Think About It

While praying in secret, feel and know that "God in Christ is generally the medicine which doth cure the world, and Christ in us is that receipt of the same medicine, whereby we are everyone particularly cured" (Richard Hooker).

Creation and Trinity

Before the fall of humanity and the lapse of nature, creation expressed the perfect and ordered will of God. Everything was good, and everything together was beautiful in its own way. We still experience moments of this original perfection that call forth praise and exaltation. In the words of the Psalmist, "When I consider your heavens, and the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses, what is man that you should be mindful of him? The son of man that you should seek him out? You have made him but little lower than the angels; you adorn him with glory and honor. You give him mastery over the works of your hands; you put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, even the wild beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever walks upon the sea" (Ps. 8:4-9). The whole creation explodes with life and praise.

Consider the *Te Deum* as an example of such praise. Set aside, for a moment, the scholarly opinion that it was composed by Niceta, Bishop of Remesia in Dacia (c. 393-414). Instead, give license to the medieval legend that St. Ambrose and St. Augustine spontaneously composed this hymn immediately after Augustine's baptism. On the same day, Augustine and his son, Adeodatus, and Augustine's dear friend, Alypius, received the sacrament of baptism from Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. The intensity of emotion around this event is suggested by Augustine's immediate impression of the church's music.

Baptized into the church, he indeed heard, for the first time, the church singing. "How greatly did I weep in your hymns and canticles, deeply moved by the voices of your sweet-speaking church! The voices flowed into my ears, and the truth was poured forth into my heart, whence the agitation of my piety overflowed, and my tears ran over, and blessed was I

therein" (*Confessions* IX.vi). With such emotion, we imagine Augustine, together with Ambrose, breaking form in song: *We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.* To their voices, they add the voices of heaven and earth and the holy church: *the earth, angels, heavens and all powers therein, cherubim and seraphim, the glorious company of apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the holy church.* Such praise reaches out to its rightful object, addressing God by name. "O Lord our Governor, how exalted is your Name in all the world!" (Ps. 8:1). "Glory to you for the radiance of your holy name." The name of God is mysteriously the very being of God: I AM. We praise the God who is and who creates.

We are, however, like Augustine, stirred from within, moved by the Holy Spirit who brings to remembrance all that Jesus taught and did, a Spirit that speaks to our spirit revealing that we are sons and daughters of God, united by adoption and grace to the eternal Son of the Father. And so, we are bold to call God "Our Father." Athanasius says, "When the Spirit dwells in us, the Word who bestows the Spirit is in us too, and the Father is present in the Word" (*Letter to Serapion*).

Take a breath. Think and feel. Have you ever heard of love? Begetting love, begotten love, shared love? Love that is above all things, through all things, in all things? This love is in you. It invites you to praise the one and equal glory of the Trinity, one being in three divine persons.

Look It Up

Read Matthew 28:19.

Think About It

God is not an explanation. God is love, and God loves what God has made.

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