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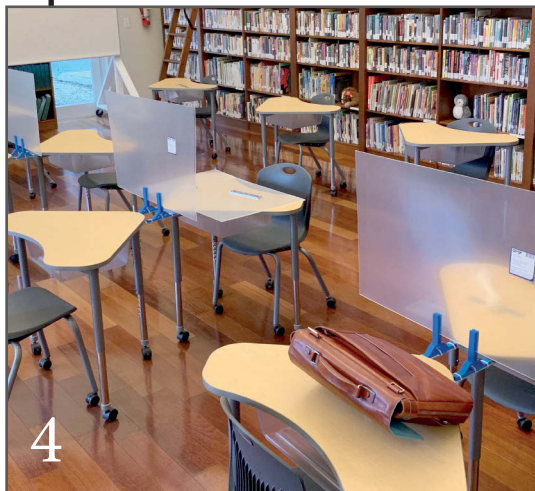
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Church of the Good Shepherd, Augusta, Georgia: A Living Church Partner. We feature our partners beginning on page 29.

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THE LIVING CHURCH

THIS ISSUE | September 6, 2020

NEWS

- 4 Episcopal Schools Return with Focus on Faith, Justice, and Safety | By Neva Rae Fox
- 10 Can a Parish Thrive with a Virtual Rector? | By Mike Patterson

FEATURES

- 16 Youth Ministries Adapt, Focus on Spiritual Renewal | By G. Jeffrey MacDonald
- 18 Watching Your Language | By Sarah Cornwell
- 29 Partner Spotlights 2020

CULTURES

- 20 Blood at Boil | By Tim Bascom

ETHICS

- 22 Religious Liberty Dominates Supreme Court's Term | By James E. Sweeney

BOOKS

- 25 *Biblical Fracking* | Review by James Stambaugh
- 26 *Diary of a Pastor's Soul* | Review by Craig Loya
- 27 *Caring* | Review by David Svahn

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

- 15 *De terra veritas*
- 58 People & Places
- 59 Sunday's Readings

Episcopal Schools Return with Focus on Faith, Justice, and Safety

By Neva Rae Fox

As a national debate rages over whether to return to the classroom in a few short days or weeks, Episcopal schools are taking a variety of approaches to balancing safety and education.

“Almost all of our schools transitioned to online teaching in the spring,” said the Rev. Dan Heischmann, executive director of the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES). “It was a pretty quick transition. It’s really remarkable what our schools did.”

“We were able to turn on a dime,” shared the Rev. Dr. Stuart Dunnan, headmaster of Saint James School in Hagerstown, Maryland. “We delivered our whole curriculum online. This was an example of our versatility and the different academic culture of private schools.”

He added, “We learned things. We learned what worked and what didn’t work.”

St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School, a pre-K-12 school in Alexandria, Virginia, also shifted from in-person learning to virtual. Kiki Davis, director of institutional equity and diversity, said that “this transition presented an opportunity for our preschool to look at how preschoolers learn through a different set of lenses. Our teachers made phone calls, mailed letters, and engaged with small and large groups via Zoom.”

The Rev. Michael Spencer, vice rector for faculty at St. Paul’s, Concord, New Hampshire, noted, “Everything came to a head when we were on spring vacation. We moved to create a schedule. It answered the need that we had to provide for engagement for our students and to prioritize the academic rigor of our classes, allowing for stu-



Screens between desks enhance student safety at St. Philip’s School, Coral Gables, Florida.

St. Philip’s photo

dents, even international students, to be able to connect with their teachers.”

Episcopal schools made plans with input from faculty, administration, board, parents and, in some cases, students. The results fall into three categories: in-person, completely online, or a hybrid of the two, with most planning for at least some in-person education. All are aware that plans may need to change with changing conditions.

Heischmann said that no school has announced plans to cease operations, and that school enrollments have generally been steady, and in some cases have increased from last school year.

“No matter what plan is implemented, the schools will physically look different,” Heischmann said, with schools reconfiguring their space to meet social distancing requirements.

Jasmine B. Harris, head of school at St. Philip’s in Coral Gables, Florida, said June was dedicated to “removing unnecessary furniture, knocking down walls.” Students will not rotate classrooms to “increase our ability to contact trace.”

“We are limiting how students interact with each other,” Harris said. “There will be no choir.” Also new for the fall: swivel cameras in the classrooms, staggered starting and dismissal times, and “we invested in a lot of plexiglass.”

Spencer also installed 360-degree cameras, and purchased other equipment, including iPads that allow for sharing screens, and white boards. He also said the day’s schedule would be altered with priority teaching time between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. “A bit more passing time between classes (we

have a large campus) allows for the cleaning of the classroom.” Other keys are installing special filters in buildings and shifting times for lunches and dinners. He said communal lunch is “just not going to work.”

“At St. James, we are starting on September 5,” Dunnan said. “The board and parents were clear that they wanted us to reopen. We don’t have fall sports; we don’t have intercollegiate sports. Masks, social distancing, no common meals, temperature checking each day. And we are never gathering the whole school in the fall.”

Many are considering closing after Thanksgiving break and not reopening until the winter semester. All are wary of a potential second wave of the virus, which could be coupled with the annual flu season.

Virtual worship

Although students’ education was interrupted during the spring, worship remained foundational in every school.

“We moved quickly to online chapel,” said Norman Hull, chaplain of Campbell Hall, Studio City, California. “We never did online chapel services before.”

Hull said one of the lessons learned was “the kids were so appreciative that they could connect with other. We had to find ways to keep the community connected, and Zoom did it. Just seeing each other’s faces was so important.”

Another way to keep connected was the expansion of roles in chapel. Hull explained that every sixth and eighth grader “took a Bible story and connected it to the world, connecting to stories like Ruth and Naomi.”

And, for the first time, “We offered summer chapel. Kids were not going to camp, not going on vacation, some were not leaving the house,” Hull said. “Summer chapel allows me to work with students on readings and keeps us connected to community.”

Spencer agreed. “There are silver linings of COVID time, and appreciating community is one of them. Chapel is a grounding experience for our students. It is our community-connection time – it connects our students and we become aware of our

place in the world, our service to our community, and how we can reflect the life of Christ. It allows a deeper sense of spirituality, a deeper sense of purpose.”

“Our families have several online opportunities to worship,” said Tamiko McCullough, director of St. Stephen’s Preschool in Durham, North Carolina. “They can worship virtually with the parish on Sunday through our recorded services. During the week, there are also preschool chapel videos that our families can access at any time.”

Addressing social issues

Episcopal schools have not shied away from the issues currently facing the nation. Besides COVID-19, schools have found creative ways to engage with social justice issues raised by the economic downturn and Black Lives Matter protests.

“In the middle of the pandemic was the murder of George Floyd,” Heischmann pointed out. “Many schools reacted to that.”

Davis agreed. “I think that one thing
(Continued on next page)



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that is happening is intersectionality: the pandemic, diversity and equity, social uprising, and the economy. So much of my work is talking about the intersec-

tionality and our connections. Putting a lens on all issues.”

She continued, “We want these kids to have these conversations. You don’t have to agree, but when you understand where the person comes from, you have an insight. ... It’s about maintaining relationships.”

Harris believes it is important to address issues with students. “You are never too young to learn.”

The Rev. Todd Fitzgerald, chaplain, St. Stephen’s Episcopal School, Austin, Texas, said his school follows the guidance provided by their founder, former Presiding Bishop John Hines. “We teach our children about social justice issues and how they can engage in mind and heart.”

He added, “The pandemic has exposed those who are most vulnerable, not only in Austin but in the U.S. As educators we are very aware of how important it is to live into our bap-

tismal covenant — we are about respecting the dignity of every human being in the middle of a pandemic, in the middle of an election season, in the middle of racism.”

Educators share their hopes

“We can be so impactful on the lives of children, we can teach them about right and wrong, diversity, equity, and inclusion,” Harris said. “We can talk about differences. And love one another, not in spite of that, but because of that. We are all still humans, we all still hurt, we are all still the same.”

“My hope,” Fitzgerald said, “is that more and more of the young people in my school community have a greater sense of Paul’s statement that nothing, nothing, can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”

“My hope is that we move through this liminal threshold time with eyes wide open,” Spencer said. “Schools are not places that should mimic culture, they should create culture. Schools should be where we form students to make a better future.”

Davis said, “All I expect is an open heart and a willing spirit. Faculty, students, parents, alumni – it is messy work, but we can be better, we won’t be perfect, but we can do better.”

Harris summed up the feeling of all the educators: “At the end of the day, I have to think of the safety of the children first.”

General Convention May Move to 2022

By Kirk Petersen

No decision has been reached about whether there will be a General Convention in Baltimore in 2021, but the church has announced Plan B.

“In the event that we cannot convene safely in person from June 30 to July 9, 2021, we will postpone the 80th General Convention to 2022, working with our partners in Baltimore as we determine appropriate dates,” according to a July 29 letter from Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings.

“In the fall, we will reevaluate the public health situation and consult again with epidemiologists who have given us their time and advice so generously,” they said. “In October, we hope to ask Executive Council for their advice and consent to our final decision about how the 80th General Convention will proceed, but we recognize that it may not be possible to finalize our plans that quickly.”

The letter (understandably enough) leaves many open issues:

- What happens to terms of office that are pegged to the triennial General Convention? They number in the hundreds, including members of the Executive Council (essentially the legislature between General Conventions); standing commissions and limited-purpose commissions that have geared their three-year efforts toward ending in 2021; offices in the various provinces, and more.
- Of special note: Jennings is serving her third and final three-year term as president of the House of Deputies, and is scheduled to step down at the end of GC 2021. Curry’s nine-year term as presiding bishop expires in 2024.
- The Church’s three-year budget normally is passed at General Convention, then adjusted as necessary over the course of the triennium. The current \$134 million triennial budget expires at the end of 2021. How will the Church decide what it can spend beginning in January 2022?



Photo: Myanmar COVID relief distribution center

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Baltimore's Inner Harbor

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How will the Church conform to (or finesse) Article I:7 of its Constitution, which states, “The General Convention shall meet not less than once in each three years, at a time and place determined in accordance with the Canons. Special meetings may be held as provided for by Canon.”

In an online meeting of the Executive Council in June, Sally Johnson, chancellor to the president of the House of Deputies, said in a committee meeting, “it feels like a three-dimensional chess game that a core group of us are looking at ... if we move this piece then that happens, everything from economic impact, to cost to dioceses and the Church, to what does the constitution say, what does the canons say, what does the Church need, how are all these things interpreted, who decides?”

Bishop Laicized in North India Rebellion

By Mark Michael

Basil B. Baskey, who has served as Bishop of Chotanagpur in the Church of North India, has been stripped of his orders after declaring that his diocese has seceded from the denomination in a dispute about the administration of church property. “I have already declared the diocese as an autonomous church and have no link with the CNI to follow its order,” the Northeastern Indian bishop told the *Union of Catholic Asian (UCA) News* on July 22,

adding that all 52 of the diocese’s pastors support his decision.

The Church of North India’s synod responded to Baskey’s July 17 declaration by asking him to go on leave. They described his declaration as “an act of serious indiscipline and insubordination” in a formal statement issued on July 21. On August 11, the synod “unanimously resolved” to terminate Baskey, *UCA News* reported.

The Most Rev. Prem Chand Singh, the Church of North India’s moderator, said that the constitution of the Church of North India forbids any diocese from seceding from the denomination.

The Rev. Suresh Jacob, a member of Chotanagpur Diocese’s executive committee, traced the conflict to a property dispute. “We have learnt that Bishop Baskey wanted to lease some church properties in Hazaribagh in Jharkhand,” Jacob said. “In these days and age, with land sharks around, many were apprehensive about the future.” Hazaribagh has seen a sharp increase in population in recent years since coal mining was restarted in the region.

Baskey told *UCA News* that he had been unfairly accused of corruption by senior synod officials, who had “ignored his plea against those who indulge in corruption.”

The Church of North India was formed as a merger of several Protestant mission churches in 1970. It inherited the substantial land holdings of the colonial-era Church of England’s Indian dioceses, some of which date back to the early 19th century.

Disputes over the disposition of church

land holdings and allegations of corrupt dealings have plagued the church in recent years. In 2014, the Church of North India’s treasurer, Prem Masih, was charged with fraud in connection with the lease of a plot in Mumbai’s high-end Colaba neighborhood that was entrusted to the historic Afghan Memorial Church. A former Bishop of Lucknow, the Rt. Rev. Morris Edgar Dan, was deposed in 2013 after being charged with forgery and fraud in a case concerning the sale of lands belonging to the Lucknow Diocesan Trust.

‘Shattering Blow’ to Westminster Abbey, Cathedrals

By Mark Michael

London’s Westminster Abbey, which relies on visitor admission fees for 90 percent of its income, is down more than £12 million in revenue this year, and will soon lay off nearly 20 percent of its staff. The Very Rev. Dr. David Hoyle, dean of the abbey, described the losses to the BBC as a “shattering blow,” and said that a further loss of £9-12 million (\$11.8-15.8 million) is expected in 2021. “We’re negotiating one of the greatest challenges to hit the abbey in recent times,” Hoyle said.

The Association of English Cathedrals separately reported that the Church of England’s 42 cathedrals are experiencing a £28.4 million revenue shortfall. They are projecting another £15.5 million loss next year. The Association said that job cuts would likely hit churches around England in October, when the British government’s pandemic-related job retention scheme ends.

Churches across the UK were granted permission to reopen for visitors and worship services on July 11, but numbers are sharply restricted because of social distancing requirements. Hoyle said that in a “normal” July day, 1,000 visitors per hour would be admitted to Westminster Abbey, the traditional site for the coronation and burial of British monarchs. Visitor numbers are not

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expected to return to pre-pandemic levels for another five years.

Westminster Abbey has been drawing from its financial reserves to pay for staff salaries and other operating expenses, but its financial reserves will be depleted by a third by September. Plans have already been announced to consolidate the congregations of the abbey and St. Margaret's, Westminster, which share the abbey grounds. Sunday services will no longer be held at St. Margaret's, traditionally the church of Britain's House of Commons, and its professional choir has been disbanded. "In the short term we will only be able to sustain our familiar commitments to Parliament," the abbey announced. "In the years to come a much more ambitious program of worship and events will be possible."

The announcement was lamented by Britain's classical music community, with *The Times'* chief music critic David Morrison tweeting, "Tragic and sadly symbolic news: the superb professional choir of St Margaret's Westminster – the parish church of Parliament itself – has been abolished. It

won't be the last. And so, blow by blow, England reverts to being the land without music."

The Church Commissioners, who manage the Church of England's financial holdings, announced plans to deploy funds to maintain essential cathedral staff on July 11. The commissioners had already directed £3 million for stone masons and apprenticeships and £1.1 million to support payroll staff. An additional £2.5 million for key staff support was announced, as well as £1 million for lay clerks, the adult singers from the cathedrals' famed men-and-boy choirs.

The funds should be enough to maintain full employment for lay clerks through Christmas. Several musical trusts have announced plans to raise an additional £1 million in matching funding through events including a celebrity virtual choral evensong, which would keep the lay clerks on payroll through Easter, 2021.

"We are very well aware that that is not enough," Commissioner Eva Poole told the church's General Synod. "The scale and the size of the problem is extraordinary, so we are spending quite a lot of time talking to government and other funding partners like the Cathedral Choirs Emergency Fund to figure out what else we can do to help."

Welby Under Review for Mishandling Abuse Allegation

By Mark Michael

The Church of England's National Safeguarding Team is reviewing a claim that Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby mishandled abuse accusations made against his former mentor, the late John Smyth. According to reports in *The Church Times*, an abuse survivor, "Graham," alleges that in 2013 Welby failed to report his complaint to church officials in South Africa, where Smyth was then living, allowing him continued contact with young men.

Smyth, who died in 2018, is accused of savagely beating and sexually harassing young men and boys at the Iwerne Camps, an evangelistic summer program for boys from elite private schools. Archbishop Welby served as a dormitory counselor at an Iwerne camp under Smyth's direction in the late 1970s. The Church of England is currently conducting a separate "lessons-learned" review into the handling of accusations against Smyth, which is expected to be completed next year.

The investigation into Welby's handling of the complaint comes a month after the Most Rev. Stephen Cottrell, the new Archbishop of York, acknowledged his failure to report a domestic abuse case correctly. Earlier in June, former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey had his license to officiate revoked by the Diocese of Oxford for yet-to-be disclosed reasons associated with his own handling of allegations against Smyth.

Graham first reported his abuse to a priest in the Diocese of Ely in 2012, but the priest, a fellow abuse survivor, delayed passing on the accusations to diocesan officials for a year. Welby was briefed about the allegations in 2013, and said in 2019, that he had written to the primate of South Africa about the situation.

Graham, however, says he has seen the letter Welby mentioned, and that it is addressed to a suffragan bishop in

(Continued on page 10)



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Cape Town diocese, not the primate, and that there is no evidence that it was ever sent or received. On Channel 4 news on July 27. Graham said, “I’m afraid from everything we can see, Justin Welby was told relatively early on in the story, seven years ago, and appears to myself to have done virtually nothing.”

The National Safeguarding Team, in a July 27 statement, said “It is in the public domain that when Lambeth was contacted in 2013 about an allegation against Smyth it liaised with the relevant diocese. This was to ensure that the survivor was being supported, police had been informed and that the bishop had contacted the Bishop of Cape Town, where Smyth was then living.”

They added that they were “reviewing information and will obviously respond on this to the person who brought the complaint and take any further action if needed.”

Can a Parish Thrive with a Virtual Rector?

By Mike Patterson

St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Madisonville, Kentucky, population 19,591, has been without a rector for four years. Not that it hasn’t tried to find one, but after advertising, web postings and word of mouth, it’s had only one application before the search committee. That applicant withdrew from consideration.

The bright red double doors, pitched roof, and dark brown cedar shake siding are as inviting as a welcome mat to the parish in western Kentucky. A video on its website features parishioners sharing how much they love St. Mary’s.

What gives?

Senior Warden Jim Love, whose family has attended the church since his father moved to the community in 1962, thinks he knows the problem.

“It’s the location,” he said. Madisonville is a manufacturing hub along Interstate 69 in Kentucky’s Western Coal Fields, 155 miles southwest of Louisville and 150 miles northwest of Nashville, Tennessee.

“They’d rather be in Louisville or a bigger city, thinking that they have more things to do,” he said in an interview with *TLC*. “Madisonville seems to be a place to get your feet wet and then move on to the big city.”

Church members aren’t novices at rector searches. They’ve gone through this process three or four times over 15 years. They’ve even talked to neighboring congregations about sharing a priest. No interest. “Here’s the reality kick,” Love said. “We may not find someone.”

Averaging a Sunday attendance of 40, St. Mary’s functions without its own rector through the work of a recently retired deacon, the vestry, church members and transitional and supply priests. Lately, COVID-19 has forced St. Mary’s and other churches to go virtual to protect the health and safety of congregations.

So, St. Mary’s thought, if we can run a remote service, why can’t we have a



St. Mary’s, Madisonville, Kentucky

remote priest? In other words, “Is it reasonable to come up with a virtualized rector?” Love wondered.

Love is in the software business and believes that with modern technology such as Zoom, FaceTime, and cell phones “we can put a person in contact with the rector, with the community on Sunday or a prayer group.”

“I think it’s way outside the thought pattern of what churches have been,” he acknowledged. “But from my technical world, yes, relationships can be built if the parties are available and willing to learn the technology which is available to us all.”

Forced to forsake face-to-face contact during the coronavirus pandemic, St. Mary’s has adapted to the new virtual world by assigning vestry members to connect with parishioners “on a periodic basis to maintain health checks, friendships, and other needs,” he said. “Could this method of service be extended to the rector’s method of communications during this pandemic? If assets are provided to members who do not have access to a Zoom type of communication, the rector could provide face-to-face interaction and build a relationship to communicate the message of caring.”

Other challenges facing St. Mary’s are that fewer students are graduating from seminaries and entering the ministry as well as churches in larger cities being able to offer clergy higher salaries than smaller, rural churches. “Here is the crazy idea: Do we as a community of Episcopal churches in western Kentucky need to think outside the box and return to a ‘digital rector on a horse,’ who with technology, visits a group of surrounding parishes to serve the members?” he wondered.

A remote relationship with a rector

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raises several interesting questions. For example, how would Holy Communion be offered? “Since the Episcopal Church desires to have Communion in person, the closest solution would be a version of an in-person Communion,” Love said. This might be accomplished by utilizing a supply priest, deacon or a layperson authorized to present the reserved sacraments.

Another question is how a “virtual” rector could offer the personal and spiritual support sought by the congregation. How this would play out would be “dependent upon the individual’s willingness to create this type of relationship,” Love explained. “Our option at this point is no spiritual relationship with a rector.”

“But just as we have created long-distance relationships with our family members with FaceTime or Zoom-type video conferencing and calls, we have adapted. Personally, I would rather have a virtual relationship with a family member versus none at all,” he said.

Love also acknowledged that “there are a number of administrative and leadership issues that would be unique to this relationship,” especially to avoid any potential concerns or conflicts between those physically present at the church and a rector who is physically absent. “If St. Mary’s is to survive the next years,” he said, “the vestry leadership will be the key to solving this problem.”

The Rt. Rev. Terry Allen White, Bishop of the Diocese of Kentucky, told *TLC* that St. Mary’s is a “great place to give this a try. This is a place with strong leadership and is willing to innovate. They are an incredibly loveable congregation for how they care for each other and the Madisonville community.” White said the lessons learned at St. Mary’s have the potential of benefiting the greater Episcopal Church by showing the pluses of a remote relationship with a rector as well as identifying things that can’t be done remotely.

Mike Patterson is a free-lance writer and photographer based in San Antonio, Texas. He attends St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in the rural community of Blanco, Texas.

Land Dispute Climaxes in Church Demolition

By Mark Michael

St. Peter’s Anglican Church in Ndeeba, Uganda, a Kampala suburb, was demolished overnight on August 10 as the climax of an ongoing dispute over the title to the land on which it was constructed. Three local police officers who had been dispatched to guard the building have been charged with failing to provide security. A further 11 people found at the scene were arrested for malicious damage to property and violation of COVID-19 related curfews. An excavator discovered at the church has been impounded by police.

“This barbaric act of destruction is evil,” said Archbishop Stephen Kazimba, the Ugandan primate, who gave an on-site press conference on August 11. “If an action can’t be done in broad daylight, then there is something deeply wrong; we have lost respect for God.”

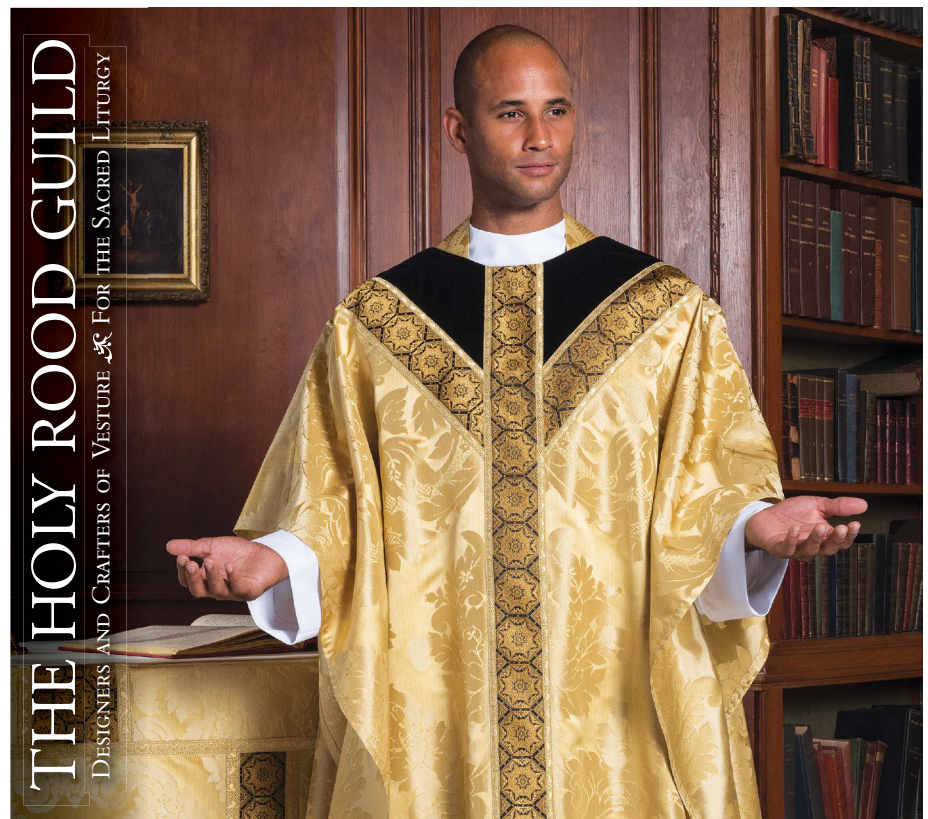
The church demolition has caused an uproar across Uganda. The country’s lands minister Betty Kamy

vowed that “all those involved would be dealt with decisively because their actions were terror intended and causing hate against government.” Kampala’s lord mayor, Erias Lukwago, called on police to punish the officers who had failed to protect the site, and said he planned to petition the nation’s parliament about the matter.

The Church of Uganda’s Diocese of Namirembe says the property was a gift of the late Evelyn Nachwa, a princess of the former Kingdom of Buganda. The large brick church on the site was constructed 49 years ago. However, according to the Kampala *Independent*, the administrators of Nachwa’s estate lodged a suit against the Diocese of Namirembe in 2008. They maintain that title had never been properly conveyed to the diocese, and that the land had been fraudulently registered by church officials.

Ugandan high court judge Eudes Keitirima ruled in favor of the admin-

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istrators of Nachwa's estate in August 2019. The diocese was required to return its duplicated title to the estate, and to vacate the church premises. Judge Keitirima harshly condemned the church's actions, stating that "fraud is such a grotesque monster that the courts should hound whenever it rears its head and wherever it seems to take cover behind any legislation. The transfer of the suit land (from Nachwa) is clearly tainted with fraud which court cannot condone."

St. Peter's School, associated with the church, was demolished in March, as was a garage on the site. Teachers, however, have continued to gather their classes under makeshift tents on the site, and the church had apparently never fully complied with the high court order to vacate.

More recently, the administrators for Nachwa's estate requested a court order to demolish the church. Judge Keitirima granted permission on July 10. The Capital City Authority of Kampala also approved the application for demolition, though it required that the space be fully vacated in advance and local residents notified. It is rumored a developer plans to construct a hotel on the land.

Police statements focused on the failure to notify police about the demolition and the way in which the action violated local restrictions on evictions during coronavirus lockdowns.

Diocese Grapples with Housing Woes in Southeast Florida

By Kirk Petersen

The Bishop of the Diocese of Southeast Florida has told the residents of a currently uninhabitable apartment building in West Palm Beach that work is actively continuing to enable the residents to return to their homes, which they had to evacuate after a June 14 electrical fire.

In a letter dated August 12, the Rt. Rev. Peter Eaton, "writing in my capacity as President of the Board" of the 182-unit St. Andrews Residence, said that although power has been restored, "the building was without power for two and a half weeks and air quality tests are currently being conducted" in the common areas and each apartment. Hotel accommodations and daily meals were being provided.

The letter came after residents complained to the *Palm Beach Post* that they were not being kept informed by the diocese. "Adding insult to injury has been the silence of the Episcopal diocese. Some residents said they reached out to Bishop Peter Eaton and received no response," the *Post* reported August 5.

TLC's inquiry to the bishop's office was referred to Aimee Adler Cooke of Conceptual Communications, a South Florida public relations firm. She pro-

vided the Bishop's August 12 letter, as well as written answers to written questions submitted by TLC.

Asked to clarify the precise ownership of the apartment building, she wrote:

St. Andrews Residence of the Diocese of Southeast Florida Inc. is a nonprofit corporation that was created by the diocese. The nonprofit provides low income housing to the elderly (ppl over age 62) under section 202 of the National Housing Act as regulated and amended by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The diocese appoints the nonprofit's board members. Bishop Eaton serves as the President of the Board.

St. Andrews Residence of the Diocese of Southeast Florida purchased the building in 2009, during the housing crisis and Great Recession, for \$3.3 million, according to Palm Beach County Appraiser office. The county records indicate the building has a 2019 appraised market value of \$16.5 million.

The finances of the diocese and the St. Andrews Residence nonprofit corporation are completely separate. In fact, the separation between the two entities is so complete that there is no mention of St. Andrews Residence anywhere on the extensive diocesan website. A search of the site for "Andrew" returns a handful of links, none of which refer to the apartments.

Residents have complained about mold problems for years, according to the *Post*, and that could explain the need for air quality testing. Two and a half weeks without power or occupancy in South Florida humidity would have provided ideal conditions for any existing mold to flourish.

"Please know that your safety remains our top priority," the bishop said in his letter. "Many professionals and contractors have been engaged and are acting to expedite and complete safely the work that needs to be done."

The Diocese of Southeast Florida is one of dozens of dioceses, churches and organizations that support The Living Church financially. See pages [29-57].



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PPP Funds Help Parishes Maintain Staff, Ministry

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has given out forgivable loans of more than \$1 million each to 56 Episcopal organizations, according to a Small Business Administration database. Some plan to pay the money back, while others say there's no need because it went to pay employees as Congress intended.

The largest Episcopal beneficiaries are organizations with substantial payrolls: schools, dioceses, social service providers and homes for the elderly, as well as parishes with affiliated entities. The \$525 billion program was designed to help employers keep workers on the payroll during coronavirus shutdowns by covering as much as 10 weeks worth of compensation.

The PPP, which closed August 8, allowed employers to receive funding equivalent to 2.5 months of average monthly payroll in 2019. At least 75 percent had to be in the category of employee compensation. That means

those receiving upwards of \$1 million from PPP must have paid out at least \$3.9 million in salaries, wages plus benefits in 2019, according to David Heywood, a retired tax attorney who advised Episcopal congregations on PPP borrowing last Spring.

Topping the Episcopal list were 24 entities that each received between \$2 million and \$5 million from the PPP. The tally includes 10 Episcopal schools, eight homes for the elderly and four social service providers. The Diocese of Los Angeles and St. Martin's Church in Houston, where the annual budget tops \$15 million, also banked more than \$2 million from the PPP, according to the SBA.

With 9,590 members at the end of 2019, St. Martin's is the largest congregation in the Episcopal Church. According to the Rev. Dr. Russell Levenson, rector, PPP funds went to three separate nonprofits: St. Martin's Church (\$1.8 million); St. Martin's Hope and Healing Center & Institute (\$464,000);

(Continued on next page)

Sam B. Hulsey, III Bishop of NW Texas, 1932-2020

By Kirk Petersen

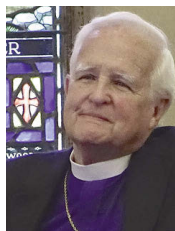
The Rt. Rev. Sam B. Hulsey, the former long-time Bishop of Northwest Texas, succumbed to cancer on August 6, according to the diocese. He was 88.

After leading the Lubbock-based diocese as its III bishop from 1980 to 1997, Bishop Hulsey moved back in retirement to Fort

Worth, the city of his birth, and since 2016 served there as assisting bishop.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, he is remembered as a steadying force in a turbulent time:

In the early 2000s he was a true pastor to those Fort Worth Episcopalians seeking to remain in The Episcopal Church when the diocesan leadership was threatening to leave. After the bishop and other diocesan leaders left the Episcopal Church in late 2008, Hulsey continued his spiritual guidance of those who were rebuilding the diocese.



“His ability to remember names, his personal handwritten notes, and his sincere interest in people's lives are nothing less than legendary,” said the Rt. Rev. Scott Mayer, who serves as both Bishop of Northwest Texas and Provisional Bishop of Fort Worth. “He was one of those rare people whose guidance and decisions changed the course of people's lives — certainly, mine included. And that puts me in a very large club.”

Before his election as bishop, he received his master's in divinity from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1958, and served parishes in three Texas towns and in Nashville, Tennessee.

Bishop Hulsey's long leadership in the Church was honored in 2015 with an endowed chair in the divinity school at Texas Christian University, the Right Reverend Sam B. Hulsey Chair in Episcopal Studies. The Diocese of Northwest Texas is headquartered in the Sam Byron Hulsey Episcopal Center.



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(Continued from previous page)

and St. Martin's Preschool (\$235,000). Those funds allowed for maintenance of staffing levels and continuation of social ministries without cutting back during the pandemic, Fr. Levenson said.

"If we had not received that support, we really would have been in a position where we would have had to look at everything and ask: how do we keep the lights on, how do we keep people employed, how do we continue outreach in the community?" Levenson said.

Though St. Martin's Church has an endowment of about \$10 million, restrictions on how the funds can be used mean that fiduciaries can't simply make withdrawals to pay salaries and benefits, Levenson said. He noted that the church allocates more than \$2 million per year for causes beyond its own expenses, including a diocesan assessment, and will be applying to have its PPP loan forgiven.

"I have no qualms about it because of what St. Martin's and her members give back to the community," Levenson said.

Some well-endowed PPP recipients have come under public pressure, including from the Trump administration, to repay the funds even if they qualify under the program rules to have their loans forgiven.

"It has come to our attention that some private schools with significant endowments have taken PPP loans. They should return them," said U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in a May 1 tweet.

Episcopal schools that received upwards of \$2 million would have needed to have 2019 payrolls topping \$7.8 million, according to the PPP formula. These included St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Md., where President Trump's son, Barron, is a student, as well as less prominent schools such as St. Mary's School in Memphis, Episcopal School of Jacksonville (Florida) and Christ Church School in Greenville, S.C.

Some Episcopal schools declined to apply and others opted to return their PPP funds after "thinking long and hard about the moral implications of



St. Martin's Church in Houston

Photo courtesy of St. Martin's

this process," said the Rev. Daniel Heischman, executive director of the National Association of Episcopal Schools, in an email. He did not say which ones are opting to repay.

He said those that kept the PPP funds also grappled with the moral implications before doing so. He explained that they were financially challenged last spring as they increased financial aid for hard-hit families, canceled revenue-generating summer programs and, in the case of boarding schools, refunded room and board fees.

"It is not the case that schools that have large endowments (a large percentage of those endowments being restricted) were able to access those endowments for purposes of keeping workers on the payroll," Fr. Heischman said. "Substantial endowments do not provide a simple solution to crises such as these."

Garnering some of the largest payouts were not just the organizations with the largest payrolls. Example: among the seven dioceses that received \$1 million to \$2 million were East Carolina, Maine, and Western Massachusetts. Each received more from the PPP than neighboring and nearby dioceses with significantly larger payrolls.

Meanwhile select congregations received six- and seven-figure sums. For instance, in Mississippi, just one Episcopal parish received more than \$150,000: St. James in Jackson. In Penn-

sylvania, only one got more than \$350,000: St. David's in Wayne. And in California, one parish took in more than \$1 million: St. Andrew's in Saratoga.

Most of the nine parishes that received upwards of \$1 million from PPP also operate a school, a home for elders or both. These include Christ Church in Covington, La.; St. Stephen's Church in Miami; and Church of the Good Shepherd in Dallas.

In one case, the seven-figure scale is largely explained by a cemetery. The amount received by St. Michael's Church on 99th Street in New York City would have been enough to pay an entire year's worth of church salaries and wages, according to the 2020 budget.

However, the church also owns and operates St. Michael's Cemetery on 88 acres in Queens. The PPP loan went to pay both church and cemetery employees, according to spokesperson Patricia Allen. The cemetery lists 16 employees on its website and generates \$420,000 for the church this year, representing 23 percent of the church's projected revenue.

"Our successful application to the Paycheck Protection Program for a loan of approximately \$1 million enabled us to retain all of our employees at the same level of compensation and benefits," Allen said in a statement from St. Michael's Church. "It is a great blessing that we did not have to resort to furloughs or salary reductions." □



De terra veritas

Introducing *The Living Word*

Like so many of my colleagues, I never planned to be a televangelist. But with the assistance of our tech-savvy assistant rector, we quickly collected spotlights, tripods, mixers, and microphones, refitting the side chapel into a passable studio. Except for those times YouTube refused to receive the stream or we've forgotten to change the batteries, the show has gone on: a daily offering of the Lamb of God, who grants us peace in troubled times, and morning and evening praise to the Strength of our salvation.

And we have proclaimed the Word: assuring the distressed of God's presence and power to heal, pointing to Christ's victory over death and the hope of glory to come, urging mutual patience and loving service, and calling for self-examination and new resolve in the face of racial injustice and widespread anger. There has been no shortage of things to say.

People have given their attention, as well. Even as we all grow weary of screens, the faithful still long to hear a message refreshingly different from the exchange of anxiety and blame that dominates our social media feeds. When we have called to check in, many have reflected on what was helpful or posed thoughtful questions. Sometimes they suggest topics for us to address in the future.

It reminds me of my time as a boarding school chaplain, when the daily course of a shared life often made it easier to see the connections between the Gospel and common pastoral need. Back then, we were elated by a big lacrosse win, anxious about looming exams, and heartbroken about foolish choices that got a student expelled. Today, we are mostly apart from each other, locked inside protective pods, but our fears, frustrations, and grief remain common.

We are adrift *together*, conscious of the bonds the Holy Spirit sustains even by the thin means of digital connection. The preacher's joyful burden is to point to him who holds us still. As Pope Francis said in his rain soaked *Urbi et Orbi* address last March: "We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love."

That particular sermon revealed the surprising power of preaching in these times. Most preachers will find it hard to match the dramatic screenplay of a darkened and empty Saint Peter's Square, the spotlight shining on a sixteenth-century wonder-working crucifix. But the words we are given by God speak more powerfully than any others to the needs around us.

There has been some chatter in the clerical world about how to do this well. Many say we will live stream our sermons until the Second Coming, but few priests have any formal training in broadcast communication. One wise old bishop simply said: "You'd better be on top of your game."

The consensus seems to be that sermons should be shorter and more focused and that we should speak a little faster, making

meaningful eye contact with the camera instead of scanning across the pews. We should explain local references, since listeners could be connecting from anywhere. Technicalities of videography permitting, film clips and images may be used creatively.

Above all, the message needs to count. For me, the approach to this has come through deeper textual study and from reading sermons by gifted preachers of the past. I feel closer to St. Augustine urging trust in God as the Vandals arrived, John Donne proclaiming the resurrection as another plague infested London, and Martin Luther King pleading for freedom and a reckoning with social sin.

Digging into classic texts from the past, sitting at the feet of contemporary preachers in different contexts from our own, and thinking more deeply about the theological issues raised by the Sunday lectionary readings will help all preachers to draw closer to the one who connects us. Christ himself, the "living word" (Heb. 4:12), stands at the heart of all faithful preaching. When we proclaim him in continuity with the communion of saints, we share a message that will touch hearts in every context.

With help from longtime colleague Dr. Cal Lane, and seminarian Micah Hogan, my "lockdown project" has been developing a new sermon resource from TLC, *The Living Word: A Preaching Resource for Liturgical Christians*, which we will launch on Monday, September 7. *TLW* (by abbreviation) is a digital product, delivered as a weekly email containing resources to help engage the Revised Common Lectionary readings for the following Sunday.

These include sermons from gifted preachers right round the world, excerpts from classic homiletical, theological, and devotional texts, and articles on relevant themes from the archives of *The Living Church, Covenant*, and the Living Church Institute. Our first issue, for example, explores the lectionary readings with sermons from a leading Episcopal preacher and St. John Chrysostom, and articles focused on debt and forgiveness in the New Testament, the prayer book confession, and the role of listening in racial reconciliation.

We are starting small, with a free version containing six links. A more robust version with at least 18 links will be available for \$5 per month from the first Sunday of Advent. Those who serve in mission contexts can request free access to the expanded version. We are also planning a free drop-in Zoom gathering to study the lectionary texts every two weeks. Details about how you can join the conversation will be available in the first issue.

The Living Church is committed to supporting leaders across the whole Church. These are days when the world needs to hear the Gospel we have been called to share. We hope to equip you with the best we have to offer. Turning together to God's truth will draw us closer and heal our divisions.

—Mark Michael

Youth Ministries Adapt, Focus on Spiritual Renewal

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Youth ministry at Trinity Church in Iowa City has long depended on components that just aren't feasible in a global pandemic. Pilgrimage, social events, and service projects: all canceled. Even the thought of moving the regular curriculum to Zoom is a non-starter for many families exhausted by online fatigue.

But the youth group is far from finished at Trinity. Instead, it's making a back-to-basics shift designed to be refreshing for tired souls in extraordinary times.

Building relationships, including with God through prayer, will be the focus. As long as the congregation is offering in-person worship, the youth group will gather for youth-led, socially distanced compline outside, according to Parish Life Coordinator Nora Boerner.

"My main focus with the youth group specifically is community building and having us pray together," said Boerner, who was ill with COVID-19. "Even if they just spend time with one another, or they spend time online with one another and they pray a little bit, I'm going to consider that a win. So we might be off a little bit on our hard curriculum this year."

As ministries everywhere settle in for a long haul amidst pandemic restrictions, youth ministries have been particularly impacted. Congregations have been quicker to reopen for worship than to bring youth back. A LifeWay Research survey of 443 Protestant pastors over July 20-22 found more than 70 percent of churches had resumed in-person worship, but 51 percent still didn't know when in-person ministry with students would begin again.

"Maintaining social distance and necessary sanitation is very difficult with younger ages," said LifeWay Research Executive Director Scott Mc-

Connell in a statement. "To complicate things further, some of the volunteers who normally work with kids and students are in higher risk groups who are not ready to return any time soon."

With so much disruption afoot, congregations have been taking stock of what's needed from youth ministry now and how best to deliver it. They're repositioning it to be less achievement-oriented and more spiritually renewing for youth, parents, and local ministry leaders alike.

Though situations vary with locale, common principles are shaping the fall 2020 youth ministry landscape. Amongst priorities that youth ministry experts recommend: be vigilant about safety. Mix up programming, allowing for some silly fun as well as sincere disclosures from youth craving to be heard. Join forces online with youth groups from other congregations. Perhaps don't assemble more than 10 in person, but safe mission projects in small numbers can still be valuable.

"The key is smaller groups and building relationships during this time," said Baylor University Assistant Professor of Practical Theology Angela Gorrell, co-author of a 30-page *Guide to Taking Youth Ministry Online*. She suggests assigning each leader to just a few youth, no more than 12 per leader. Invest in each participant by texting, asking how you can be praying for them and scheduling Zoom small groups on a regular basis. Ask how they're feeling and what they're thinking about daily. Take notes on what you hear.

"If you really dedicate time to talking to youth about what's going on in their lives, then ministry issues will be unearthed," Gorrell said.

She recommends letting youth responses inform what happens next. For example, if leaders hear themes of loneliness or fears of missing out on life during the pandemic, then a next step could be to design a ritual outlet for their lament. It could involve invit-

ing each youth to make art conveying lament, or encouraging each one to walk a labyrinth. The ministry can get creative even if participants are not meeting in person.

For youth ministry to work out in pandemic times, all involved — including parents — need assurance that safety precautions are in place. Besides heeding public health protocols, youth leaders also need to be vigilant to keep online settings safe from abuse.

Experts caution that pandemic conditions are ripe for abuse to occur, and youth ministry leaders need to be proactive. Dove's Nest is an Omaha-based nonprofit that provides resources to prevent abuse and ensure children's safety in churches and at home. Executive Director Anna Groff paints a scenario for how online a youth group session online can go awry.

"A handful of kids show up for a youth group with one adult," Groff said. "One child shares a vulnerability in their life or appears to be unsupervised at home and online. Then that youth leader would ask for a private Zoom session, a call or some way to be alone with them in a virtual setting and cross a boundary — or worse."

Groff recommends a few safeguards to prevent abuse:

- Have two unrelated adults present
- Record Zoom sessions
- Keep parents informed about what's being planned
- Discourage youth from being on camera in their bedrooms
- If you observe signs of abuse in the home, be prepared to take appropriate steps

Once safety is addressed, youth groups can get on to the serious business of fun. That's an important component this fall, even for groups that still strive to impart Christian lessons and allow room for serious conversations.

At Houston's Palmer Memorial Church, gathering youth on Sunday mornings is no longer part of the pro-

gram, as it used to be pre-pandemic. Families are already stretched thin at that time of week as they try to hop online for worship and coffee hour, according to Director of Christian Formation Roger Hutchinson. He said the church is being cautious not to ask too much of families or to burn anyone out.

Youth group learning time at Palmer now happens on Tuesday nights in a Zoom Bible study format, which Hutchinson says has been a refreshing change of pace for youth participants. They meet again on Thursdays, but just for games. Classics like charades and bingo are adapted for Zoom, and youth want to show up for something that's just fun.

"It's taking some old school kinds

of things and giving them new life on Zoom," said Hutchinson, author of *The Very Best Day: The Way of Love for Children*, which came out in January. The game structure usually "doesn't require them to have anything. Sometimes the games don't even work out: it's just a lot of laughter, and they're playing. It's being together in a relaxed kind of way, and games are a part of that."

A similar concept gives rise to a somewhat different format at Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. Youth lessons that used to happen on Sunday mornings now occur Monday nights on Zoom. But the format is condensed: 10 minutes for check-in, five for a game and 15 for instruction.

This approach ensures youth still get biblical teaching that's tailored to their lives but doesn't burn them out after a day of online school, said Thomas Brackeen, Metropolitan's minister to youth and families. Gathering on Zoom also allows them to see each other more often than they would in person because Metropolitan is what Brackeen calls a "commuter church" with member families scattered across the region.

"What can we do on Mondays that looks different from Sunday so that they will be engaged and want to come back to be part of that space?" Brackeen asked. "Whether it's drawing or playing a game, they can feel a community. Being amongst fellow Christians in their peer group is important, but we're also giving them a little Scripture and life application before they leave."

Congregations are also getting new support this fall for youth programming from their dioceses. For example, Iowa youth groups will be coming together once a month for youth-led, online compline, organized by the Diocese of Iowa.

The Diocese of Atlanta hosts Sunday night online youth group with compline for 30 to 40 middle schoolers and high schoolers for congregations across the region. Musicians play guitar and sing. Youth hear a five-minute talk related to current events and get a chance to share what's happening in their lives.

And rather than require youth leaders to forge new programming in a time when many are worn down by the pandemic, they're joining forces with sister churches. For example, youth groups from St. Catherine's Church in Marietta and St. David's Church in Roswell have been doing the Diocese of Atlanta's *Dismantling Racism Youth Curriculum* together online.

When the pandemic began, "we hit the ground running hard and sprinting when we needed to be pacing ourselves," said Easton Davis, director of youth and young adult ministries for the Diocese of Atlanta. "We're seeing a lot of youth ministers that are tired right now and congregations that are tired right now. They're rethinking their strategies for how we move forward in this work." □



Geoff Strehlow illustration



On Watching Your

By Sarah Cornwell

This essay was first published on August 2 on Covenant, the weblog of the Living Church

In the United States, we are living in a time of anger and fear. You may have felt some measure of this yourself. In general, these are not considered to be positive emotions, but in certain circumstances, they may be justifiable — a righteous anger against cruelty and injustice — or helpful — a fear that triggers an appropriate fight-or-flight reflex which could save a life. In this piece, I hope to walk a fine line by advocating for more peaceful language in the way we discuss matters of great importance and consequence online while retaining a sense of how deeply important the outcomes of these discussions are — be it Black Lives Matter, immigration, healthcare, climate change — to so many of our brothers and sisters, and, by extension, to all of us who have a share in this collective body.

I will not seek to make any value

judgments on any side of our current discourses. (Not that value judgments are not important; this is simply not the goal of this essay.)

Particularly in the devastating wake of COVID-19, much of our communication is written and online via emails, social media posts, and comments on various media websites. Without the benefit of body language, facial expression, and tone of voice providing context, written communication is easily misunderstood. Indeed, it is not always clear when a misunderstanding even occurs because we often overestimate how clear we are when we communicate.

A fun illustration of this is a well-known Stanford University study in which one person taps the rhythm of a song to a listener who is supposed to guess which song it is. Tappers estimated that listeners would guess with 50% accuracy. In fact, listeners guessed correctly only 2.5% of time. Where a tapper could “hear” in his head lyrics, orchestration, and the logic behind

whether the taps indicated, say, drums or a sustained note, the listener would be privy to none of that.

In a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, several researchers built on this concept and demonstrated that over email, both writers and readers were overconfident in their ability to communicate and identify sarcasm, each declaring they were as confident as they would be if they could communicate the sarcasm verbally. Even when the two people communicating knew each other, they were both overconfident in their ability to convey accurately and identify a sarcastic tone in written form.

Misunderstanding, however, is only a small part of the trouble that sarcasm can cause for effective online communication. It also can turn off third party readers, or “lurkers,” to the information being presented or disparaged by the

(those that don’t), causing greater division as well as potentially creating more good will toward the supposedly victimized out-group — the opposite effect that a debater generally wishes to have.

In addition to the risk of sarcasm leading to misunderstanding and to the perception of an oppressor/victim dynamic, sarcasm appears to add to the uncivil nature of our current discourse — what some have labeled “the nasty effect.” This can include anything from general haughtiness, to name-calling, to bold, exaggerated claims meant to inflame the opposition. Inflaming the opposition makes it less likely one will win others over to one’s own viewpoint (see here, for example), and more neutral lurkers who are not well-informed on the subject are more likely to view the uncivil writers as less credible, and they also are more likely to be turned off to the issue by the uncivil discourse (see here and here).

As such, written sarcasm can have a counter-productive, or harmful, effect on how well the writer and his argument are received by third parties: it further solidifies divisions and, taken as part of the broad characterization of uncivil discourse, it discourages more neutral readers from taking part in the conversation on the subject.

What, then, is the effect that sarcasm can have on the user? The word itself should make us cautious. Sarcasm comes from the Greek *sarkazein*, which means “to tear flesh, bite the lips in rage, to sneer.” Is this not strikingly similar to the biblical description of gnashing of teeth, something the enraged Sanhedrin do before they stone St. Stephen, or what the poor wretches do who have been cast into the outer darkness? Sarcasm can be written with good intentions, absent of rage and sneering, even if those intentions are ultimately misunderstood. In such cases, I would venture that while the written piece can still be harmed by the miscommunication sarcasm often stokes, the writer is safe. However, if sarcasm is used in anger — even righteous anger for a just cause — the writer risks not only harming his own argument, but harming himself as well.

Hell — the place of teeth-gnashing, of *sarkazein* — is not a place anyone would wish to be regardless if one sees it as real or metaphorical. St. Paul, in the epistle to the Galatians, in which he seeks to settle fractious debates between Jews and Gentiles, writes of the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (5:22-23). He says we are not to provoke one another. And if someone transgresses, we “should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.” There is no place for a tearing, biting, sneering, raging sarcasm, or any uncivil tone in this way of relating to our brothers and sisters, even those whose views are morally repugnant.

For some practical steps of how to start putting some of St. Paul’s guidance into practice, it could be worth revisiting Alan Jacob’s *How To Think*, which he wrote as response to the growing incivility he saw in public discourse back in 2016. It is a short, useful book which identifies habits and behavior to adopt in order to foster more charitable and effective communication. It would be particularly helpful for online communication, where many of us — myself included — can experience the “disinhibition effect,” which includes feelings of dissociative anonymity and dissociative imagination encouraged by a lack of authority. The changes in our online behavior could be so extreme that it is almost like we become different people, a Dr. Jekyll in the flesh and a Mr. Hyde online.

There is much to discuss in our world, and decisions that derive from many of these discussions are crucial to the wellbeing of God’s people. Participate, deliberate, strive, and do not lose heart, but do it all in a spirit of gentleness. As Christians we can help to set the tone, not one of a biting rage, but of kindness and self-control. Our words will be better received and therefore better considered, and our own wellbeing will not suffer, making us better able to continue the long journey towards what is good and just.

Sarah Cornwell is a laywoman in the Hudson Valley who has had a wonderfully odd assortment of jobs and education.

Language

sarcastic writer.

In the journal *Discourse Processes*, a study was published in which third-party participants read either a sarcastic or a non-sarcastic aggressive argument between individuals of the same gender. Participants perceived the sarcastic argument as more aggressive and “victimizing” of the other side. A secondary analysis showed that if participants took the perspective of the so-called aggressor, the sarcastic comment was more likely to be viewed as humorous and less aggressive than those who took the perspective of the so-called “victim.”

In other words, from the perspective of silent readers following an aggressive online debate, writers using sarcasm frequently appeared to be victimizing the other side even if the sarcasm was meant to be humorous; the joke was lost on anyone that sympathized with the so called “victim” position. Sarcasm becomes a wedge that further separates the in-group (those who find the comment humorous) from the out-group

Blood at Boil

Spike Lee's film *Da 5 Bloods*



Scene from *Da 5 Bloods*.

Reviewed by Tim Bascom

When our Iowa town held its fireworks display for Independence Day this year, I did more than the recommended social distancing. I stayed home and watched Spike Lee's new film about the Vietnam War, *Da 5 Bloods*, which offers a sobering perspective on American national pride. In Lee's story about Black veterans returning to Vietnam to find gold buried during a mission gone awry, a North Vietnamese propagandist suggests that 32% of the U.S. soldiers in the Vietnam War were African American while the population back home was only 11%. My research puts

the percentage of Black draftees lower, but I found multiple sources asserting that 25% of U.S. casualties were black, which is even more disturbing.

Why did this happen? Apparently, draft boards did not let Blacks (many of whom could not afford to go to college) evade the draft as much as whites. Also, the officers, almost all white, tended to assign Blacks to front-line combat more than whites.

Da 5 Bloods, which repeatedly confronts viewers with such harsh realities, can seem heavy-handed. It presents an unusual pastiche of fiction and fact, including scenes of recorded war atrocities alongside invented flashbacks on 16 mm film, rendered grainy, like ar-

chival war footage. It also integrates unsettling propaganda broadcasts from Hanoi Hannah, who repeatedly tried to undermine the allegiance of Black soldiers to America. But the mix of filming techniques and the occasional preachiness is worth the watch, particularly at this juncture in our national history, when so many have taken to the streets in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Here's the story in a nutshell. Four former foot soldiers come together in Ho Chi Minh City to travel with a Vietnamese guide back to where they were ambushed during a helicopter rescue mission. Their presumed goal is to recover the buried body of their

unit leader, Stormin' Norman, played by Chadwick Boseman of *Black Panther* fame. However, we discover that they are also planning to recover gold that was intended as payment to South Vietnamese troops for their role in battling alongside U.S. troops, a big metal case of gold that the soldiers hid before being airlifted out of battle.

This central plot becomes more complicated when one of the returning veterans, Paul (played by a brooding Delroy Lindo), finds that his grown son has followed the older men so that he can cash in on the gold with them. As an unexpected tag-along, David (Jonathan Majors) has a major impact on Paul, who is struggling visibly with post-traumatic stress disorder and has been estranged from his son. Then there is the former mistress of one of the other men, Tiên Luu (Lê Y Lan), who puts the group in contact with a shady, French middle man named Desroche (Jean Reno), who may or may not be trusted to buy the gold and pay the group in dollars. Throw in an idealistic bomb squad trying to defuse abandoned mines, then throw in a gang of very resentful South Vietnamese and you have, in essence, escalating violence reminiscent of the war itself.

These four Black soldiers, who still idolize their dead leader Norman, are forced by the increasingly stressful circumstances to revisit the racist realities that put them in harm's way, fighting for a country that seemed to be fighting against their own family members during the civil rights movement. One of the biggest gut-punches is when, during a flashback, they learn of the



assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. This flashback, like all the other grainy, washed-out flashbacks, is acted by the older men playing younger selves, which presses home the fact that the war is never over for them, having been seared into their psyches. If not for the fierce leadership of Norman, they would go on a rampage against white soldiers. Instead, they lock fists as bonded “bloods,” then fire their automatic weapons into the air. For a moment, at least, we are made to feel just a bit of their visceral pain and rage.

What intrigues me particularly about that central scene is the way that Stormin' Norman, who is a kind of martyred Christ figure, pulls the unit back from the brink of revenge. This theme of tough grace, once introduced, keeps coming up as the film moves to-

wards its ultimate crisis — until we are watching Paul, captured by the resentful South Vietnamese gang, digging what might be his own grave yet singing and reaching out toward his captors in a kind of prayerful, redemptive acceptance: “Jesus is my friend. He made this world for us to live in. And he gave us everything. All he asks of us is we give each other love.”

Under the fraught circumstances, the gold money that Norman had insisted was reparation for the suffering of all Black Americans becomes a source of tremendous conflict for these haunted veterans, especially Paul, who is full of grievance and determined to get what ought to be his.

While he and the other veterans battle with the question of what to do with the gold money, what actually happens may suggest why Spike Lee took this script, which was originally not focused on Black soldiers, and converted it into such a provocative exploration of the African American experience in Vietnam. Why do some Black Americans still feel justified asking for reparation a century and a half after the abolishment of slavery and 50 years after the signing of the civil rights act by Lyndon Johnson? *Da 5 Bloods* presses home the inescapable fact that the United States has, over and over, demanded the service of its Black citizens — even to the point of death — while keeping nearly all the benefits for itself.

Tim Bascom is author of two prize-winning memoirs about life in Ethiopia as a son of missionaries, plus the recent collection of stories, Climbing Lessons.

One of the biggest gut-punches is when, during a flashback, they learn of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Religious Liberty Dominates Supreme Court's Term

By James F. Sweeney

The October 2019 term of the Supreme Court of the United States produced an unprecedented number of potentially landmark religious liberty decisions that were necessitated by the rapid rise of rigid secularism as a major force in American culture and politics.

Less than two generations ago, the accommodation of religious belief and practice was simply a given in law and politics. But times have changed. Because religious belief and practice have been marginalized culturally and politically, the state's willingness to accommodate the faith community has all but disappeared. The Supreme Court heard an unusually large number of religious freedom cases during the term just ended, all but one of which have serious implications regarding the future ability to exercise those rights.

A majority of the justices signaled a cautious willingness — at least for the moment — to continue to protect the First Amendment religious liberty rights of religious believers from increasingly aggressive infringement, by government agencies and private organizations advancing a secularist political and legal agenda. While the majority's apparent affirmation of the continuing vitality of religious freedom rights is a welcome outcome, religious believers should remain deeply

concerned that these decisions were required at all to safeguard rights that have been fundamental to American liberty for two centuries. Moreover, the relatively thin margin supporting religious liberty rights also remains a serious, ongoing concern.

Two of the Court's most controversial decisions this term — *Bostock v. Clayton County* and *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru* — are particularly significant from a religious freedom standpoint. These cases collectively raise more questions than they answer. In *Bostock*, Justice Neil Gorsuch, writing for a 6-3 majority of the Court, concluded that the prohibition against sex discrimination in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also applies to discrimination on the basis of homosexuality and transgender status.

Previously, “sex discrimination” under Title VII had always been understood to mean biological sex, not sexual orientation or gender identity. Indeed, in their strongly worded dissenting opinions, Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Brett Kavanaugh criticized the majority for legislatively revising the law, as opposed to interpreting it as it was written and enacted by Congress.

Bostock caused considerable concern among religious organizations, particularly educators, who feared that teachers and staff at religious schools openly living in a manner inconsistent with

religious teachings and beliefs were now subject to the protections of Title VII. This was a deeply problematic development for religious institutions that adhere to traditional Christian and biblical principles regarding sexual morality.

But just three weeks after handing down *Bostock*, the Court reaffirmed in *Guadalupe* that the First Amendment-based “ministerial exception” bars most employment-related lawsuits against religious organizations by employees whose positions involve some form of religious ministry. Alito, writing for a 7-2 majority of the Court, concluded that the First Amendment prohibited employment discrimination claims brought by two elementary school teachers against the parochial schools that employed them. The Court concluded that both teachers were “ministers,” exempt from federal employment discrimination claims, because training young people to live their faith is the core mission of a religious school. Such being the case, the First Amendment protected the schools' decision to terminate each of the involved teachers.

Was *Guadalupe* intended to protect religious schools and churches from discrimination lawsuits based upon *Bostock*? Are these two clearly significant decisions intended to be companion cases? We do not know. What goes



on in the justice's private conference room is perhaps the best kept secret in the federal government. But, reading the cases together does seem to suggest that *Guadalupe* could well be the shield given by the Court to religious organizations to protect their right to live out their religious beliefs in the wake of *Bostock*. The next few years will give us the answer to these very important questions.

In another set of seemingly-related decisions announced at the end of the term, the Court appears to have cleared the way for religious schools and organizations to participate in government programs and receive public benefits on an even footing with public schools and secular organizations.

In *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*, the Court struck a potentially fatal blow to what are known as Blaine Amendments, which prohibit state governments from allocating any public funds to religious organizations. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the 7-2 majority, concluded that denying generally available state benefits to an organization because of its religious character constitutes discrimination against religious belief, violating the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Religious organizations now appear to stand on equal footing with secular organizations regarding generally available public benefits.

In a related 5-4 decision four days

later, the Court struck down a provision prohibiting religious schools from receiving funds through Montana's tax credit scholarship program, which provides tuition assistance to families sending their children to private schools. Writing again for the majority in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, Roberts noted that the Free Exercise Clause protects religious observers against unequal treatment and prohibits laws imposing special disabilities on the basis of religious status. Read along with *Trinity Lutheran*, *Espinoza* appears to clear the constitutional way for the use of tuition vouchers and tuition tax credits for religious schools in states that have such programs.

Finally, in a decision of limited scope but significant political importance to American Christians, the Court upheld the Trump Administration's 2017 decision that religious institutions cannot be required to cover contraceptive services if they provide healthcare insurance plans to employees. For the past ten years, the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Roman Catholic religious institute for women, have been opposing the contraceptive mandate in the Affordable Care Act. The Sisters argued that because contraception is a practice contrary to well-known Catholic moral and religious teaching, the mandate violates their free exercise rights. Without expressly addressing the Sisters' religious freedom rights, a 7-2 majority

in *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Pennsylvania* upheld the Administration's decision on procedural grounds, relieving the Sisters of the legal obligation to provide contraceptive benefits to their employees. The case ends — at least for the remainder of the Trump Administration — the Sisters' long battle to conduct their ministry in conformance with Catholic moral beliefs.

The October 2019 term will likely be remembered as one dominated by questions of religious liberty. The Court grappled with balancing the cultural and political demands of secularist activists against the religious liberty rights of churches and religious organizations. At issue was the right of individual believers and religious organizations to live their public and personal lives, and carry out their religious missions, with fidelity and authenticity. Recent experience suggests this conflict is far from over.

The Rev. James Sweeney practiced religious-liberty law for more than 30 years, representing some of the largest religious organizations in the United States. As a priest of the Anglican Diocese of San Joaquin, he currently serves as assistant head of school and dean of students at Pacific Bay Christian School in the San Francisco Bay Area, and is an alumnus and a member of the Board of Visitors of Nashotah House Theological Seminary.



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Breaking Open the Bible's Strange World

Review by James Stambaugh

If you can get past the title, you will find much to appreciate in Francis Wade's slender new volume of Bible studies.

Biblical fracking, for Wade, means "reaching into the cracks and crevasses of the biblical narrative to extract the richness that lurks there." However, an author should not get to use a word that is so fraught without earning it. Wade does not adequately address the environmental and human impacts of hydraulic fracturing, much less its complex political and economic dimensions. The extended metaphor doesn't do enough work to be justified.

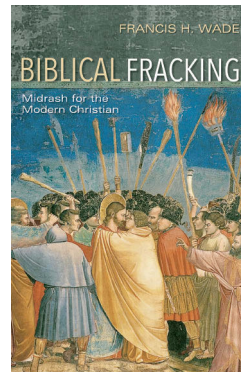
Despite the subtitle's claim, Wade is careful to distinguish between his project and the rabbinic practice of midrash. Wade is inspired by the latter and shares some of the means and ends but this is not a wholesale Christian appropriation of the Jewish practice. The book owes much to Ignatian spiritual practice as well. Like Ignatian contemplation, Wade's project is not meant to engender idle speculation on the Bible, but "faith-based reflection on the human experience" that stays within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy.

After the introduction, Wade offers twenty short chapters. Each features one or more biblical characters. Our author excels at concision and clarity. Most chapters are only a couple of pages long, making them well-suited for use in a parish Bible study. As he ranges across the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, Wade scours the margins of the biblical narratives; highlighting people who are often overlooked by preachers and biblical scholars; looking for openings to break open their narratives and imaginatively explore possibilities. He leads us to consider the likes of Onesiphorus, Zebedee, Purah, and Jahzeil as well as the more well-known Herod, John the Baptist, Abraham, and Sarah.

Sometimes this fracking falls flat. On occasion, Wade lets his imagination run off with certain biblical characters only to find little of value to say about them. Those rare chapters tend to end awkwardly. Most times Wade's delving leads to a payload of insight and wisdom. Like water from a rock, we are reminded again and again that Scripture can yield nourishment and refreshment from the most unexpected places.

His meditations on the Archangel Gabriel; John the Baptist; Justus, who was passed over to become one of the twelve apostles; and Abraham's servant Eliezer are all fascinating and insightful. Several of the more precarious chapters attempt to rehabilitate, or at least reconsider, the reputations of some of the Bible's villains. When it works, it works. Wade's subtle and compassionate treatment of Judas Iscariot is compelling; the attempt to frack Caiaphas the high priest, not so much.

Each chapter is full of well-placed witticisms, folksy proverbs, and original adages. Wade is a master aphorist. He is also an astute observer of human behavior and motivations and brings to this project decades of ministry and teaching experience. The book really shines when he is able to utilize his



Biblical Fracking

Midrash for the Modern Christian

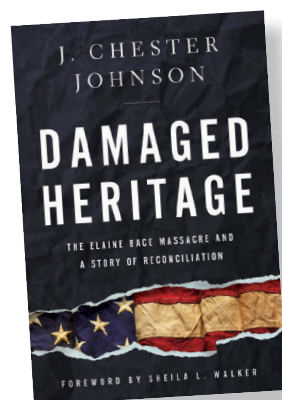
By Francis H. Wade

Wipf & Stock, pp. 104. \$16.

wisdom and razor-sharp writing successfully to connect the dots between the stories of Scripture and our own stories. We all need more opportunities to understand how Scripture opens us up to receive God's grace and informs us of our true identity.

Suitable for both laity and clergy, the book is a training exercise in careful attention to Scripture. For preachers it offers good examples of ways to invite God's faithful people to inhabit the story of our salvation through a sanctified imagination. *Biblical Fracking* helps open a door into what Karl Barth called, "the strange world of the Bible." At its best, this book shows us how we might use our imaginations to walk through that door and abide more completely in Scripture — our rightful home and stronghold.

The Rev. James Stambaugh is rector of Church of the Holy Apostles in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania.



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Interpreting the Congregation's Life

Review by Craig Loya

For several years when I was a parish priest, I spoke every month with a clergy coach, a retired priest who had spent his entire ministry leading congregations. What I initially expected to get out of our relationship was some top-drawer management tips, easy hacks for how to manage conflict, or some fool proof ways to grow a church.

He gave me some wonderful practical advice to be sure, but in the end, what I came to cherish about our conversations was his deep and contagious passion for parish ministry. I would mention a topic, say the annual stewardship campaign, and he would enthusiastically recount story after story of what he had tried, what he had learned, how he had made mistakes, and what was so joyful about it all.

When I asked for help strategizing about an important vestry meeting, he would tell me to make sure I went into the church and spent some serious time in prayer first.

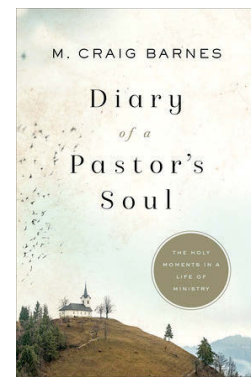
When I was feeling discouraged or

drained by some of the tedious parts of congregational life, he was quick to point out the extraordinary ways we meet God's grace in the very midst of tending to the minutiae.

He was a constant reminder that serving a congregation as pastor is an immense gift and privilege, and that if we have eyes to see, we will see God's power and love shining through every small task.

Every chapter of M. Craig Barnes' book *Diary of a Pastor's Soul* is like a conversation with my coach. The book might best be described as autobiographical fiction. The author filters his own experiences through the fictional voice of a Presbyterian pastor in his final year of ministry. He wrestles with anxieties about retirement, the irconcilable tension between pastoral and family life, the heartbreaking decisions often required of Christian leaders, and the deep joy of being present to the holy moments in the lives of church members, generation after generation.

When recounting one of the intense pastoral situations he was thrust into as



Diary of a Pastor's Soul

The Holy Moments in a Life of Ministry

By M. Craig Barnes

Brazos Press, pp. 240, \$18.99

a young pastor, the narrator says "My seminary taught me a great deal about how to exegete the Bible and the Christian tradition, but nothing about how to exegete the congregation I had just vowed to serve with 'energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.'" In many ways, this book is a course in how to interpret a congregation's life through theological exegesis, so the shepherd can better serve the flock as pastor, priest, and teacher.

In our church, there is often an unfortunate and imagined disconnect between the "theological" and the "pastoral," as if one belongs entirely to intra-academic conversations, and the other to the "real world" of lived ministry. Barnes, who is a serious theologian, beautifully models how the work of the pastor can be both empowered and sustained by serious theological reflection on the life of a congregation. The voice of the semi-fictional narrator is both a delight to read and astutely captures the intersection of theology and practical application.

As a bishop in the church, I intend to give this book as a gift to every priest who is called to or ordained in our diocese. I have found that what the church and the world desperately long for is Christians whose lives are so saturated with the Holy Spirit that they naturally render a sense of God's goodness and peace. Barnes' book is an outstanding model for how to cultivate just such a life, and it is manna in the wilderness and water in the desert for the weary pastoral soul.

The Rt. Rev. Craig Loya is the X Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota.

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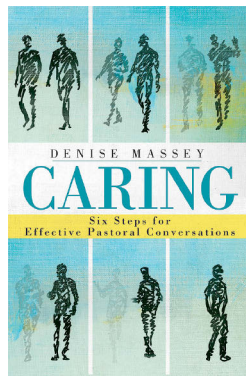
Review by David Svahn

Denise Massey's new book, *CARING: Six Steps for Effective Pastoral Conversations* aims to provide spiritually based guidance for those who minister to troubled souls. Directed primarily at clergy, but useful for others as well, the author, a professor of pastoral care and counseling at Mercer University, draws on years of classroom teaching and training in psychology of religion, pastoral care, spiritual direction and life coaching to offer a "trustworthy method for listening well, understanding your parishioners' concerns, and guiding them to discern the next steps in solving their problems or moving toward their goals."

She wisely calls these interactions conversations, no doubt to distinguish them from lecturing or preaching. Her title is a somewhat contrived acronym derived from the six steps she describes but *caring* does emphasize her unarguable point that love for God, self, and others is "the primary theological foundation for pastoral conversations."

Historically "caring" has meant looking after one's family, friends and associates with special compassion, and supporting the needy, sick, and elderly. Nursing is the foremost example of selfless care and, interestingly, most caring professions have traditionally been the province of women. This reviewer's related profession, medicine, is belatedly catching up with the need for caring, which was often neglected as scientific research began to replace conversation, and doctor-patient interactions became dominated by an ever-increasing panoply of tests and treatments. Time for "just talking" was ignored or left to others.

As far back as 1926, Francis Peabody bemoaned the shift. In an oft-quoted lecture, he concluded with the famous injunction that "the secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient." In recent years a turn back toward caring has been encouraged with courses (narrative medicine,



CARING

Six Steps for Effective Pastoral Conversations

By Denise Massey

Abingdon Press, pp. 132. \$18.99

which emphasizes the importance of the patient's story) and ceremonies (the ritual donning of the white coat as students begin their studies.) The key to caring, whether for the doctor and her patient or the minister and his parishioner, lies in knowing the care receiver. To know, one must listen attentively, empathically, and reflectively.

Ministers, when called on to provide advice and care to people in crisis, often feel ill-prepared to deal with issues raised by their parishioners — not to mention lacking time due to their myriad duties. Programs like Stephen Ministries provide extensive training and a system of review for lay people to share in pastoral care. This has proven useful to help relieve the counseling care-giving load on clergy. But this ministry is still church-based, and the pastor is usually the first contact with the care receiver and must discern what level of care and support is appropriate. Massey's book is directed at that pastoral need.

Despite its minor shortcomings (wordiness and repetition), the book largely succeeds, and should find an appreciative audience among those, especially clergy, who need help in guiding their conversations with congregants. Massey emphasizes the spiritual nature of this work and points out that both caregiver and care receiver must work to "understand where God is in the midst of the situation."

Besides the essential lesson to listen to know the care receiver and understand his problem, another lesson, particularly difficult for harried ministers,

is to avoid hasty solutions. "Should," she reminds us, does not belong in a caring dialog. When a congregant asks, "What should I do?" one must avoid a hasty answer. It may be tempting to tell him what seems right at the moment, but it is better to help him figure it out; your role is to guide as he finds his own way.

The book provides meticulous well-referenced instruction based on the author's extensive experience. It might prove more popular were it more succinct; perhaps a summary version would be useful for those unwilling to plunge deeply into the subject at first. But close reading is worthwhile. In our fraught, fast-paced culture with its severe divisions and associated tensions at work and home, pastors are confronted increasingly with congregants' questions and personal crises. The advice in Massey's book will be a boon as clergy seek ways to support their congregants.

Dr. David Svahn is a retired physician who lives in Doylestown, Pa.

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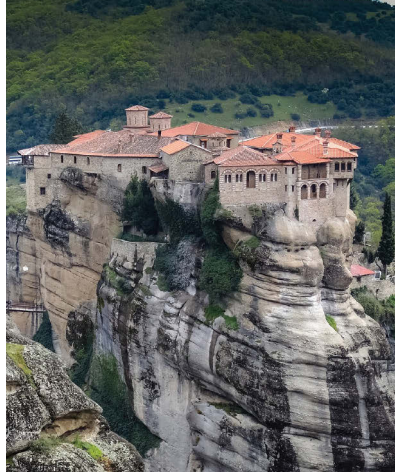
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Partner Spotlights 2020

Letter from the Editors

Dear reader,

You may have noticed this issue is a bit thicker than usual. We asked our Partners, organizations who support TLC's ministries, for a glimpse into their own communities. "What is God doing among you?" These are the glimpses we received — a kaleidoscopic family photo album from Episcopal and Anglican parishes, nonprofits, monasteries, and dioceses, from Maine to California, Malawi to Jerusalem.

Of course COVID-19 has deeply shaped these snapshots. We've hoped all along that this special feature would be encouraging, prayer-inspiring, and enjoyable to read. It certainly is all of those things, but it is also strikingly poignant. We have been touched to receive and curate these stories of reimagining worship and service, raising money and strawberries, grieving death and distance, rejoicing and struggling, and taking more careful stock of our common life in Christ Jesus.

These are just a few of the friends who give to TLC's ministry year by year. For a complete list of Partners, see the final pages of each issue of the magazine.

Thank you again to all who contributed to this special spread.

See page 57 for an alphabetical index of Partner Spotlights.

Faithfully yours, in Christ,

The Editors





All Souls' Episcopal Church

Oklahoma City, OK

All Souls' began as a children's Sunday school in a park in 1944. Today, by God's grace, we are a vibrant parish church bearing witness to Jesus Christ in Oklahoma City and beyond. Our worship is grounded in the richness of traditional Anglicanism and the Book of Common Prayer. When the Bishop of Oklahoma suspended public worship in March,

we decided to continue celebrating the Holy Eucharist in the church (with organ and a small choral ensemble) and to live-stream the service on our Facebook page. Like so many other churches, we had to learn how to become an online church essentially overnight. With some trial and error, we figured it out in time for Holy Week, and we plan to continue live streaming indefinitely.

Christ Church

Cooperstown, NY

Note from the rector, Fr. Dane Boston: "What do you know about Jesus?" We've asked that question a lot in Children's Chapel on Sunday mornings. COVID-19 made us ask — and made kids answer — in a new format. We've offered a joyful, chaotic online Children's Chapel each week, broadcast from the rectory. It brought our parish family into our home, and our children to Jesus. "What do you know about Jesus?" My 3-year-old preached powerfully: "He died! He DIED! And he ROSE!" Amen!



Christ Cathedral

Salina, KS

In the heart of downtown Salina, we've been offering a free nutritious meal each weekday through a ministry called The Welcome Table. This ministry, which serves 10,000 guests annually, has experienced a 400% increase during the pandemic. Our parish answered, "We will, with God's help!"



Christ Church

Georgetown, Washington, D.C.

As a historic and traditional Episcopal church, we've seen in the last few months the capacity for people to join our worship from all over the globe, and the numbers that join us each week have been eye opening. We have also been delighted to see a large lay pastoral network spring up. We hope to begin Sunday in-person worship in September, but we're looking for ways to preserve the good things we've learned in this strange period.



Diocese of Pennsylvania

We've been blessed to provide free Zoom licenses to all 136 churches in our diocese, along with access to online giving tools and a Digital Disciples team. Online prayer has been led by the youth. At the beginning of the pandemic — to reach parishioners without internet and provide for churches without streaming capability — we purchased airtime on the local CBS affiliate, and soon found out we'd become the most popular "show" on the channel.

Parish of Calvary-St. George's

New York, NY

We are a historic Episcopal parish consisting of two churches, located in the Gramercy and Stuyvesant Square area of Manhattan. As a result of the pandemic, like everyone, we have had to think about fresh ways to share the gospel in the city and abroad. Our priests can be found at large in the city, wearing masks. We offer a regular online Sunday 11:00 a.m. service of

Morning Prayer complete with sermon and songs, regularly viewed by people all around the world. We also moved Christian education online, including Sunday school, in order to continue to form disciples. One of our favorite taglines is "Enjoy Your Forgiveness." We hope you'll tune in sometime to one of our services in the heart of NYC and do just that.



Society of Mary, American Region

We were founded in 1931 as an Anglican Devotional Society to love and honor the Mother of Our Lord, with devotions, services, fellowship, and pilgrimages. The Society's magazine, *AVE*, is published twice a year. During the coronavirus pandemic, we have continued to support one another in prayer and fellowship. On June 6, we held our first virtual annual meeting by Zoom, and with nearly 40 online participants it was one of our best-attended ever.





Trinity Parish St. Augustine, FL

Like everyone else, our online pivot has been a fascinating act of trust in God and relinquishing of our idols. The things we “worshipped” as Americans have been shut down. Education: schools closed. Fitness: gyms closed. Pleasure: restaurants and bars closed. Travel: cruise ships in port. As we approach our bicentennial, we are praying and seeking to be used in this crucial moment. We especially praise God for our preschool, thrift store, endowment, family ministry, and partnership with the Episcopal Church in Cuba.



Christ the King Episcopal Church

Santa Rosa Beach, FL

Though COVID-19 has changed much of our life together, our commitment to being grounded in Anglican pastoral and ascetical theology with a distinctly Benedictine ethos remains unchanged. In addition to our Sunday and Wednesday Eucharist, we offer weekly centering prayer and daily Morning and Evening Prayer. Right now we’re using the Living Church’s pamphlet series, “*ANGLICANS BELIEVE*” and the Sacred Ground Dialogue Series on Race and Faith to continue broadening the scope and reach of worship and Christian formation.



Diocese of Central Florida

This season has highlighted diversity in ministry among our people and clergy. What does diversity mean?

It means the Rev. Tracy Dugger, new rector at Church of the Nativity, Port St. Lucie, who began her ministry there by leading the congregation through 40 days of prayer.

It means the Rev. Matt Ainsley, missionary of All Souls in Horizon West, a self-described “brand-new old church”

plant, reaching its burgeoning community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It means the Rev. José Rodriguez, vicar of Iglesia Episcopal Jesús de Nazaret, Orlando, who led his congregation and our diocesan family in far-reaching recovery efforts for Latinos displaced by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

And diversity will mean our ongoing prayer is answered: that we look more like God’s kingdom and less like our own.





Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue

New York, NY

This year, we have watched with solemn hearts as our city grew quiet, its once bustling sidewalks and streets hushed and still. Although our church doors were closed to the public, and our parishioners could no longer meet together, clergy and staff worked to develop ways to keep worshiping with our parishioners and friends around the world. We maintained a schedule of daily Mass, broad-

casting the audio of these services online, inviting listeners to make their spiritual communion with us. For our Sunday services, we've been focused on producing near-cinematic online experiences of liturgies at the High Altar — filmed in advance, lovingly edited. We will continue doing this until the crisis comes to a close. In the throes of a pandemic, we are seeking to worship and love our Lord.

Collegiate Church of St. Paul the Apostle

Savannah, GA

Working hard to maintain our humor, connection, and a modicum of stability, we maintain a full schedule of the Daily Offices, and offer Mass six days a week. While the in-person cohort is small, the virtual congregations are filled with parishioners, parish alumni, and people from around the world. Our food pantry now takes up our whole parking lot. We want to raise the banner of resurrection when too many experience the absence of hope.



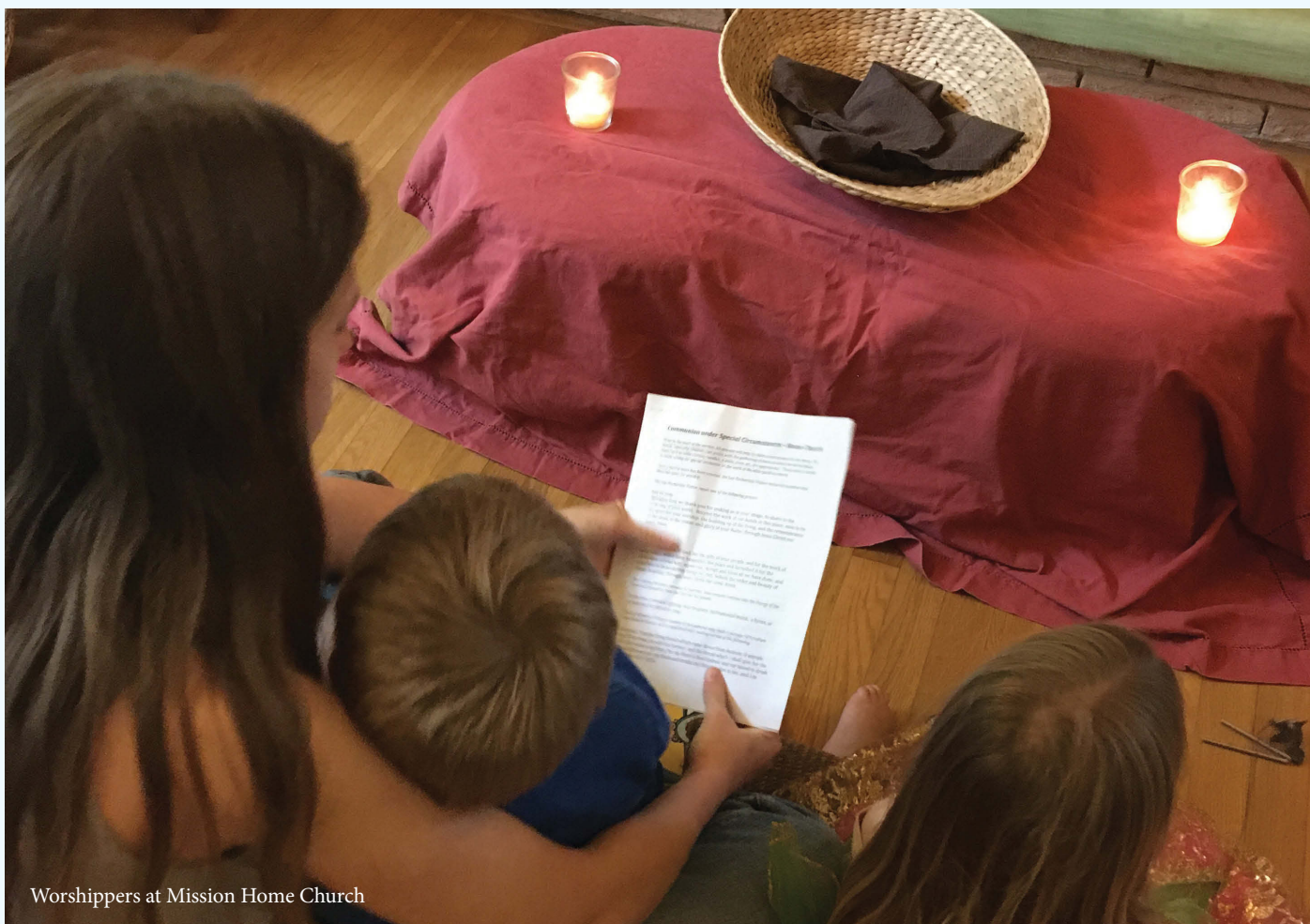
Church of the Good Shepherd

Corpus Christi, TX

Our mission is to share Christ with the next generation. We're a rapidly growing church, and we give thanks for a thriving children's, youth, and young families ministry bursting with classes, programs, and creative fellowship opportunities, even

in lockdown. While our ability to meet in person has been limited, we're finding ways to connect, like reading the Bible together with a multi-sensory study series called *The Story*. Pray for God's blessing and leading as we celebrate our 160th birthday on September 13th!





Worshippers at Mission Home Church

Diocese of Dallas

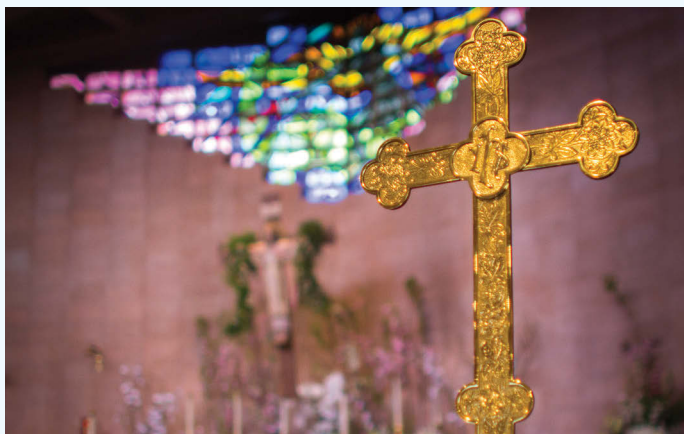
While North Texas has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, our goal has been to respond in faith, hope, and love. We've supported feeding programs in South Dallas. We're using online catechism and Alpha to incorporate new "online" parishioners. Our clergy have been incredibly innovative, offering "mission home communion" through lay eucharistic ministers, "Mass on the Grass," Zoom prayer groups, streamed services to diaspora Sudanese Christians, the Daily Office, and more. With the leadership of Assistant Bishop Michael Smith, we have a relief program for struggling congregations, especially those dependent on plate offering. Generosity in stewardship by so many lay people has been encouraging. Hard-pressed, the Holy Spirit has been opening a way.

COVID-19 has put so much on hold,

including parish land development projects and our discernment conference, RADVO. We're cobbling together hybrid study plans for our seminarians. Two women are "reading for orders" in Spanish via Zoom as part of a group — in which the bishop is as much student as instructor! Other plans are moving ahead. We're excited about newly yoked congregations in East Texas under the guidance of the Rt. Rev. Fraser Lawton, assisted by curate Trent Pettit, who's been furloughed for the year from his assignment in Ethiopia. Mother Samira Izadi Page has brought her refugee ministry alongside a parish seeking renewal. We've slowed, but not abandoned, our hopes for church planting. In sum, "we are afflicted but not crushed... so that the life of Jesus might also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:8-9).



The Rev. Trent Pettit



St. Michael's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church

Carlsbad, CA

We are the oldest church in Carlsbad, established in 1894. We celebrate a “beachy” version of the ancient Christian faith: we’re the host to public pickleball courts and the Carlsbad Music Festival, and we welcome all pilgrims on their spiritual journey, no matter the stage. Things may look different these days with “blog Mass” and video sermons, but worship of our Lord Jesus Christ is still the heartbeat of this spiritual community. To God be the glory!



Episcopal Church in Connecticut

A new ministry from our camp and conference center, Camp Washington has risen up in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since summer camp has been moved to a virtual platform and retreats have been postponed, the Executive Director, Bart Geissinger, and the Director of Food Services, Ben Thompson, have responded to their community’s need by offering fully prepared meals for free. We ask that you keep the camp in your prayers.



St. Matthew's Cathedral

Dallas, TX

On Sundays through Fridays, “the Cathedral has left the building”! On Pentecost, we began a “Mass on the Grass” at 8 a.m. — BYO chair, mask, and bug spray! — a boon to isolated parishioners seeking connection. An additional blessing has been neighbors showing up to worship, which is now much more visible to our East Dallas community. St. Matthew’s has also reached out to our homeless neighbors and expanded our feeding program to include families newly in need.



Church of the Holy Faith

Santa Fe, NM

When COVID-19 began sweeping across New Mexico, we saw quarantine and social distancing as a call to action to redefine “church.” Though we are now streaming, we have kept our Anglo-Catholic liturgy as close as possible to what it was before, wanting our “WorshipCasts” to engage worshippers as if they were sitting in the pews. As long as we need to, we will continue to live-stream Sunday Eucharist on YouTube and offer Children’s Chapel and Christian formation via Zoom.



Diocese of Texas

During the COVID-19 outbreak, our vision has been to remember the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities and to stay missional.

With worship, fellowship and pastoral care all online, community engagement has made a difference. St. Isidore's, Spring, shifted the use of its space to meet the growing need of the unemployed. St. Philip the Evangelist, Houston, provided iPads for households without internet access so that children could continue virtual schooling. Christ Church Cathedral, Houston, and All Saints Episcopal School in Austin have distributed more than 7,700 safety masks. Many others have held successful weekly food drives, feeding thousands of families.

We've seen God provide in the midst of major tragedy. Emmanuel, Houston, faced severe flooding between 2017-2019, after two hurricanes. While

temporarily housing at a generous synagogue, the rector, the Rev. Andy Parker, developed a brain tumor and passed away. Then a developer backed out of a deal on a new property. Through creative financing methods and the help of various diocesan foundations, Emmanuel was able to resettle in a new home. The new priest-in-charge, the Rev. Lance Ousley, says he is extremely proud of Emmanuel: "They are amazingly faithful, resilient, and caring people."

During the pandemic, 11 Houston-area Episcopal congregations have made it a pri-

ority to use their voices to let city officials know about the struggles and suffering of neighbors. Thanks to their persistence at public hearings about the need for rent, utility, and food assistance for low-income families, their work has resulted in \$53 million in rent relief.





Diocese of Oklahoma

From Bishop Poulson C. Reed: What's impressed me most about my new diocese is how our people have found creative ways to reach out during the pandemic. One of our senior care centers offered residents and their families a place to visit through closed windows, with sound from baby monitors. An Episcopal school held a drive-through parade for new families.

We've rapidly grown in our comfort and competence with technology

as well. Like many other dioceses, our congregations are streaming worship and gathering on Zoom for meetings and social time. My consecration as bishop coadjutor on May 30 was similarly moved online, with only about 20 in-person participants at our cathedral.

These imperfect moments of human connection may not be all that we want, but God is providing us, through them, what we need.



Diocese of Louisiana

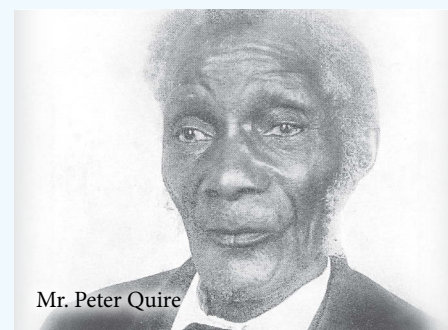
When we were not able to gather for worship, our churches never stopped serving as Christ's hands and feet in south Louisiana. We were hit particularly hard in this pandemic and have done our best to support local communities through

food pantries, preparing grocery boxes to assist people who lost their jobs. We also served virtual after-school programs and healthcare providers. In the midst of all this, we were blessed to ordain a new deacon, the Rev. Ben Nobles (above).



Community of St. Mary Eastern Province

Our community is located in New York and Malawi. We have evolved in the second century of our monastic existence through a strong belief in a calling to minister to the poor of our world. This flows out of a contemplative devotion to the Divine Office and the Eucharist. We center all our works around the stability of our convents.



Mr. Peter Quire

Zabriskie Memorial Church of St. John the Evangelist

Newport, RI

At its founding in July 1875, in the home of Peter Quire, the Free Chapel of Saint John the Evangelist was a fully integrated congregation. We thank God this legacy has remained. Today, we carry on the Anglo-Catholic tradition, which values not only liturgy and music, but, as our original name indicates, the God-given dignity of every human being.



Diocese of Tennessee

God is doing so much in our diocese. One of our most treasured ministries is the Episcopal School of Nashville. Located in an urban area, the school has seen tremendous growth during the first few years of its operation.

In early March, the students had just begun outdoor work in the school garden — their tiny green strawberries barely visible on the vine. Teachers and students alike looked forward to the lessons that would be learned outdoors. When in-person schooling abruptly ended, the future of the garden looked grim. But teachers and students — even school families — took turns working the soil. As the wider Nashville community reeled from the virus outbreak, the little garden from this young school

community sprung to life.

Founding Head of School, Harrison Stuart, and his faculty and staff have worked hard to instill into their students awareness of and compassion for their neighbors. In this spirit, it was decided that the fast-growing produce needed to find its way into the hands of the hungry. For a couple of months, students have operated a booth at the East Nashville Farmers Market. The only difference between them and the other vendors is that there is no charge for their food. The produce is grown and given with love: Episcopal education at its finest! The Diocese of Tennessee is proud to showcase such impressive young leadership. Go Purple Martins! *With Mind and Spirit Soaring.*





Diocese of Springfield

We embrace the reality that we're in a largely post-Christian culture, and that the "attractational" model of church growth is no longer effective. We want to go and serve Jesus where he is found outside our doors. Our parishes — "Eucharistic Communities" — are taught to think how Christian life is a prayerful continuation of the Mass and then to find God's providence in the world. Each parish works to devise a strategy

to carry out its own charism within its neighborhood.

Some of the ways we've seen that work lately are: sack lunches for the food insecure and homeless; English language assistance; sewing warm things for winter and masks for the pandemic; adult catechesis over Zoom; the Daily Office online; and, whether virtual or 6 feet apart, "eyeball-to-eyeball" relationship building, all anchored in the Eucharist.

Saint James School

Hagerstown, MD

Set in the rolling hills of central Maryland, Saint James was founded by Bishop William Whittingham and the Rev. Dr. William Augustus Muhlenberg in 1842. Since then, we've remained faithful to our Tractarian roots and Anglo-Catholic identity. A boarding school with students from 19 countries, we are a remarkably diverse yet small community: 230 students with a seven-to-one student-teacher ratio.

Saint James figured prominently in the Battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, so we're no strangers to challenging times. We successfully delivered our entire academic and fine arts curriculum from early March through May by distance learning and graduated the class of 2020 "virtually" on the Feast of Pentecost, fulfilling our mission "to produce leaders for good in the world." We hope to regather on campus with appropriate precautions in the fall.



Diocese of Olympia

During coronavirus, we've continued to live into our vision of community and service — online. In May, we held an online service honoring high school graduates. Thirteen graduates joined us, along with families and friends, the bishop, and diocesan leaders. Students offered readings, worship on guitar, and classic protest/folk music accompanied by piano, and the group prayed personal blessings over the graduates.





Bishop Waldo at Vorhees College

Diocese of West Virginia

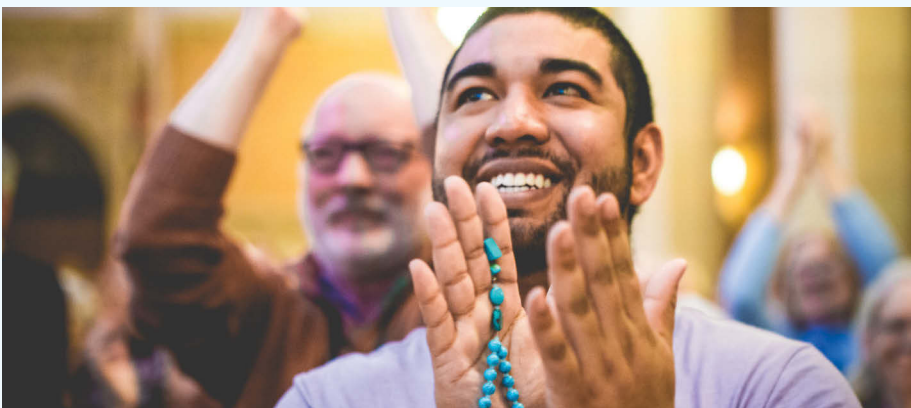
The Rt. Rev. W. Michie Klusmeyer, our seventh bishop, quickly learned two things: The state would be larger than Texas if it were flat, and its people are close and resourceful. The pandemic halted travel after more than 18 years. However, he remains convinced about its people.

The diocese hosts Noonday Prayer on weekdays and Holy Eucharist on Sundays. Many parishes are hosting Compline, Morning Prayer, and Holy

Eucharist, and providing community support, sewing masks, and housing food pantries. In March, the diocese hosted online workshops to help parishes get started with their own live streams and to reconnect. Peterkin, the diocesan church camp, sponsored a virtual summer camp for three weeks, and the Highland Educational Project provided seven weeks of camp-in-a-box to 100 children in McDowell County.

Diocese of Upper South Carolina

Even though things look different during COVID-19, we're still a community rooted in worship, discipleship, vocation, and service to the world. In the past decade, we've deepened parish-school relationships to support public education, partnered with ministry in Ecuador and Haiti, and strengthened congregations to serve communities. Recently, this has looked like: congregants ensuring everyone has access to online worship; Cursillo and Happening movements for youth and adults; renewed emphasis on campus ministries; and community gardens, free food pantries, and accessibility renovations.



Episcopal Church in Minnesota

We stand in a unique and transformational moment in our common life. With a newly consecrated bishop (the Rt. Rev. Craig Loya), the creative and destructive impact of a pandemic, and the clarion call for racial justice spurred by the uprising in Minneapolis, ECMN is embracing the opportunity to listen to the Holy Spirit and engage the difficult work of learning and unlearning that leads to new life, resurrection, and transformation.





Church of the Incarnation Dallas, TX

Despite the global pandemic, we're gaining new members at an unprecedented pace, discipling a large number of young families especially, and actively evangelizing in North Dallas. Growth like this requires a lot, and God continues to equip us for the call. "Enthusiastically traditional" in teaching and preaching, we're working hard to offer programs built to reach out to and disciple in each age and stage of life.

In 2018, we hosted an international conference for vocational discernment, with guests like Archbishop Justin Welby, Ephraim Radner, N.T. Wright, Wes Hill, Elisabeth Rain Kincaid, and Samira Page. We look forward to hosting again. The Radical Vocation Conference (RADVO) will include a year of digital content, culminating in a three-day in-person conference in Sep-

tember 2021, Lord willing. Our hope is to inspire "Priests for a New Century," especially in this difficult season.

In August of 2019, Incarnation opened its doors to a satellite campus, generally referred to as Incarnation North. Serving the community of North Dallas, the satellite has shown immense growth and continues to host a thriving community amid the pandemic.

Incarnation's eight Sunday services, like most churches, have had to pivot, and now feature several in-person socially distanced services, accompanied by contemporary and traditional live-streamed services. Strongly committed to living for others, the church is involved in a wide variety of social programs, including local children's services, homeless programs, and giving to those in need locally and around



the globe. Incarnation's outreach efforts continue to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our community while working alongside numerous partners.



Church of the Redeemer Sarasota, FL

In March, we made the call to host fully virtual services three hours before Florida's governor, Ron DeSantis, made the executive order to limit all gatherings of over 250 people. The Rev. Charleston Wilson, priest-in-charge, said: "We got ahead of it because we have such care and responsibility for our people that we could not risk having a large number of persons — especially at-risk persons — come and be part of a service."

We have been offering virtual services with a threefold approach: virtual worship, virtual education, and pastoral care. Since our entirely virtual Holy Week, the Daily Office has live-streamed in English and Spanish Monday through Friday, with a live stream of Redeemer's choral, contem-

porary, and Spanish Masses on Saturday and Sundays.

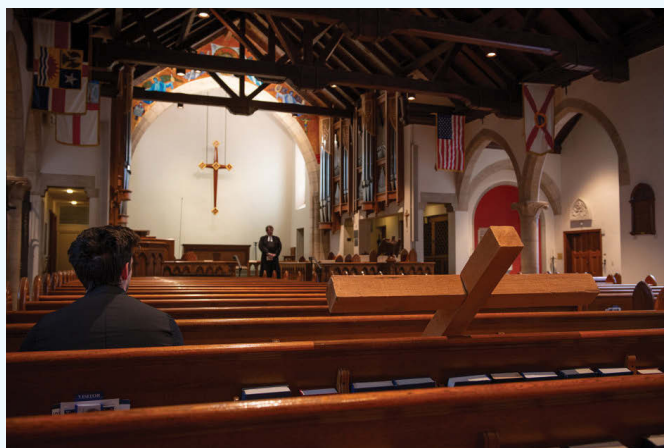
Our Fearless Faith Formation series has been a continual asset to parishioners, with live online education, interviews, and discussions every evening Monday through Friday, in which parishioners can actively engage and ask

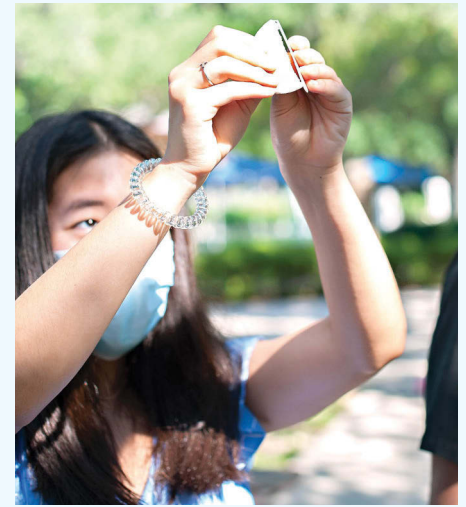
questions.

With a vibrant youth program before the pandemic, we've sought to continue ministry to children and families through Zoom meetings and online games for youth. We even tried out an entirely virtual Vacation Bible School in August!

Two members of the church, Liza and Hugh Culverhouse, set up a \$200,000 fund to assist members who might be facing economic hardships.

Despite the fact that there are fewer people setting foot on Redeemer's property, God has provided opportunity for service and worship. We are grateful to him that eight new members have come to the parish family through this time of online ministry.





Christ Episcopal Church

San Antonio, TX

The pandemic may have forced us to be physically distant, but we are never socially distant at Christ Church. Since mid-March we've been live-streaming Morning Prayer on Sundays and Evening Prayer on Wednesdays, singing over the internet with parishioner requested hymns. In June we added an outdoor service under the live oak trees so that our masked flock, in family groups, can celebrate Communion. The need for food in San Antonio is high, so we became a pop-up distribution center for the San Antonio Food Bank, passing out over 2,500 lbs. of fresh food. On our Outreach Campus, we distribute groceries to around 150 families. Our folks are writing encouraging notes, calling each other, gathering for study by Zoom, and continuing to be the loving presence of Christ.



Church of the Good Shepherd Augusta, GA

The coronavirus pandemic has carried the church into radically altered circumstances. “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a new land?”

At Good Shepherd we have belatedly discovered that the online presence that providentially preserves our shared parish life also provides an avenue to the wider world. We realized we are not speaking to an empty room but to viewers in their homes, so we began using closer shots and speaking right to

the camera. Our average age is 39, with a lot of kids, so we intentionally include them. We even hide “Reepicheep the church mouse” somewhere in the service and encourage kids to find him.

We pray that through carefully-crafted worship casts, drive-thru food drives, and our online parish talk show, “Good Morning Good Shepherd,” a wider audience may also come to know Jesus Christ as we know and love him: as the Lord of all hopefulness and the loving God here with us.



Grace Church New York, NY

Our historic Episcopal church, located in downtown NYC since 1808, welcomes a diverse group of Christians, committed to fellowship, serving the city, and glorifying God. We are thankful for our video streaming ministry, through which we will continue to offer our 11 a.m. Sunday service post-pandemic. Our especially vibrant Children, Youth, and Family Ministry is currently holding a popular weekly children’s chapel over Zoom!



St. David's Church Wayne, PA

COVID-19 is highlighting what the Church has long known: people are deeply connected to each other. When physicality is removed, when facial expressions are erased with a mask and cleansing means sanitizer rather than confession, we feel vulnerable. Our church's answer to the call to maintain spiritual connection in the new normal has been to evolve and reconstruct worship.

When we began live-streaming as the primary source of worship, pictures began popping up on social media showing families worshipping together in Paw Patrol pajamas and princess nightgowns, with sippy cups and mugs of coffee. Parishioners commented that they had not worshipped

so regularly with their entire families in a long time. Jesus with jammies and java became a new convention.

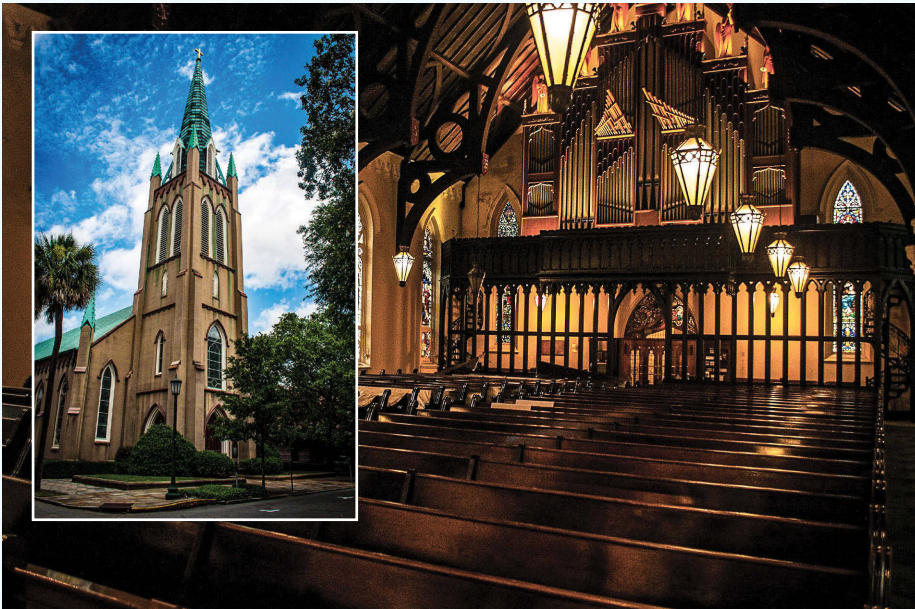
Live stream worship also includes pre-recorded hymns, but that did not stop live singing. Posts emerged showing choir members in their cassocks, holding their choir books and singing out loud in front of their home TVs.

These touching graphics illustrated not just a vocal performance but a powerful witness.

A new telephone call ministry began, with 76 parishioners reaching out to over 1,000 parish households. Relationships formed, conversations continued, and friendships were forged.

The introduction of new technologies has become a new evangelism, and platforms designed for physical separation have instead connected Christians together in community. St. David's life in the midst of COVID-19 is continuing to do what we feel called to do: live out the Great Commission to help seekers of Jesus grow in their faith. The Church is not closed, the Church is alive!





St. John's Church

Savannah, GA

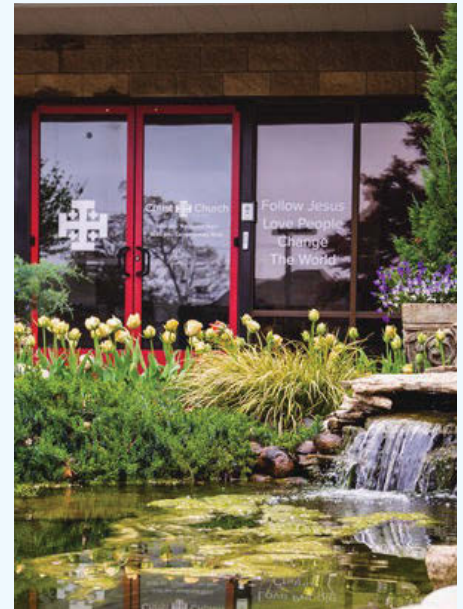
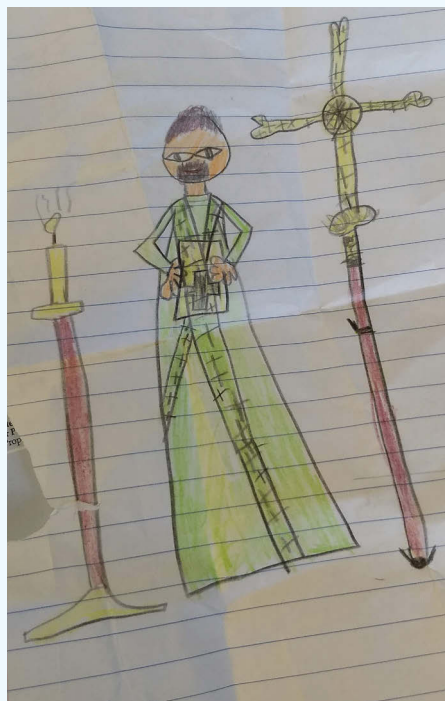
Our church has encountered uncertain historical times before. Since its foundation in 1841, the congregation has survived three yellow fever epidemics, Sherman's March to the Sea, and several hurricanes. We are responding to this year's stresses by humbling ourselves in prayer, in the classical rites of the 1928 Prayer Book. We are grounding ourselves more deeply in the gospel, and sharing comfort with those who are

needy and demoralized, as many other churches have also been doing. We are live-streaming services from the church and chapel. Parishioners keep in touch with one another by regular phone calls ("Hi-Five" ministry). We've kept the church's hourly workers (e.g., in the nursery and kitchen) on payroll and are offering assistance (such as rent) to parishioners and non-parishioners who have lost work.

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

Fort Thomas, KY

We're a multi-generational community steeped in tradition, located in the heart of the Cincinnati metro area. Alive with vitality and bursting with kids and youth, music is a big part of our life together, which we have missed during lockdown. Along with Sunday Christian formation and Wednesday after school programs, we have two adult choirs, a youth choir, and adult and youth handbell ensembles. An extensive homebound visitation ministry also makes this parish one of the anchor congregations for the Diocese of Lexington.



Christ Church Episcopal

Tulsa, OK

We're a rapidly growing congregation that tries to focus on the basics: the gospel, the Anglican tradition, and authentic relationships in a space where sinners, saints, and skeptics are welcomed. With our five acres, we garden fresh cut flowers, herbs, vegetables, berries, fruit trees, bees, and monarch butterfly flowers, raising money for the hungry in Tulsa. And, because of our vibrant Godly Play and children's ministry, we're blessed that over one third of our Sunday attenders are under the age of 10!





Saint Francis Ministries Salina, KS

The world has changed since Saint Francis was founded 75 years ago. Yet, our mission has remained constant — to provide healing and hope to children and families. What began in September 1945 on a wind-swept Kansas prairie now provides programs and services in six states and Central America. As the world changes, we adapt — remaining faithful to our ministry of life-changing hope for those who need it most.

Today, Saint Francis helps survivors of sex trafficking heal, adults with disabilities live independently, immigrants find safety from violence, and at-risk families stay together. We provide compassion and care to those struggling

with trauma, addiction, and mental health issues, so they can create a better future — of wholeness, optimism, and grace.

2020 has shown how desperately this world needs grace. The pandemic has challenged us to find creative ways to

fulfill our mission. While it hasn't been easy — emotionally or financially — to move our workforce to home offices, secure PPE for staff, and ensure therapeutic treatment for clients, we are proud and humbled by the response of our employees, resource families, and everyone we serve. Once again, they adapted with grace, skill, and dedication to serving a broken world.

Worldwide pandemic. Racial injustice. The world changes, and Saint Francis changes with it. Sure, this isn't the 75th birthday celebration we anticipated, but we like challenges. Whatever tomorrow brings, we will continue to advocate for the dignity and worth of every human being, while serving children and families wherever God leads us.





St. Francis Episcopal Church

Potomac, MD

Gary Davison, our beloved organist-choir master, celebrates 25 years of ministry at Saint Francis this year. A prolific composer of contemporary choral music as well as a talented director, Davison leads a program deeply rooted in the Anglican tradition, but full of creative flair. An anthem setting of “My Eyes for Beauty Pine” is being composed by Matthew Owens, director of music at Belfast Cathedral, for a festive Evensong in the fall to mark the occasion.



St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church

Pewaukee, WI

A note from Fr. Joel and Tammy Prather: After we recovered from COVID-19 ourselves, we immediately jumped into our familiar church-planting mode. Partnering with both local and global mission, we've found new tangible ways to reach out. We leaned into social media/tech options, and things took off. We invited everyone to join a Zoom “Happy Hour and Bible Study” by life stage. And we're growing, through daily fellowship, prayer, and Bible study, in numbers and knowledge. We are actually more connected than ever before.



Church of St. Edward the Martyr

New York, NY

We are a small Anglo-Catholic gem steeped in Oxford Movement history, and this year we welcomed our new interim rector, the Rev. Matthew Paul Buccheri, to shepherd the parish through the pandemic and its aftermath. A Brooklyn native, Fr. Matthew has a passion for preaching the saving work of Jesus Christ, and brings manifold experiences, from church consulting, to carpentry, to audio/video production (newly important). We look forward to proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in East Harlem in this new era and beyond.



Church of St. John the Divine

Houston, TX

We focus on *Changing Lives for God in Christ*. Now, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, we do this by amplifying our digital ministry. We **WORSHIP** through weekly online services — traditional, contemporary, and for young children. We **CONNECT** through a weekly virtual coffee hour. We **GROW** through our new online teaching center hosting classes and studies for anyone. We **GO** through contributing \$90,000 to aid local community partners facing a dramatic increase in needs.



St. George's Episcopal Church

Nashville, TN

A promising theme has emerged at St. George's during these troubling times. We are Christians whose hope is steadfast that God may bring unexpected new life from things falling away, as Jesus promises in the parable of the grapevine (John 15). We are exploring innovative ways to be Christians together — and to spread Christ's love in the world around us.

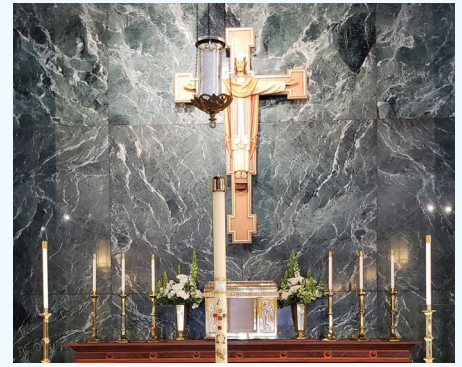
From outdoor worship and neighborhood groups, to providing food, books, and clothing for families in need, to making and distributing masks, St. George's is using this season of the pruning of our physical comforts and conveniences to experience new spiritual growth. We are confident that God is leading us to surprising and even extraordinary fruitfulness in Christ.



All Saints Episcopal Church

Jacksonville, FL

We've been spreading the gospel and serving our community for over 135 years. As we've been moving toward reopening the church for limited numbers, we've offered a Holy Eucharist on Wednesday only for those over the age of 65 or with immunocompromised conditions, and a special "Children's Chapel" where kids aged 4-9 have their temperatures taken before entering, and can enjoy Bible stories, worship, and crafts. Online community food drives and Meals On Wheels for seniors have also been a staple of service in this season.



St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Baton Rouge, LA

We've recognized how important it is to be united under the symbols of worship. We make our Christus Rex prominent when we stream on Facebook Live. At Easter, though we had to forgo Holy Eucharist, we highlighted the Paschal candle in front of the altar with Easter lilies. And we've participated in unifying, diocesan-wide worship, praying and singing with others across Louisiana.



Saint John's Episcopal Church

Bangor, ME

We celebrate our 185th anniversary this October! Site of Richard Upjohn's first Gothic Revival church in America, St. John's always values beautiful worship and compassionate ministries, including a food drive this summer for the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter. Our current campaign to replace the church tower will ensure that St. John's continues to "act as a beacon of hope in a new age."



The Consortium for Christian Unity

Last fall, thanks to a young Rwandan woman from a monastic community in London, I ended up with a copy of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Strength to Love*. Nothing prepared me for the power of this book. I was particularly struck by his sermon based on Matthew 10:16: "Be ye therefore as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." To be effective in the world, King preaches, we must cultivate both tough minds and tender hearts. I was mesmerized. And I'm a little chagrined

to admit that I was so overcome, I called several of my African American friends: "We have to get every church to read *Strength to Love*!" (They were kind.)

Then God spoke to me, and he said, "I didn't choose Martin Luther King for your job, I chose you."

As hard as it might be to believe, he has also chosen *you*. What part is Jesus giving *you* in following him during this time in our world? What is he telling us, as a church family, during this period

of great sickness, suffering, truth-telling, conflict, anger, and hope?

God might be telling us to make an effort to learn, to look beyond our safety and care enough about the difficulties of others that we can truly share their suffering. Solidarity with suffering nurtures the soil for the kind of unity that comes from charity, where mutual love can flourish. That's what will grow "tough minds and tender hearts." That's what we're praying for at the CCU. Will you join us?





Jerusalem Peacebuilders

Since 2011, Jerusalem Peacebuilders (JPB), a nonprofit ministry of interfaith reconciliation, has gathered thousands of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Druze, both adults and youth, for people-to-people encounters focused on producing the leadership and understanding necessary to transform the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In March 2020, COVID-19 upended life as we knew it. Undaunted, we at JPB faced pivotal choices about operating our summer peace and leadership institutes for American, Israeli, and Palestinian educators and students.

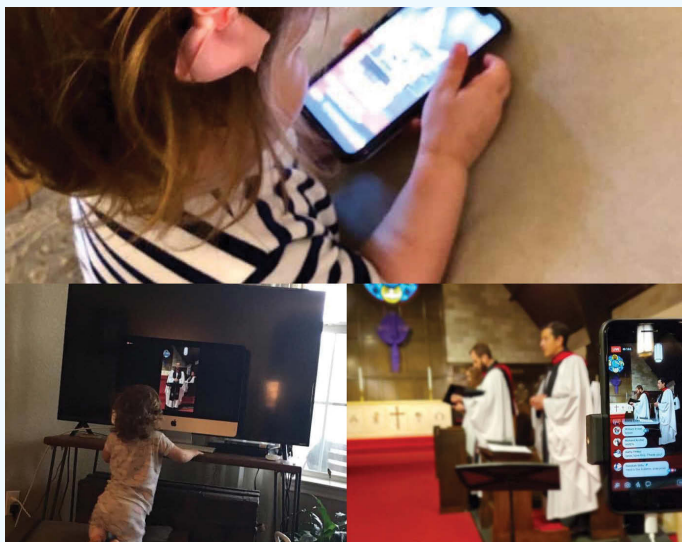
Our programs in dozens of schools in the USA and the Holy Lands quickly shifted to an online format. Check-in calls, social events, projects, and educational webinars were offered to support our active alumni community. In some ways, physical borders became less of an issue, as we adapted to the constantly changing dynamics of the pandemic and engaged participants from their homes. Our Lord's words, "for nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37), soon became our mantra.

Peacebuilding during the pandemic quickly becomes prophetic. We found ourselves witnessing to God's power and purpose as we leveraged our structure and professional network to determine how we might safely operate our peacebuilding programs this summer. Thankfully, God's

grace moved us beyond the impossible, and the doors of opportunity were opened to us.

Despite restrictions, we have offered online summer programs that advance reconciliation. Teens enjoyed workshops, dialogue, social events, and guest speakers including prominent Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith leaders in Jerusalem. With the Lord's help, we remain undaunted in our ministry of reconciliation in the Holy Lands.





St. Alban's Episcopal Church

Waco, TX

On Shrove Tuesday, we opened a beautiful new parish hall and welcome center — and promptly could not use them! The pandemic has taught us that we're first a *people*, not a building. Clergy and staff have blessed us with high-quality digital Sunday worship, Morning Prayer, Evensong, organ concerts, and Vacation Bible Camp. We'll gather together again when we can do so safely, but in the midst of this trying time, worship and fellowship are what "house" us.



Christ Church Cathedral

Nashville, TN

Daily Mass and Morning Prayer are now live-streamed Monday through Friday. Sunday online worship incorporates guest preachers from across the country, speaking from their home "pulpits."

Nashville was hit by a devastating tornado just before lockdown, so the urgent community needs quickly compounded. Material support drives produced flashlights, tents, canned goods, Bibles, and tarps.

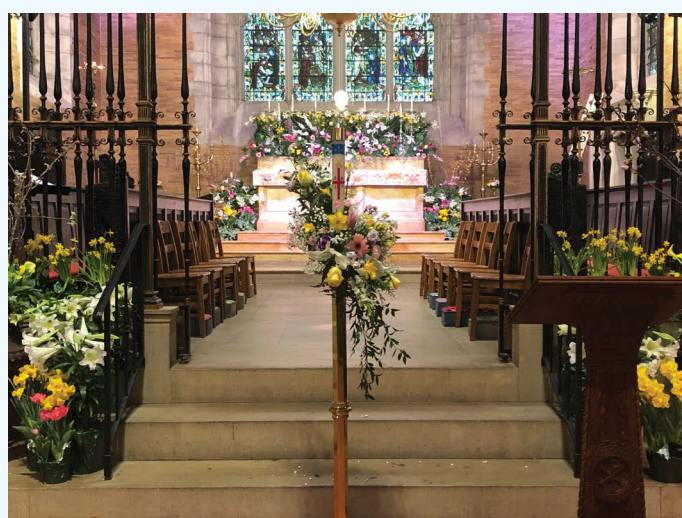
Cathedral teens deliver burritos on bikes downtown to those experiencing homelessness, so that gospel work in the church still meets gospel work in the world.



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Durham, NC

We've remained connected through recorded Sunday services (at a quality and comfort level we never would have thought possible) and live-streamed Thursday services. We've also formed new live-streamed communities for men's Bible study, family Sunday school, and adult spiritual formation. Joys have come in so many ways, from incorporating music into our recorded services, to seeing homebound parishioners join us online. Heightened awareness of racial tensions has also impacted us deeply, bringing new shape to formation.



St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Morristown, NJ

A story from the rector, Fr. Bob Trache: The first Sunday we live-streamed, I had to leave the altar. I was diagnosed with the virus and became very sick. Then friends called, and the parish gathered around me. Suddenly the priest who was embarrassed to ask for help needed help. Amid a whirl of leadership, service, and streaming decisions, I learned my faith in Christ meant allowing others to give to me. I've learned this at St. Peter's: the value of God's love when you are on the edge.



Diocese of Southern Ohio

Life and work in our diocese during the coronavirus pandemic has focused on connection. As many of our congregations embraced the available technology and scrambled to keep worshipping together as Holy Week approached, panic and uncertainty about the future quickly settled into the knowledge that church really is all about people rather than buildings. A few months into our exodus from our buildings, many congregational leaders were reporting that while there has been much to grieve, there has also been much to celebrate.

During this unwelcome time of fasting from celebration of the Eucharist, there are stories of discovering renewed joy in listening to scripture in the Daily Office. We've known delight in online gatherings, attracting new people who had never visited our buildings in the past, but who find community in the

matrix of faces in a Zoom meeting or a stream of comments and heart emojis during a Facebook Live feed. We've felt astonishment and gratitude that weekly "attendance" at online worship is up, and giving has remained generous in many congregations. And we're excited about the opportunities this new medium of connection may present for re-

newal of the church.

While it is not exactly the route we thought our journey towards becoming the Beloved Community would take, we're following Jesus into our neighborhoods in new ways, and seeing a glimpse of what the Kingdom of God could be.





Diocese of West Texas

The diocese is made up of 26,000 persons gathered in 87 congregations and 26 schools, spread across the South-Central region of Texas and sharing approximately five hundred border miles with Mexico. Led by the Holy Spirit, and adapting to the ever-changing landscape of a pandemic, our clergy and congregations continue to experience God's presence through common liturgy and prayers, alternative ways of gathering, and out-

reach ministries within our communities. In 2020: The diocese launched a new website. Our church plant continues to take root in the community of Spring Branch. Immigration ministries experienced some renewed momentum with the on-boarding of an Immigration Ministries Coordinator, in partnership with Episcopal Relief and Development. And our first class of IONA School for Ministry graduates were ordained.

Diocese of Long Island

Our diocese includes the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens in New York City and Nassau and Suffolk counties of Long Island, and it was one of the well-known early epicenters of the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers across the diocese, all facing their own health risks, courageously served in frontline ministries with everything from running errands and handing out gift cards to organizing meals for healthcare workers and expanding essential food pantries and meal programs.



Diocese of Massachusetts

We're living into a multi-year strategy for reimagining congregations, building relationships, and engaging our world. Our immigration and multicultural ministries got together this year, online and in D.C., to advocate policies reflecting love of neighbor. Racial justice, creation care, and young adult engagement are among the ways we're energizing one another this fall to embrace brave change in Christ's name.



Diocese of Pittsburgh

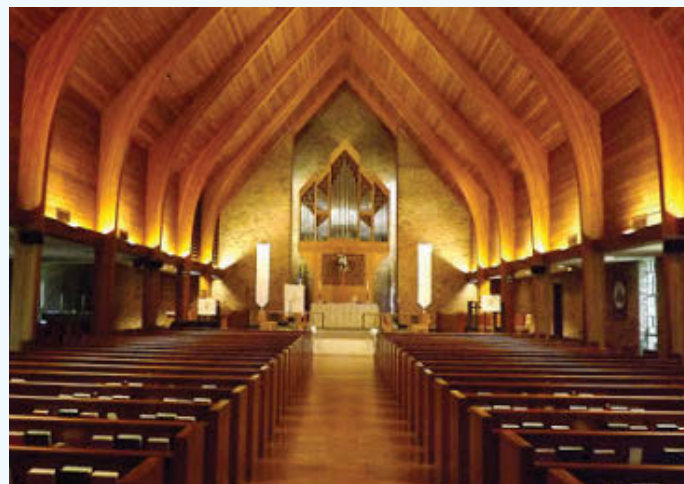
When COVID-19 disrupted routines, nearly every parish began online worship and virtual gatherings, venturing into new offerings and renewed outreach ministry. As the country confronted the virus of racism, our bishop led those taking to the streets. We also established a Beloved Community Initiative to ensure that racial justice and reconciliation permeate every aspect of our mission to Love, Teach, Heal.



St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church

Tucson, AZ

We've been an Anglo-Catholic parish on Tucson's east side since 1953. Our current passions and callings include our K-8 parish school (now largely online), a long-time co-working relationship with a local homeless shelter and a Catholic Worker house, friendship and service with Native American neighbors (Tohono O'odham Nation, Pascua Yaqui Tribe), and medical support ministry in rural Guatemala.



St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

Richmond, VA

The pandemic has struck us more deeply than we first realized. Even when cheerfully adapting to online worship and Bible studies, we have felt a profound sense of loss — hard to quantify or put into words. Outdoor services have been a great salve, though they, too, fail to fill the place of what we knew before. And yet, we're recovering a part of our identity as the Body of Christ: bearing the afflictions of the world, hungering and thirsting for restoration.



St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Murfreesboro, TN

As we joyfully prepared meals for the needy in our downtown community, we knew we were addressing a need of the moment — hunger. But we wanted to do more. So we led a community effort to build housing for the homeless and housing-insecure seniors. Our initial effort netted thousands of dollars and sparked a deeper, lasting commitment to those in need. The good Lord is at work among us in the heart of Murfreesboro!



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Austin, TX

During "Coronatide," we have explored the hidden depths of belonging. We say Morning Prayer every day via Zoom. We've orchestrated phone-trees and intergenerational letter-writing projects. We delivered interactive VBS-in-a-box to children. We've tripled our charitable giving to support pandemic relief and racial justice projects in our city. And we've learned more than we ever cared to learn about camera equipment.



Trinity Episcopal Church

Vero Beach, FL

We thank God for the unexpected ways our church has grown through the pandemic. We now offer “family friendly” worship online that includes an online service bulletin and Sunday school lesson so that everyone is able to participate together. We also host interactive online lectures and book studies, such as on C.S. Lewis’s *Screwtape Letters*.

Unexpected blessings continue as

the number of people participating in Trinity’s online Masses and lectures rise, and the message of the gospel is spread over the world! We thank God as we begin another year of our Christian preschool, with every safety precaution that will keep teachers and children safe and healthy. And we continue to grow our endowment in order to secure the future of the church.



Church of St. Mark Brooklyn, NY

July 6th was our first funeral service in the church since March. Through prayer and careful planning, the Lord has used us to comfort grieving families and give the deceased a Christian burial. In the spring and summer, we held worship services online as well as weekly youth programs. Parishioners have maintained a powerful prayer ministry via phone and text. We look forward to Eucharist together in August. “This, too, shall pass.”

See page 57 for an alphabetical index of Partner Spotlights.



Holy Spirit Episcopal Church

Waco, TX

We exist because God has called us by name to become and share the good news of Jesus Christ. We include people with and without disabilities, and we serve those who serve our city. Every year, we host an annual first responder meal, where we serve every on-duty first responder in Waco. Together we’re learning how to hear Jesus’ voice and follow him.



Holy Comforter Episcopal Church

Tallahassee, FL

Responding to the massive need created by Category 5 Hurricane Michael, a disaster relief ministry emerged at our parish. Working with Mission 850, those who can help are connected to those needing help. Church members have provided needs assessment, property repair and cleanup, equipment operations, monetary support, counseling, and prayer.



St. Martin's Episcopal Church Houston, TX

REACHING OUT — As part of its COVID-19 response, St. Martin's opened its doors to the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center in April and May. In five short days, members and friends donated altogether 217 units of blood, which we were told saved 6,541 lives. We've also been able to create a COVID-19 Response Fund through gifts from our parishioners to support ministries helping the underserved in the Houston area and beyond.

FIGHTING HUNGER — One organization in our community that our gifts helped support is the Houston Food Bank, America's largest food bank, which feeds thousands of hungry families at massive distribution sites. The Rev. Russell Levenson and his wife, Laura, dropped off a donation check to the



organization's development director, Amy Ragan, in April.

CONNECTING — Like many churches, we have spent much of the past few months adjusting to digital worship and "virtual" ministry. Many ministries moved to Zoom and email, and our Hope and Healing Center offered psychotherapy appointments online. Graduation time saw drive-through parades with families dressing up and driving through campus where staff celebrated them from a distance. Our Pastoral Care department organized calling and checking on every household in our 9,500-member congregation. Our student ministry team also made more than 1,000 phone calls to follow up with our teens. It's been a busy and different time, but our parishioners have nonetheless appreciated the opportunities to connect across a distance.

Alphabetical Index

These are the Partners who provided stories for this feature. A full list of our Partners may be found in the back of every magazine, or at livingchurch.org/partners.



All Saints Episcopal Church, Jacksonville, FL	48	Diocese of West Virginia	40
All Souls' Episcopal Church, Oklahoma City	30	Episcopal Church in Connecticut	35
Christ Cathedral, Salina, KS	30	Episcopal Church in Minnesota	40
Christ Church, Cooperstown, NY	30	Grace Church, New York, NY	43
Christ Church, Georgetown, Washington, D.C.	30	Holy Comforter Episcopal Church, Tallahassee, FL	55
Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville, TN	51	Holy Spirit Episcopal Church, Waco, TX	55
Christ Church Episcopal, Tulsa, OK	45	Jerusalem Peacebuilders	50
Christ Episcopal Church, San Antonio, TX	43	Parish of Calvary-St. George's, New York, NY	31
Christ the King Episcopal Church, Santa Rosa Beach, FL	32	Saint Francis Ministries, Salina, KS	46
Church of the Good Shepherd, Augusta, GA	43	Saint James School, Hagerstown, MD	39
Church of the Good Shepherd, Corpus Christi, TX	33	Saint John's Episcopal Church, Bangor, ME	48
Church of the Holy Faith, Santa Fe, NM	35	Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York, NY	33
Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, TX	41	Society of Mary, American Region	31
Church of the Redeemer, Sarasota, FL	42	St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, TX	51
Church of St. Edward the Martyr, New York, NY	47	St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Fort Thomas, KY	45
Church of St. John the Divine, Houston, TX	47	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Pewaukee, WI	47
Church of St. Mark, Brooklyn, NY	55	St. David's Church, Wayne, PA	44
Collegiate Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Savannah, GA	33	St. Francis Episcopal Church, Potomac, MD	47
Community of St. Mary, Eastern Province	37	St. George's Episcopal Church, Nashville, TN	48
The Consortium for Christian Unity	49	St. John's Church, Savannah, GA	45
Diocese of Central Florida	32	St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Baton Rouge, LA	48
Diocese of Dallas	34	St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Austin, TX	54
Diocese of Long Island	53	St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Houston, TX	56
Diocese of Louisiana	37	St. Matthew's Cathedral, Dallas, TX	35
Diocese of Massachusetts	53	St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA	54
Diocese of Oklahoma	37	St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Tucson, AZ	54
Diocese of Olympia	39	St. Michael's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Carlsbad, CA	35
Diocese of Pennsylvania	31	St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Murfreesboro, TN	54
Diocese of Pittsburgh	53	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Morristown, NJ	51
Diocese of Southern Ohio	52	St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Durham, NC	51
Diocese of Springfield	39	Trinity Episcopal Church, Vero Beach, FL	55
Diocese of Tennessee	38	Trinity Parish, St. Augustine, FL	32
Diocese of Texas	36	Zabriskie Memorial Church of St. John the Evangelist, Newport, RI	37
Diocese of Upper South Carolina	40		
Diocese of West Texas	53		

PEOPLE & PLACES

Appointments

The Rev. **Miguel Alvarez** is vicar of La Capilla Santa Maria, Hendersonville, N.C.

The Very Rev. **Licia Affer** is canon to the ordinary of the Diocese of Southeast Florida.

Ms. **Lisa Brooks** is diocesan coordinator and assistant to the bishop of the Diocese of Idaho.

The Rev. **Lyn Burns** is interim rector of St. Patrick's, Pagosa Springs, Colo.

The Rev. **John Caleb Collins** is vicar of St. John's, Bisbee and St. Stephen's, Douglas, Ariz.

The Rev. **Anne Carriere** is priest associate of Grace-St. Luke's, Memphis.

The Rev. **Charlie Deaton** is interim rector of St. Stephen's, Indianola, Miss.

The Rev. **Alison Dingley** and Mr. **Willis Moore** are chaplains to retired clergy in the Diocese of Hawaii.

The Rev. **Angela Emerson** is interim priest of St. Peter's, Bennington, Vt.

The Rev. **Gaelyn Evangreene** is rector of St. David's, Cullowhee, N.C.

The Rev. **Nathan Finnin** is rector of St. Andrew's by the Sea, Nag's Head, N.C.

The Rev. **Grace Flint** is assistant rector of St. John's, Chico, Calif.

The Rev. **Michael Foley** is rector of Holy Nativity, Westchester, Los Angeles.

The Rev. **Karl Griswold-Kuhn** is rector of Christ Church, Nacogdoches, Texas.

The Rev. **Carrie Guerra** is rector of St. Francis, San Antonio.

The Very Rev. Canon **Gary Hall** is interim dean of Bloy House, Glendale, Calif.

The Rev. **David Halt** is rector of St. James', Texarkana, Texas.

The Rev. Canon **David Johnson** is interim rector of St. Paul's, Foley, Ala.

The Rev. **Thomas Joyner** is rector of St. Dunstan's, Auburn, Ala.

The Rev. Dn. **Meaghan Keegan** is deacon vicar of St. Paul's, Greenwich, N.Y.

The Rev. **Benita Keene Johnson** is long term supply priest of St. Katherine of Alexandria, Baltimore.

The Rev. **Lee Lowery** is rector of Epiphany, Tallahassee, Ala.

The Rev. **William Lupfer** is interim rector of All Saints' Church and Day School, Phoenix.

The Rev. **Angel David Marrero-Ayala** is priest in charge of Christ Church and Iglesia St. John, Hyde Park, Mass.

The Rev. **Helena Martin** is missional curate of St. Paul's, Southington, Conn.

The Rev. **Joshua Chan Foo Ng** is rector of True Sunshine, San Francisco.

The Rev. **Pete Nunnally** is assistant rector of St. Mary's, Arlington, Va.

The Rev. **Neil O'Farrell** is priest in charge of St. John's, Mount Washington, Md.

The Rev. **Timothy O'Leary** is rector of St. James, West Hartford, Conn.

The Rev. **Kevin Olds** is priest in charge of St. Paul's, Southington, Conn.

The Rev. **Will Packard** is priest-in-charge of St. Andrew's, Burke, Va.

The Rev. **Sara Palmer** is associate rector of St. Mary's, Arlington, Va.

The Rev. **Christopher Richardson** is priest in charge of St. John's, Columbus, Ohio and a member of the youth ministry team of the Diocese of Southern Ohio.

The Rev. **Christopher M. Robinson** is priest in charge of Redeemer, Biloxi, Miss.

The Rev. **Aidan Rontoni** is rector of All Saints', Redding, Calif.

The Rev. **Oscar Rozo** is missionary for Latino ministries of the Diocese of Western North Carolina.

The Rev. **Jamie S. Samilio** is priest in charge of Good Samaritan, Clearwater, Fla.

The Rev. **Jeffrey Samuel** is rector of St. Luke's, Jackson, Tenn.

The Rev. **Steven Tamke** is priest in charge of Christ Church, Manhasset, N.Y.

The Rev. **Porter C. Taylor** is rector of St. David's, Cocoa Beach, Fla.

The Rev. **Matthew Woodward** is dean of Trinity Cathedral, Sacramento, Calif.

The Rev. **Douglas Worthington** is priest in charge of St. Andrew's, Kent, Conn.

The Rev. **Andrea Castner Wyatt** is rector of Trinity, Newtown, Conn.

The Rev. Dr. **James Yarsiah** is priest in charge of St. Michael the Archangel, Wall Township, and St. James, Bradley Beach, N.J.

The Rev. **Philip Zoutendam** is curate of St. Titus', Durham, N.C.

Deaths

The Hon. **James Elvis "Jim" Bradberry**, a long serving lay leader in the Diocese of Southern Virginia and the wider Episcopal Church, died July 25, aged 80.



An attorney and judge by profession, Bradberry served many terms as warden and vestry member at St. George's Church in Newport News. He chaired several committees that studied the future of the Diocese of Southern Virginia's Camp Chanco in the 1970s, and eventually help to guide the process of relocating the camp from its original site to its current location in Spring Grove. In 1995, he was one of the founders of Camp Wakonda, the diocese's summer camp program for kids and families infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. His work with Camp Wakonda continued for 14 years until 2009.

He served as a deputy to the General Convention for the Diocese of Southern Virginia from 1988 until 2006, participating in seven General Conventions. He also served as a member of Executive Council for six years, from 2000 until 2006.

During a long career at the bar and the bench, Bradberry served in the Army's Judge Advocate General Corps, as a prosecutor in the Commonwealth Attorney's office in Newport News and was in private practice. In 1991, he was appointed as a Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia's federal court.

Bradberry was preceded in death by his wife, Elaine, and is survived by two children, four grandchildren and a host of friends across the country.



The Rev. Canon **George Luck**, a gifted teacher and spiritual director who served central Texas parishes for 61 years, died July 23, aged 87.

Born in Houston, Luck grew up in Fort Worth, and prepared for the ministry at the Philadelphia Divinity School. Ordained in 1958, he began his ministry as priest in charge of St. Thomas Church in Ennis, Texas, and would go on to serve other Texas parishes in Kaufman, Forney, Arlington, Pittsburg, Dallas, and Fort Worth, before serving nine years as rector of Holy Trinity in Rockwall. In 1997, he was made an honorary canon of the Diocese of Dallas and he assisted in various capacities at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Dallas in retirement.

Canon Luck assumed several positions of leadership within the Diocese of Dallas, serving on the commission on ministry and as chair of the standing committee. He taught Old Testament and spiritual theology at the diocesan training institute, now called the Stanton Center for Ministry, for over 40 years, and continued to be a valued mentor to many clergy until the time of his death.

After the death of his first wife, Jane, he married the Rev. Diana Nelson Fricke, who joined him in ministry at Saint Matthew's Cathedral. He and his first wife raised three children, the Very Rev. George Luck, David Luck, and the Rev. Mary Luck Stanley. They also grieved the deaths of two infants, Mary Katherine and Diane Louise.

"George was friend, Scripture teacher, counselor, pastor to so many clergy," said Dallas Bishop George Sumner. "He reminds of the true nature of spiritual authority which he exemplified." The Rev. Rebecca Tankersley remembered, "I have known Father Luck for over 20 years, during which time he has been my priest, my spiritual director, and my mentor," she said. "He taught me how to be a Christian, how to be an evangelist, how to discern God's call in my life, and how to be a priest. He will be deeply, deeply missed."

The Rev. **Philip David Schaefer**, who had a long ministry to small town parishes, died July 25, aged 85.

A native of Toledo, Schaefer graduated from Denison University and Berkeley Divinity



School, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1961. He first served as curate of St. James Church in Painesville, Ohio. He went on to serve congregations in Georgetown and Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, and

was rector of Church of the Incarnation in Penfield, New York for 13 years. He then served as chaplain of the Episcopal Church Home in Rochester, New York, and engaged in hospice ministry. Schaefer was also active in the Penfield and Fairport Lions Clubs, the Penfield Democratic Club, and Metro Justice of Rochester, and he enjoyed outings with a local hiking club. He is survived by Elsa, his wife of 61 years, and by four children, nine grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren.

Maintaining Bonds of Peace

A disciplinary rubric states, “If a priest knows that a person who is living a notoriously evil life intends to come to Communion, the priest shall speak to that person privately, and tell *him* that *he* may not come to the Holy Table until *he* has given clear proof of repentance and amendment of life” (BCP, p. 409). The same instruction applies when the offense is against a neighbor or a scandal to members of the congregation. Additionally, the priest may exercise a similar discipline if “there is hatred between members of the congregation.” Although rarely used, the general intention of this rubric should at least be considered.

The “Exhortation” in The Book of Common Prayer explains the seriousness of Holy Communion. “For, as the benefit is great, if with penitent hearts and living faith we receive the holy Sacrament, so is the danger great, if we receive it improperly, not recognizing the Lord’s Body. Judge yourselves, therefore lest you be judged by the Lord” (BCP, p. 316). This call to self-examination and the disciplinary rubric above highlight and protect the very purpose of Holy Communion. “For in these holy Mysteries we are made one with Christ, and Christ with us; we are made one body with him, and members one of another.” Notorious evil and hatred among members of the community are serious offenses to the mystical body of Christ.

The gospel reading from St. Matthew likely addressed church discipline at the time the gospel was composed. “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have gained that one” (Matt. 18:15). If he refuses to listen, one or two witnesses are to confirm the charge. If he still refuses, he is to be brought before the community, and, if he refuses to hear the church, he is to be excommunicated as a Gentile and a

tax-collector. The final exclusion, however, may be softened by considering Jesus’s ministry precisely to Gentiles and tax-collectors. A later reconciliation may still be in view. These instructions do not intend to humiliate a member of the body. Instead, they are to help that member “listen” to the truth and “gain” him as a restored member of the community. Although harsh by modern church standards, the goal was to save and restore the member in the bonds of peace essential to the church community.

Every parish church and every parish priest ought to be vigilant in keeping the peace. While some measure of conflict and discord is normal and even healthy, too much of a good thing can spoil a parish. Conflicts and animosities of a dangerous sort should be addressed early. This requires incredible sensitivity and prudence, especially on the part of the priest. A priest must know when to be serious, light-hearted, willing to speak, ready to listen. There are laity who have gifts in this area as well.

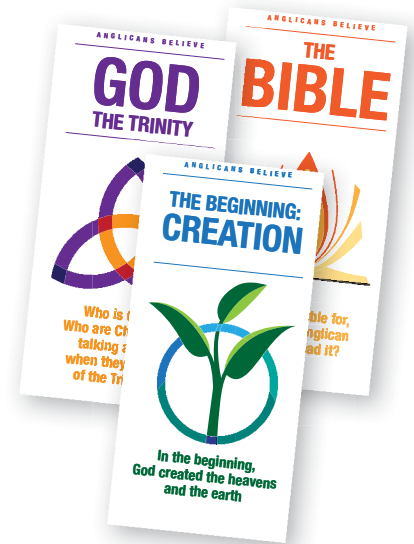
Why is church discipline, or, at least, the effort to maintain bonds of affection in a parish community so important? One answer is this: We are in a hurry! We cannot squander time with evil and hatred. “Now is the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:11-13). Like the children of Israel eating their Passover in haste, we hurry toward the peaceable kingdom (Ex. 12:11). The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Look It Up

Read Psalm 149.

Think About It

We sing a new song *together*.



INTRODUCING Anglicans Believe

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

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

Each six-panel pamphlet draws on the faith of the historic creeds and is well grounded in Scripture, in our shared prayer books, and in the insights of major theologians from the early Church to the present day.

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Release

“Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times’ (Matt. 18:21-22). The parable that follows concludes with a warning of punishment toward those who, having received forgiveness, refuse to give it to others, “So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from the heart” (Matt. 18:35). Like the earlier instruction about confronting a church member who has sinned, the overall intention is “to gain your brother [or sister]” (Matt. 18:15). Unlimited forgiveness from the heart restores and maintains the church as a reconciled community.

Doing this may seem a simple matter if there is nothing to forgive, or only some minor irritation or inconvenience. The command to forgive from the heart, however, when one’s heart has been deeply wounded may seem almost cruel, especially when the wound is fresh and wrenching. A betrayal, a horrible injustice, careless cruelty, an emotional or physical attack — simple honesty requires space for a full range of negative emotions, which, if not allowed, will circle back with a vengeance, doing more harm to the person who has tried to rush or force forgiveness. This raises the difficult question of what forgiveness is.

The Latin version of the Lord’s Prayer offers, I believe, a clue to the real meaning of forgiveness, employing the same verb used by old man Simeon after seeing and holding the Christ child. Starting with Simeon, we recall that “it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he would not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). Here is the crucial part, the beautiful moment when Simeon holds and blesses Jesus, and then asks to be “set free.” As translated

in Rite I, this line is a request, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant go in peace.” In Rite II, the verb is rendered in the perfect tense, with “nunc” (now) emphasizing a present action. “Lord, you now have set your servant free.” The Latin employs the simple present: “Now you set free your servant, Lord” [*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*]. God is the subject and God sets free. This has everything to do with forgiveness.

In the Lord’s Prayer, we say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” [*dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos demittimus debitoribus nostris*]. The same Latin verb, *dimitto*, is used. “Set us free from our debts, just as we set our debtors free.” First, God sets free, and then, in response, we learn to set others free, not because the offense was insignificant, but because the “release” or “freedom” occurs principally in the heart of the one who was wounded. When we forgive, we are freeing ourselves from the agonizing claim a wrong and the offending party has upon our emotions and thoughts, our time and energy. This happens most commonly over time, after normal negative emotions are allowed their place and expression.

Something happens, a release comes, life starts over as the heart slowly heals and releases old wounds. Because forgiveness is the act of God, it cannot be forced. Like the Spirit who blows where it will, forgiveness comes in its own time and in its own way. When we forgive, we are free. We free ourselves, though, of course, God provides the release, and we release our offenders so that life can start anew.

Look It Up
Read Matthew 18:35.

Think About It
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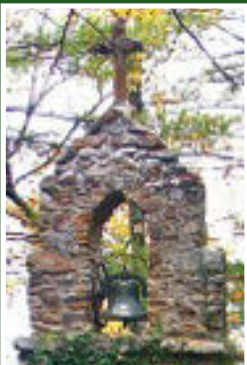
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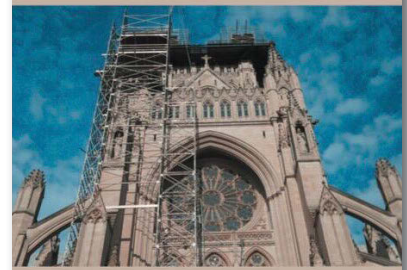
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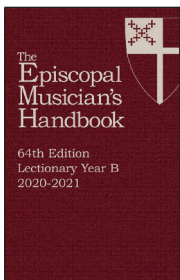


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