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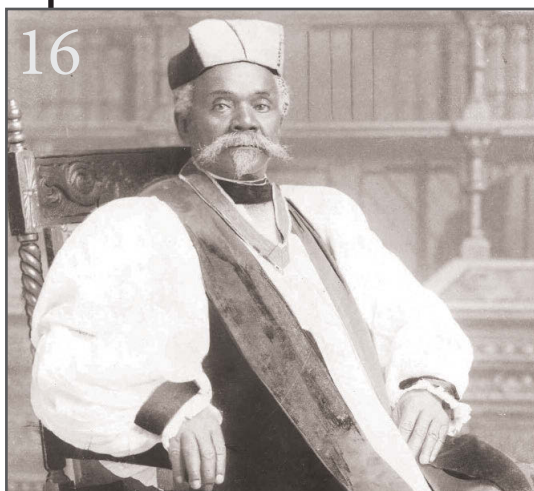
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ON THE COVER

Crosses made in Southern Tanzania in the region of Mtwara are packed for distribution (see "Palm Cross Ministry for a Pandemic Palm Sunday," p. 22).



ACNA, Nigerian Primates Clash over Sexuality

By Kirk Petersen

The Anglican Church in North America, which split from the Episcopal Church more than a decade ago in part because of disagreement over human sexuality, now finds itself embroiled anew in a related conflict with international ramifications.

Archbishop Henry C. Ndukuba of the Church of Nigeria has denounced ACNA with the kind of language normally reserved for TEC and the Church of England: “The deadly ‘virus’ of homosexuality has infiltrated ACNA.”

No, ACNA has not consecrated a gay bishop. Leaders in Nigeria and at least two other provinces of the Anglican Communion have castigated the ACNA bishops for the language they chose regarding “Christians who experience same-sex attraction,” and “reject[ing] the use of language that identify such people for who they are — Gays.”

ACNA and the Church of Nigeria are both prominent members of GAFCON, a traditionalist Anglican movement that has been carving out an Anglican sphere of influence separate from Canterbury. In fact, ACNA Archbishop Foley Beach is chairman of GAFCON’s Council of Primates — a role in which he succeeded Nicholas Okoh, the fourth Archbishop of Nigeria.

The conflict flared in response to a 3,700-word pastoral statement in January from the ACNA College of Bishops — the culmination of more than a year of research and consultation.

The statement carefully explores nuances between identity and behavior, distinguishing “between the unsought experience of same-sex attraction and the sin of engaging in lust or bodily practices that stem from this experience.”

After discussing objections to the phrases “gay Christian” and “same-sex attracted believer,” the statement con-

Update: The conflict has spilled into the Anglican Communion. As this issue of TLC was going to press, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby rebuked Ndukuba, writing: “I completely disagree with and condemn this language. It is unacceptable. It dehumanizes those human beings of whom the statement speaks.”



Archbishop Ndukuba

cludes that the least problematic term is “Christians who experience same-sex attraction.”

Addressing these people, the bishops wrote: “Please hear this: we love you, respect you, and pray that this statement will encourage you.”

The conflict broke out in late February when Pieter Valk, a celibate gay man in Nashville who aspires to ordination as an ACNA deacon, created deargayanglicans.com as a vehicle for responding to the bishops’ message. He posted a letter cosigned by an ACNA bishop and more than a dozen priests. Valk’s letter did not explicitly contradict anything in the bishops’ statement, but implicitly made clear that the signers consider *gay* an identity, not just a behavior.

He quickly took down the letter on the advice of his bishop, but it already

had touched off an international uproar.

Beach responded to the “Dear Gay Anglicans” letter with a message to clergy, saying the issue is serious enough “that I am writing this at 1:15 a.m.”

Beach wrote that he had heard protests from three provinces of the Anglican Communion within a day of Valk’s letter. “In many of our partner provinces, the practice of homosexuality is against the law, and to make matters more difficult, they usually don’t understand the nuances of the word ‘gay’ or ‘homosexual attraction’ — they just hear the practice of same-sex immorality.” Under Nigerian law, homosexual acts can be punished by up to 14 years in prison.

Beach instructed clergy who had signed the letter to explain why. “If you are one of the clergy who signed on to this, I expect you to send me an email explaining why you signed a letter and beginning a private, non-punitive, conversation with me about your concerns,” he wrote, after saying such clergy should not be condemned or ostracized.

The Dear Gay Anglicans letter “is likened to a Yeast that should be urgently and radically expunged and excised lest it [affect] the whole dough,” Ndukuba wrote. “The response of ACNA leadership so far has been palliative, weak, and unwilling to discipline the erring bishops and priests.”

That language drew criticism from other theologically orthodox Anglicans. “This is an unmitigated tragedy that will bear no good fruit,” tweeted

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TEC Bishop Greg Brewer, who is part of the orthodox Communion Partners movement. “The letter expresses a hatred that is incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Writing on Fulcrum, an evangelical Anglican website, author and ethicist Andrew Goddard called the Nigerian letter “homophobic,” a term he said he uses sparingly. He said it represents “the most serious departure from Christian faithfulness among those who hold traditional views on sexuality,” as he does.

In his late-night message, Beach described the use of “gay Anglican” as an “in your face” provocation, but Valk told *TLC* that was not his intent. “I took the College of Bishops at their word, that they put exactly, precisely, without possibility of misinterpretation — they put exactly what they wanted to in the provincial statement,” he said. “They didn’t say that the word *Anglican* was some equally sacred word as the word *Christian*.”

He disagrees with the pastoral statement’s lengthy discussion of “why we cannot modify the word *Christian* in any way,” Valk said, but he nevertheless honored that stricture in writing his letter. “After the fact, applying this same standard now to the word ‘Anglican’ — I can only describe that as moving the goalposts.”

Valk, 30, lives in a Nashville monastery that he helped found, called the Nashville Family of Brothers, where he has taken a vow of celibacy. He hopes to be ordained as a deacon in the ACNA, and said the current controversy has done nothing to change that.

He spoke about the Bible verses often quoted in opposition to homosexuality, and said “the most reasonable conclusion, and certainly the teaching of the church historically, has been that what we should take from those verses is that same-sex sexual and romantic activity are sins.”

He added: “None of us who signed the ‘Dear Gay Anglicans’ letter disagree with the top-line theology of the provincial statement.”

Are ‘Amin Tendencies’ Returning to Uganda?

By Mark Michael

As Ugandans observed the 44th anniversary of the martyrdom of an Anglican archbishop by President Idi Amin, tensions emerged between the nation’s president and leaders of the Church of Uganda.

The body of Archbishop Janai Luwum, an outspoken critic of Amin, was found riddled with bullets on February 17, 1977, after Luwum had been arrested by government forces. A national holiday honors the cleric, who boldly denounced the extra-judicial killings and widespread corruption of the military dictator.

President Yoweri Museveni, who has



Museveni

Wikimedia Commons

ruled Uganda since 1986, touted his part in the movement that toppled Amin from power in 1979. Museveni made his remarks at an Anglican service honoring Luwum at State House, the presidential residence in Entebbe, near Kampala, on Feb. 16.

“Idi Amin killed Janai Luwum. He killed other people, including Benedict Kiwanuka, the former chief justice, but we, the freedom fighters, avenged. We fought Idi Amin. Our generation was able to avenge the death of these people,” Museveni said.

“Amin was insecure and a coward. Killing people who are not armed is laziness. ... It means the killer doesn’t have enough confidence that they will win an argument. That is why they want to silence them,” he said.

But some religious and political leaders suggest that the complicity of Museveni’s government in a campaign of violent oppression surrounding the

Jan. 14 national election shows him following in the footsteps of his former nemesis.

“Missing people, the arresting of people, is part of a bad train that our country is sinking back to,” said the Rt. Rev. Reuben Kisembo, Bishop of Rwenzori. “We appeal to our commander in chief of the armed forces to ask his security agencies not to disturb Ugandans by arresting them and torturing them.”

Joel Senyoni, spokesman for the opposition National Unity Platform, wrote on Facebook, “Today, we remember Archbishop Janani Luwum, who was murdered by Amin in 1977 for pointing out his evil deeds. Years later, Amin tendencies are back.” Those who oppose Museveni, Senyoni added, “are killed, abducted, and others tried in a military court on trumped-up charges.”

“The weeks leading up to Uganda’s recently concluded elections were characterized by widespread violence and human rights abuses,” Human Rights Watch declared in a report published a week after the election.

Government security forces detained two opposition candidates, including the National Unity Platform’s Robert Kyagulanyi, a former pop singer popularly known as Bobi Wine. Museveni reportedly won with more than 58 percent of the vote, while Kyagulanyi alleged fraud.

Police also used tear gas and, reportedly, live ammunition to disperse several opposition rallies in November and January, claiming that they violated COVID-19 gathering restrictions. At least 54 people were killed when police fired into crowds that gathered to protest Kyagulanyi’s detainment in November. Afterward, Museveni’s security minister, Elly Tumwine, warned protesters that police “have the right to shoot and kill you.”

Government authorities also limited media coverage of opposition candidates by beating journalists and shooting at them with rubber bullets, Human Rights Watch says. Two days before the election, the Uganda Communications Commission shut down the internet across the country for five full days, and it blocked the nonpartisan National Elections Watch Uganda

from monitoring the polls.

Museveni has repeatedly denied that the nation’s security forces were involved in the kidnapping of opposition leaders, but said on Feb. 14 that 318 “terrorists and lawbreakers” had been seized by military police and commando squads sent from Somalia. He claimed these people had been arrested for destroying property and threatening his political supporters. Nodding to accusations of widespread disappearances, Museveni pledged that “every Ugandan will be accounted for.”

Museveni’s internal affairs minister, Jeje Odongo, said that police are still attempting to locate 31 missing persons. The National Unity Party estimates the number still missing at more than 3,000, and said that those recently released had been tortured and interrogated about party matters while under police custody.

Archbishop Stephen Kaziimba, primate of the Church of Uganda, thanked Museveni for admitting the role played by security forces in the election-related kidnappings.

“Janani Luwum would plead that people arrested be released. He was a good shepherd. Life was not cheap,” he said during the State House service. “We remember stories of boda boda [riders] being killed using iron bars. ... Even last November, we heard a report from Jeje Odongo that people were missing. I am grateful, Your Excellence, that you have come out. ... Let the wrongdoers be brought to courts of law so that justice can be pursued.”

Kaziimba chose his words about election-related violence carefully, as did Bishop Alfred Olwa, of the Diocese of Lango, the service’s preacher. In his sermon, Olwa said many Ugandans are “carrying deep wounds” about the country’s “political divisions.”

Museveni shot back with criticism of clerical meddling: “When you are a religious person who is tribal or sectarian, I think he might not go to the kingdom of heaven. He might go to the other side.”

“Some church leaders are speaking unfairly these days. Why do you always talk about the government wrongdoings and not those who are attacking

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the government?” Museveni asked.

Kyagulanyi, meanwhile, suggested that the country’s clerics were far too timid in calling the president to account, tweeting, “Religious leaders seem to have turned into business dealers. They fear Museveni more than God. I want religious leaders to reflect on the life that [Janai] Luwum lived.”

The Church of Uganda is the third-largest province in the Anglican Communion, with an estimated 8 million members, behind the Church of England and the Church of Nigeria.

U.S. Supreme Court Declines Ft. Worth Case

By Kirk Petersen

In a victory for the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), the United States Supreme Court declined without

comment on Feb. 22 to consider property and naming rights in Fort Worth. This leaves standing a Texas Supreme Court ruling that awards \$100 million worth of church properties to the group that left the Episcopal Church (TEC) in 2008.

Many of the affected properties are already home to ACNA congregations, but a handful of TEC congregations apparently will have to vacate the buildings where they worship. The largest of these is All Saints Episcopal Church, with an average Sunday attendance (pre-pandemic) of more than 400 people.

TEC and ACNA each has a diocese that has been calling itself “the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth.” In 2015, District Court Judge John Chupp ruled that the ACNA is the continuing “Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth,” a decision that the higher courts have now let stand.

The case now returns to Judge Chupp’s court to work out the details of exactly what changes hands and when.

“I know this is a disappointment to

us all, but as followers of Jesus Christ, we live in hope,” said Bishop Scott Mayer, the provisional bishop of the TEC-affiliated diocese since 2015. He is also bishop of the neighboring Diocese of Northwest Texas. “In the wake of this decision we remain committed to preaching the gospel as we celebrate the sacraments, care for those in need, and strive for justice and peace.”

“Today’s decision marks a turning point for us as a diocese,” said Bishop Ryan Reed, who leads the ACNA-affiliated diocese. “After directing so many resources to this dispute, we can now put our entire focus on gospel ministry and kingdom work.”

Fort Worth is one of five dioceses in which the bishop and a majority of the congregations left the Episcopal Church a decade or more ago, amid doctrinal disagreements. This touched off property lawsuits in each diocese, with TEC maintaining that all of the buildings were held in trust for the Episcopal Church.

In Fort Worth, the ACNA diocese lists 55 congregations on its website, compared to 15 for the TEC diocese.

Fijian Order Celebrates 5th Anniversary, Young Novice


By Mark Michael

The Moana Community of Saint Clare, an indigenous women’s religious order on the Polynesian Island of Fiji, celebrated five years of ministry and welcomed its first novice in late February.

Miliva Tokariki, 22, will continue her university studies in geography and history while also helping at St. Christopher’s Home, an orphanage run by the community in Nasinu, near Suva, the Fijian capital.

“I love children, and so I thought of the children of the Home and how there’s a need for young girls to come and give their life to God — and to live in the life of chastity, prayer, and humble service,” Tokariki told *Anglican Taonga* of New Zealand.

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A native of Rabi, a tiny island in the northern part of the Fijian archipelago, Tokariki grew up in Suva, and was a resident of St. Christopher's Home for two years before beginning her university studies. She felt a call to the ministry at a Christian conference. "I decided to let the sisters know my decision and low-key pray about it," she said. Tokariki has spent six months as a postulant.

"It's very exciting to have Miliva come to ask us if she could spend a gap year testing her vocation," said Sr. Kalolaine Tuinea'u, one of the community's founders and the sister in charge of St. Christopher's. "We believe that if it is God's will that this order grows, then God will call women to this mission."

Sister Kalolaine says it's a surprise and a delight to see how Miliva embraces her call. "She just laughs when other young people make fun of her little [postulant's] habit, and she doesn't mind when her school friends say to her, 'You must be mad.'"

Tuinea'u was recently honored for her 27 years of service at St. Christopher's Home. She was one of four public servants awarded a 50th Anniversary Independence Commemorative Medal by the nation's president, Jogi Konrote, in a ceremony at State House on Nov. 25.

A native Tongan, Tuinea'u began her

ministry as a sister of the Community of the Sacred Name, a religious order for indigenous Polynesian women founded in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1893. She and another sister, Vutolongo Tuinea'u, were released by the Community of the Sacred Name in 2016 to pioneer a new order focused especially on the faith and social needs of Polynesian Anglicans, while the mother community continues to serve in New Zealand.

"The word *Moana* is used by the Moana Community of St. Clare to indicate the context of the religious life," the order's 2016 Constitution says. "*Moana*, an ancient word indigenous to Polynesia, means Ocean. The Moana Community of St. Clare, guided by God's Spirit, seeks to live discipleship of Jesus in ways relevant to the Oceanic context. The Community draws from the wealth of the past but seeks fresh and contemporary expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The new order's work was initially shepherded by the Most Rev. Winston Halapua, Bishop of Polynesia. As the leader of the Tikanga Pasefika, one of the three "cultural streams" of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia, Halapua was also one of the church's three co-equal archbishops and primates until his retirement in 2018. His wife, the Rev. Janet Halapua, now serves as chaplain to the Moana Community of St. Clare.

The community is also nearly finished raising funds for the construction of Moana St. Clare Boy's Home, a resi-

dence for teenage orphans adjacent to the campus of St. Christopher's. Because of government regulations, boys raised at the home now have to be moved at age 12 to a Methodist home on the other side of the island, a transition that was often difficult for the children.

When construction is complete, Sister Kalolaine said, "The children will see each other every day at the 7:30 a.m. Holy Communion service in St. Christopher's Church, and will still be together as part of children's and youth activities here on Sundays."

The home is expected to cost almost \$1 million Fiji dollars (\$498,000 U.S.) and construction is scheduled to begin in March.

Wesley Hill Moves West

The Reformed Church in America's Western Theological Seminary has hired Dr. Wesley as its associate professor of New Testament.

Hill's book *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (2015) has drawn praise from Douglas A. Campbell, Daniel Treier, and N.T. Wright.

Hill, a columnist for our sister weblog, *Covenant*, has taught for several years as associate professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.

Evangelism Grants Help 12 Projects

At its January 2021 virtual meeting, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church awarded \$33,800 in Evangelism Grant funding to a dozen Episcopal communities.

Initiatives funded by the evangelism grant program include a project to help firefighters in Kentucky, an effort to provide fresh local food to area food pantries in Massachusetts that serve people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, a "wild church" effort in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and online churches across the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe.

For more details, visit bit.ly/EvangelismGrants.



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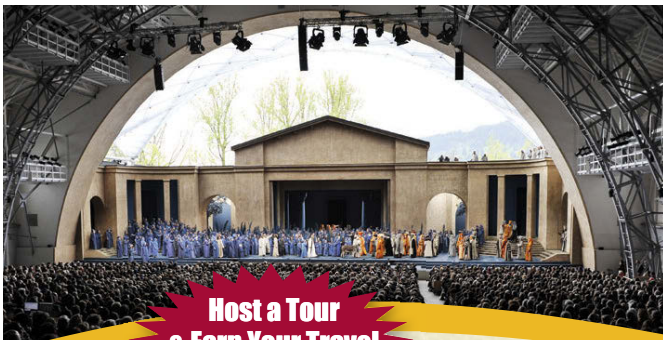


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Dispatch from Capitol Hill with Rebecca Linder Blachly

Rebecca Linder Blachly leads the Episcopal Church's six-person Office of Government Relations (OGR), and in normal times works out of an office essentially across the street from the U.S. Capitol. OGR is part of Team Beyond, working with Episcopal Migration Ministries, ecumenical and interreligious affairs, and global partnerships.

OGR is having an eventful year. TLC Associate Editor Kirk Petersen interviewed Blachly on February 12, the penultimate day of Donald Trump's second impeachment trial. The interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

I want to start at 30,000 feet. I was looking around on your website, in a video you said you tend to focus more on values than issues. I wonder if you would say a little more than that.

I would say we start with values, and that's how we then turn to issues. The originating point is always a value that is a core one to our Christian faith. As we look into *How can that be made real?*, then we get involved in issues.

And as you know, everything we do in OGR comes from General Convention resolutions, or Executive Council resolutions, so we're really implementing the will of the church has made manifest through the resolutions of those bodies.

Poverty is something we all care about. So, okay, what does that look like? Then you look at the current context that we're in, look at the available policy options to address poverty, and then there may be a policy solution that is recommended. But it really comes from wanting to serve the most vulnerable.

At a meeting of Executive Council, Bishop Scott Hayashi said he detected "a certain lightness that we haven't seen in a long time." This has got to be a big change for Govern-

ment Relations with the new administration.

In some sense it's the same work — we're going to legislators and staff on the Hill and presenting our case. The difference now is we are seeing an administration that has taken a lot of bold steps that are in line with policies the General Convention has supported.

The refugee resettlement program is something we've been a part of in the Episcopal Church since 1938, and formally with the government since the 1980s. That program was close to getting wiped out. Now President Biden has issued an executive order on the whole U.S. refugee admissions program, making sure that the program is strong and has sufficient oversight and security vetting, and also is able to serve the most vulnerable.

So the tone of the work changes, and the content changes, from being a defensive posture on some issues to something where we can think proactively and creatively about how to carry out the work.

Listening to you in that meeting, I was struck by how closely the things that the church cares about, in a public policy sense, line up with the Democratic Party. What is it like

dealing with Republicans?

I really believe that the resolutions at Convention are trying to address the problems that we face at any given moment. That changes from convention to convention, as we all have new challenges as a society, and as the Holy Spirit moves among convention, and helps to guide the wisdom of how to make the church respond at this moment.

Whether that aligns with one party or another — it may, I think at the surface level, but we work with a whole range of coalitions, many of whom are conservative. So, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we're working alongside them on refugee resettlement. We're working alongside them on things like protections for Dreamers and DACA, and on making sure that people who are seeking asylum have their legal rights afforded to them.

We had an action alert on Feb. 9, asking support on the COVID stimulus bill, with the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Catholic Bishops, and a bunch of different groups, and we're all pushing for the same things.

On the Republican piece, all our work is relationship-based. We often try to persuade, to make the case for our position. Sometimes that may be



Blachly: “We have more credibility if we’re perceived as able to work with both sides.” (ENS photo)

successful, sometimes it’s not. And then we really look for common ground. It may be that on nine out of 10 issues we disagree, but there’s one issue where we’re able to find alignment.

Members of Congress also have quite a diversity of views and opinions on things. I think that gets missed. On top-line, controversial issues, yes, you can see where the parties align. But members of Congress care about a lot of interesting things. A conservative Republican we worked with, we disagree with on a lot, and he was very concerned about preserving sharks. He really wanted to work on some environmental stuff. The environment broadly wasn’t necessarily something he was interested in, but sharks were. We don’t have a ton of policies on sharks, but we do on protection of biodiversity.

My sense is the leadership of the Church skews far more heavily Democratic than the overall membership of the Church. Is that fair?

I don’t know. We have a very politically diverse group in the pews. If you look at the members of Congress [who are Episcopalian], it’s been pretty evenly split for the past three Congresses, between Republicans and Democrats.

But I don’t know that I can speak to it. What’s your sense of it?

The leadership overwhelmingly skews liberal, and the membership is closer to a 50-50 thing. In that same committee meeting, Bishop [of Southwest Florida Dabney] Smith said he has a 50-50 diocese — sort of putting a stake in the ground that we need to be sensitive to both sides.

Yes. We are highly sensitive by being in a political environment to the different arguments, and to the different language registers that are used, and what resonates and what doesn’t. That’s something we’re very deliberate about.

We have more credibility if we’re perceived as able to work with both sides. If we’re perceived as being heavily aligned with one side, that doesn’t help our ability to do work on Capitol Hill. That’s why we work hard to partner with progressive groups and conservative groups.

On health care, I think the right and the left disagree very much on how to drive down medical costs, but everyone wants medical costs down. We’re not going to denigrate people who have a different perspective on it.

We’ve been concerned about family unity and immigration, treating immigrants with respect, for decades – and that didn’t use to be a totally winning point on the Democratic side.

The Church sometimes aligns more with one party than the other, because those parties are moving, and the

Church is moving forward, too.

Speculating about the years to come, I think there may be some major transformation, because I think maybe one of the political parties will need to re-evaluate.

[both laugh]

Are there any specific issues where you find you’re more aligned with Republicans than Democrats?

We were very supportive of aspects of the National Defense Authorization Act, which has passed for 60 years with bipartisan support. That included the corporate transparency act, which is a big piece of anti-corruption legislation. It had a prohibition that Senator [James] Inhofe introduced on weapons transfers from the military to state and local police departments.

There’s the opioid crisis, it’s certainly something that affects both parties. On some human-rights issues in the international setting, atrocities prevention, genocide prevention, some religious-freedom issues, there’s very strong Republican support on those kinds of things.

Probably the most controversial topic in the Episcopal Church in the last decade has been issues of human sexuality. Is that something you engage with much?

We’ve engaged by supporting the presiding bishop and the president of the House of Deputies on some amicus briefs around transgender rights, specifically. We supported people of all sexual orientation and gender identity in legislation. We supported repealing the executive order on the transgender military ban.

A lot of what we’re doing is this very boring regulatory stuff — submitting comments for regulations about how the FCC regulates prison phone call rates. It’s very expensive for people who are incarcerated to call their family members. It shouldn’t be that expensive.

It’s one small piece of criminal jus-

(Continued on next page)

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tice reform, it's not getting us all the way to ending mass incarceration, but it's important, especially when people can't visit during COVID. It's important for reducing recidivism. That's not partisan.

Some national security proponents are very focused on refugee-resettlement efforts for national security reasons. They're pro, because it helps U.S. standing in the world. It's not just church groups saying it's the right thing to do, it's small-town mayors saying this is good for my economy. Whenever possible we try to have a coalition that includes someone arguing the economic, and the security, and the moral framing all together. We'll work with anyone who wants the same outcome that we want.

Where were you on the afternoon of January 6?

I was at home, watching. I had been anticipating the vote-counting all day. Our office is just a few hundred feet from the Capitol. We are in the Capitol buildings — the Senate and House buildings, and then occasionally the Capitol itself — with great frequency.

Early in quarantine we were looking

“We have not always lived up to our ideals, but we’re trying.”

—Rebecca Blachly

for a hill for son to roll down. He was 2 at the time. So we went to the Capitol and rolled down the hill all day. It's our neighborhood, it doesn't feel like just something from high-school civics class.

It was quite disturbing to see. It resonates for everyone, but for those of us who work on the Hill every day, that's our view out the window. We say good morning to Capitol Police officers every day, or we did pre-pandemic. Nobody was in the office that day because we've all been working from home.

I was on the phone yesterday with a staffer who works on the Hill, and I hadn't checked in on her in a few weeks. She said she just had to tear herself away from the impeachment, it's too hard to watch. She was in the building.

We had a service for members of Congress, a Morning Prayer service,

we had it online in January. It was via Zoom. We had a number of members of Congress and staff, but it was off the record, so we don't say who it was. But they came together and had a prayer, and Bishop Curry led us, and it just felt like a really healing moment.

You mentioned in the committee that the closest place for you to get coffee from the office was in the Senate.

Yeah! We had to go through a metal detector every day to get coffee, but we did. It's a place where people work, it's an official building, but it's also, you run into friends in the hallway and give them a hug, you say good morning to the same people every day.

I've never seen anything like that. It's so disturbing.

There's a sense, too — I don't quite want to say “sacred,” but there's a hallowedness to the halls, there's a reverence that we bring to it. That's the seat of the institution that has allowed us to govern ourselves as a country. We have not always lived up to our ideals, but we're trying. So there's a sense that I, as an American, more than as a Christian, feel hurt by that behavior and disrespect.

How long do you think it will be until you can get coffee in the Senate again?

I don't know if it will go back to the same way that it was.

Is there anything else you'd like to have the Church know about your work and your office?

We sometimes get asked, why are you doing political stuff. I think this is one path, among many, toward a more just, a more humane world, where the values that we hold dear as Christians are lived out. I truly believe that advocacy does direct change. There's some real impact to it. I feel we have an obligation, as a Church, to be in the space of federal-level advocacy, lifting up the values and holding up the plight of the most vulnerable.

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New Province to Unite Mozambique, Angola

By Mark Michael

Plans are underway for the creation of the Anglican Communion's 42nd province, the *Igreja Anglicana de Moçambique e Angola* (IAMA), which would eventually gather a half million Portuguese-speaking Anglicans in the two noncontiguous southern African nations. The IAMA would join the Anglican Church in Brazil, becoming the Anglican Communion's second Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) province.

The Anglican Consultative Council's Steering Committee reviewed progress made by the Diocese of Angola and the Mozambiquan dioceses of Lebombo, Nampula, and Niassa at their meeting in late February, and granted approval for continued planning and preparation.

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA), to which the four dioceses now belong, received and celebrated the news at its February 23-26 Synod of Bishops, noting that "this development is indicative of the growth within the ACSA for which we give God the glory."

The Most Rev. Thabo Magkoba, the primate of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, had first proposed the idea to the synod in 2019, noting the significant growth of the church in both nations. The Diocese of Nampula was inaugurated in 2018 and the Diocese of Angola in December 2019.

At the ACSA's October 2020 Provincial Standing Committee Meeting, Bishop of Lebombo Carlos Matsinhe reported great enthusiasm for forming a province in all four dioceses. "[A]s bishops, we have spoken with the laity and clergy of our dioceses and we are keeping the discussion on this matter high in our parishes and congregations," he said.

The four dioceses are working together on plans to develop eight new dioceses, five more in Mozambique and three more in Angola. This step isn't necessary to form a province, but reflects new opportunities for public leadership for bishops in the two coun-

tries as well as the challenges of effective ministry in large countries with sparse infrastructure.

"Our Anglican Church is already recognized by our civil society and authorities as a serious partner in the areas of peace building, public health and poverty eradication," he said. Bishop Matsinhe himself was recently chosen to chair Mozambique's Elections Commission.

"This recognition poses a challenge of growth, effective presence and relevant witness which we cannot do well from a distance. We need more bishops to bring down their episcopal ministry to where many congregations are." Matsinhe noted that Niassa's bishop, the Rt. Rev. Vicente Masosa, must travel through Malawi when going between his diocese's eastern and western parts.

Within Mozambique, Anglicans are also concentrated in the nation's southern and northern border regions, a testimony to historic patterns of mission activity. For most of the Portuguese

colonial period, the Roman Catholic missionaries had exclusive rights in the region.

Anglican mission efforts began in the Lebombo Mountains, along the border with South Africa, then a British colony, in the late nineteenth century. Mission work in the Niassa region was begun at about the same time along the shores of Lake Malawi by the Universities Central Mission in Africa, whose base of operation was Saint Peter's Cathedral on Likoma Island in the middle of the immense lake. Anglicanism was planted in Angola in the 1920s by a lay missionary, Archibald Patterson, and remains strongest in the country's north, his original base of operations.

Mission activity in both countries was severely limited by several decades of Marxist rule during the Cold War, and a series of civil wars and political crises. In the 1980s, as restrictions on religious activity began to loosen, Angolan Anglicanism, which had gone almost completely underground, was rediscovered.



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COMMENTARY

Honoring Haiti's First Bishop, and Seeking the Next

By J. Fritz Bazin

March 13 marks the 110th anniversary of the death of James Theodore Holly, the first Bishop of Haiti and the first African American bishop of the Episcopal Church. Holly worked tirelessly in the most difficult situations to proclaim the gospel to the people of Haiti.

More than a century after Holly's death, Haiti does not have a bishop diocesan after years of internal conflict. The diocese, which has more baptized members than any diocese in the Episcopal Church, struggles with self-governance and its relationship to the broader church.

The church Holly founded was different from most missionary churches; it was indigenous, for many years self-sufficient, led by bivocational clergy who worked as schoolteachers, lawyers, and farmers.

After preliminary authorization in 2006 to add Holly to the calendar of *Holy Women, Holy Men* of the Episcopal Church, a Eucharistic celebration occurred at Cathédrale Ste Trinité in Port-au-Prince on March 13, 2009.

After Holly's death in 1911, the Haitian Church, which was then still known as l'Eglise Orthodoxe Apostolique Haïtienne, entered formally into a relationship with the Episcopal Church, by choosing to become a missionary district of the American church instead of electing a bishop from among its clergy or becoming an autonomous church of the Anglican Communion. This decision was made in 1915, the same year that U.S. Marines occupied Haiti. That occupation would last until 1934.

In 2021, as with other countries that have suffered foreign occupation, Haiti still struggles with political instability, violence, and dire poverty. Many



James Theodore Holly

Archives of the Episcopal Church

silently wish for another occupation, instead of calling for a dialogue of adults to solve the problem, by going to the roots of the constant crisis. Only Haitians can solve Haiti's problems, even if helped by others in the international community.

The Diocese of Haiti faces serious challenges of division, even polarization, and the reflex is the same among many well-meaning persons, who want "Big Daddy" to come to the rescue and solve their problem. Often the best

remedy is to allow a situation to grow worse, until the protagonists can see they will succeed together as sisters and brothers or perish like fools.

In April 2017, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry announced a covenant with the Diocese of Haiti. This covenant arose from many negotiations and prayers to address the bitter battle between Bishop Jean Zaché Duracin and Bishop Suffragan Ogé Beauvoir, who became Haiti's first suffragan in May 2012. The Haitian

church remained divided into camps that rallied around the two bishops. This division deepened as the church prepared to elect a bishop coadjutor to succeed Duracin in 2019.

Elections occurred in May 2018, and a runoff election followed a month later. The Very Rev. Joseph Kerwin Delicat, dean of the cathedral, was declared the winner, but these elections were contested by a sufficiently large number of clergy and lay delegates. Delicat did not obtain the required number of approvals by bishops and standing committees of the Episcopal Church.

Since that time, the standing committee has been the ecclesiastical authority. The bishop of my diocese,

Because of the political upheaval and violence in the country, Bishop Eaton has not visited the Diocese of Haiti, but has sent pastoral letters during the church's liturgical seasons.

the Rt. Rev. Peter Eaton, was appointed to conduct pastoral offices. Because of the political upheaval and violence in the country, Bishop Eaton has not visited the diocese. He has, however, sent pastoral letters during the church's liturgical seasons.

The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley, Bishop for Pastoral Development, has said a new election for Haiti's next bishop has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but that it may occur sometime this year.

No direct intervention in the form of appointing a provisional bishop or a board of administration will solve the problem. What might seem to work for a short time will eventually be followed by new challenges, because the solution did not come from those most concerned. Working for the people without the people is equal to working against the people.

Asking Presiding Bishop Curry to intervene by appointing a provisional bishop for Haiti would repeat the

action of 1915, and it may reflect a legacy of racism.

To quote from *The Spirit of Missions* in 1913: "In making Haiti a new foreign missionary district, the convention took action that for a long time has been seen to be inevitable. The history of the church in the black Republic has not been without its bright pages, yet it must be admitted that the experiment of an independent church with a Negro Bishop and Negro Clergy has not proven a success."

How much of that assessment of a century ago still prevails in more subtle ways in the requests for outside intervention?

The Ven. J. Fritz Bazin, DMin, is Archdeacon for Social Justice in the Diocese of Southeast Florida. He was born in Haiti and lives in Miami. He is the author of The Cross and the Crossroad: A Study on the African Spiritual Heritage in the New World (Educa Vision, 2020).

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Archbishop Williams Inspires Study Day Discussions

By Sarah Puryear

The year 2020 brought two contemporary challenges to the fore: the pressing issues of the COVID pandemic and racial injustice. What does the Church's faithful theological response to these issues look like? In the rush to respond compassionately to urgent questions, we run the risk of coming at them from an insufficiently Christian perspective.

In a recent virtual study day hosted by the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies at Duke Divinity School, Archbishop Rowan Williams cast a vision for theology that springs from the life of the Church and its experience of prayer, the sacraments, and Scripture. The virtual nature of this event enabled almost 800 people from 25 countries to participate online.

After his address, a panel discussion followed among Christopher Beeley, director of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies; Michael Battle of General Theological Seminary; Katherine Sonderegger of Virginia Theological Seminary; Jeremy Begbie of Duke Divinity School and Cambridge University; and Hans Boersma of Nashotah House Theological Seminary, who touched on some of the salient points and implications of the lecture.

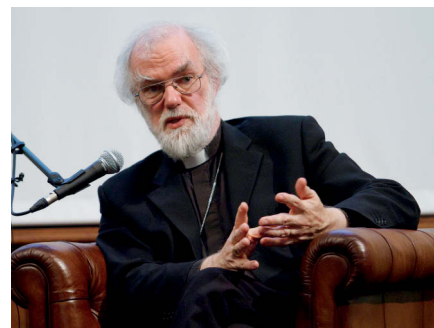
When current events exert pressure on the Church for a response, our call is to return to the gifts God has given

to the Church that sustain its life, Williams said. In this lecture, Williams focused on Scripture as the center of where we find "the grammar of the central difference that is made when God's work enters human life."

Williams examined how 1 Corinthians and Ephesians 1 reorient us toward the two central questions of the New Testament: how is humanity different in light of Christ? and what does that difference tell us about the character of God? Both passages highlight the Church's utter dependence on the free action of God, who did not choose the members on the basis of their merit or success but on his gracious gift.

Scripture shows us that "what's different, because of Christ, is that the freedom of God's welcome and absolution and renewal has become real here and now." Through the Holy Spirit, God gives each member gifts to be shared in a community marked by mutuality and interdependence, rather than competition and hierarchy.

Williams demonstrated the dynamic relationship between these two questions; the answer to the first shapes the answer to the second, which then casts new light back upon the first question. As Scripture reveals to us how God's love in Christ has transformed us, we come to see God's power, wisdom, and love with greater clarity. That, in turn, influences "our storytelling, our worshiping, our growth to maturity as Christian persons and praying per-



Williams

Wikimedia Commons

sons," as well as our engagement with and witness to a broken world.

The members of the panel discussion highlighted the archbishop's emphasis on Scripture and prayer as the well-spring of the Church's life in Christ, from which we must drink deeply before addressing the issues of our day. The panel members also considered how to apply this theological approach to today's pressing questions. For instance, both the problems of racial injustice and the pandemic have highlighted the suffering of the marginalized, those who, like the Corinthians, lack the social status and success deemed valuable in our society.

Yet when we turn to the New Testament, we see that God chooses to identify himself with the weak and powerless, for it is Jesus, "this humiliated, rejected, executed human being," whom God chooses to be "the vehicle of God's invitation to this kind of community," one marked by humility and interdependence.

Theology must first send down deep roots into Scripture and prayer before responding to the needs and questions of the world; only from that vantage point can we cast a faithful vision of what redeemed and forgiven humanity looks like to the world around us.

"We must always remember that we are in the context of a world that has been renewed by God in Christ," Williams said. "It is that perspective which nourishes our vision, which kindles our outrage, and energizes our engagement."

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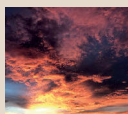
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The Evangelical Edge

This is the second of three reflections on hierarchy.

Digging deeper into the origins of *hierarchy*, one comes to a most basic sense of the Greek *arché*, namely, *beginning* or *origin*. This aspect of the term traditionally oriented Christian thinking in this field as a call to sacred order in and after God's initiative. "In the beginning," Genesis 1:1 says with reference to God's creating, which the Church takes as proof of God's eternity, since he was there before the start, so to speak. For Christians, furthermore, God is always already a trinity of persons. As we read, his spirit "swept over the waters" at the outset (1:2), after which he starts to speak the world and its creatures into existence, day by day (1:3ff.).

St. John specifies that God created all things through the Word, to such an extent that the very being and life of creation is founded, and apparently perdures, "in him" (John 1:3-4). The author of the letter to the Hebrews corroborates this picture with reference to God both creating and "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb. 1:3). And Genesis singles out human beings as made in God's "image, according to our likeness" (Gen. 1:26), which fits with the incarnate Word's particular interest in "the light of all people" (John 1:4). This light of God may be seen by human creatures as "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb. 1:3), a singular glory "as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

We find here many hierarchies, many layers of *holy order*: of holy provision and gift in the creation and redemption of the world; of holy power, with which comes responsibility, even accountability. Only God creates, and therefore can call all things to their proper end, meting out both justice and mercy. Only God can defeat death and, by his Spirit, raise to new life (Rom. 8:11). In turn, all of creation, knowingly or not, answers its creator-as-redeemer in the very words and things given by God in the first place. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). St. Thomas Aquinas calls this the "stamp of divine knowledge, which is one and simple, yet extends to everything" (*Summa theologiae* I 1, 3 ad 2).

To be sure, intentional response is a mark of faithfulness for human creatures bestowed with free wills. The Marian

fiat models a particularly fitting ready agreement and entry into the trinitarian drama, a voluntary acceptance of having been cast in a critical role. As she perfectly puts it in christological terms: "may it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Through this word and enabled by it, as St. Paul insists, obedient disciples hear and answer the call of God by grace, for "faith comes by hearing, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

The metaphor of verticality that we associate with hierarchy — the symbolic placing of people and things *above* and *below* one another — makes sense in this context, both as a recognition of the way things are and as a calling forth of complementary response. All of Scripture is shot through with this imagery, which inculcates humility and awe before God, as a goad to worship.

In the ancient depiction of the *Te Deum*, the whole earth, all angels, "the heavens and all the powers therein," the apostles, prophets, martyrs, and the Church throughout the world sing together the *Sanctus*, as a grand liturgical demonstration of the fact that heaven and earth *are* "full of the majesty of thy glory." And human beings are entrusted, in turn, with "dominion over" all the other creatures on the earth, and all plants and trees, acting in the Lord's stead as overseers — bishops, of a sort — who will be asked to report back from time to time (Gen. 1:26ff.; cf. Mark 12:1ff.).

One aspect of the trinitarian picture here bears careful consideration, as it strikes to the heart of hierarchy as both gift and call. In David's prophetic utterance "by the Spirit," amazingly reiterated by Jesus as the subject of the statement, "the LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'" (Matt. 22:43-44; Ps. 110:1). Jesus broaches this messianic prophecy with the Pharisees in a wonderful piece of scriptural scholasticism, but the intra-trinitarian dynamic is noteworthy.

By David's lights, God the LORD, the one God, speaks to his son as a Lord as well, thereby demonstrating an ordered equality between them. The equality is critical if Jesus is to be taken as God, but so too is the order, and implied obedience, of Son to Father. As the early Church concluded about such passages, if the three persons of the Trinity are identically God, the Father nonetheless must still be the *source*, in some sense, by dint of distinction from his Son. Thus, "God

*The equality is critical
if Jesus is to be
taken as God, but
so too is the order,
and implied obedience,
of Son to Father.*

(Continued on next page)

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from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.” Logically, begetter must precede begotten. In this way, the hierarchical relation of Father to Son unfolds the work of God in time as, at once, gratuitous and inviting of a response from the faithful that will mirror the Son’s filial piety.

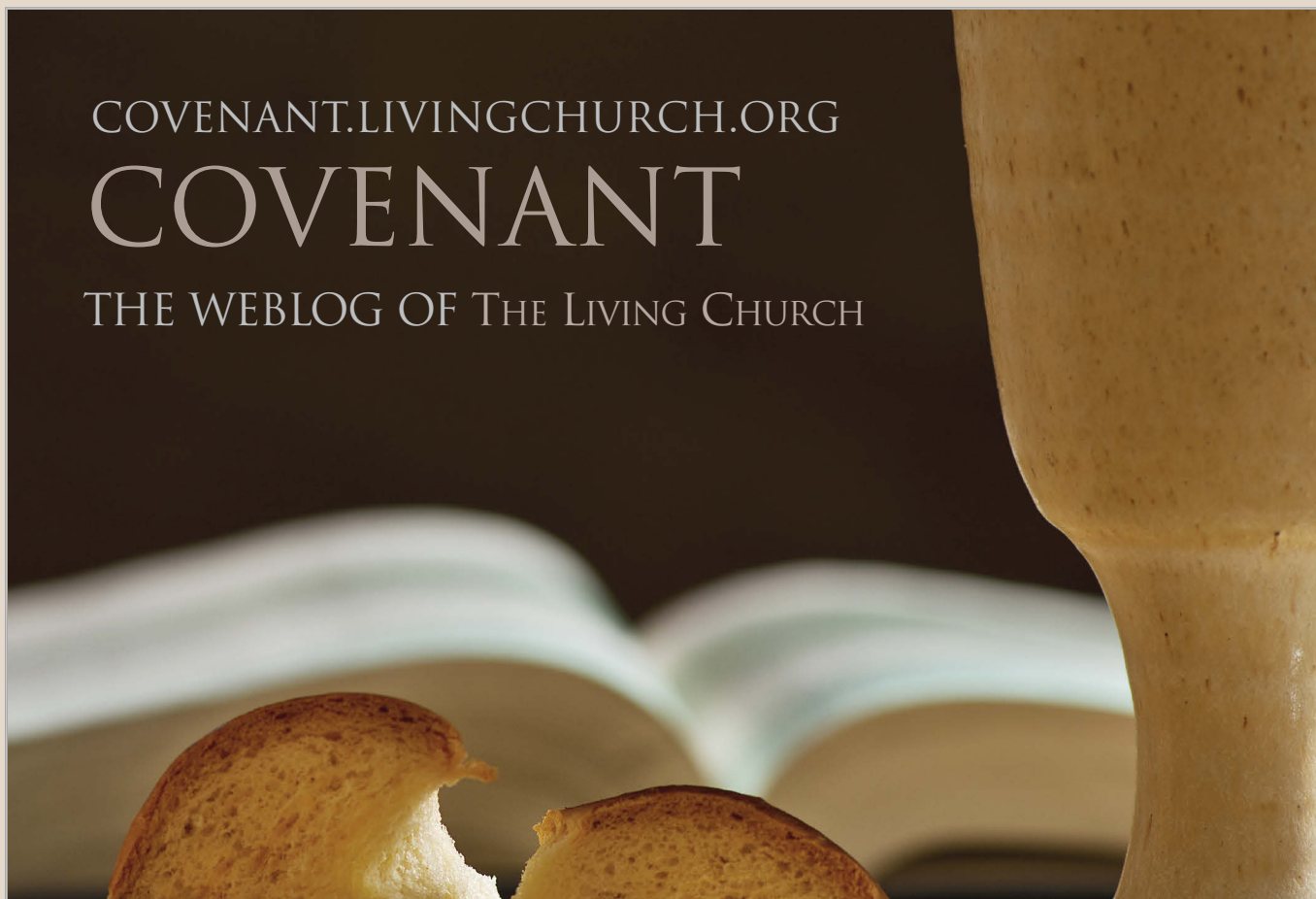
This same trinitarian pedagogy may be mapped with reference to St. Paul’s wisdom Christology (see 1 Cor. 1:24), which recalls God the LORD’s creating of wisdom “at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.” Thereafter, Wisdom is “beside him, like a master worker” to help establish the heavens and the earth (Prov. 8:22, 30). “I was daily his delight,” says Wisdom personified, “rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race” (8:30-31).

Here we have, in effect, the back story of Wisdom’s long career, setting the stage for the most-dramatic surprise of incarnation, which both follows from the foregoing and could not have been predicted. In the pellucid picture of Philippians 2, writ as an exclamation point on Christ’s exemplarity: “though he was in the form of God, [Christ Jesus] did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself” (2:6-7). The humility and humiliation of his subsequent Passion serves as an out-working of obedience (2:8) to the Father and as a model of faithfulness set forth for our imitation, on the way to being swept *up* into a glorious hierarchy of divine worship. In Paul’s grand summation:

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

Cleaving to this Christ-formed pattern, we discover the evangelical edge of hierarchy, its Christian appropriation and transformation. “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them,” but not so the incarnate God-man Jesus. Rather, as he demonstrates, “the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves” (Luke 22:24-27). Hereafter, *Christian* hierarchy can only be known by the countercultural confrontation of cruciform wisdom, offensive to Jews and simply nonsensical to Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23). The sacramental life of the Church walks straight out of this upside-down world of God’s self-offering in Christ, “by whom and with whom and in whom” we, in turn, present ourselves, our souls and bodies, “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable worship” (Rom. 12:1). Holy order yields holy communion with the Word of God incarnate and crucified — *lifted up*, in every case, to the Lord (John 12:32).

—Christopher Wells



March 26: Harriet Monsell, Monastic, 1883

By Ian McCormack

Queen Victoria called Harriet Monsell, the first mother superior of the Community of St. John the Baptist, “an excellent person.” They met when the queen made the short journey from Windsor to Clewer for a visit. As she was shown round, the monarch noticed the sisters curtseying as they passed. She remonstrated with Mother Harriet, for this was meant to be a private visit.

“But, Your Majesty,” Mother Harriet replied, “they are not curtseying to you, but to me.”

Behind this story is a serious point: though they undoubtedly offered women opportunities that had rarely been open to them, the early sisterhoods were not feminist collectives. They were strictly hierarchical, combining an emphasis on obedience, which has always been a part of religious orders, with an expectation of Victorian deference to those in authority.

Mother Harriet Monsell helped found the Community of St. John the Baptist in 1852. The Rev. Thomas T. Carter — rector of Clewer, Windsor — was the driving force of the founding. Credit for the community’s success belongs largely to Mother Harriet. CSJB was among the earliest of Anglican religious orders, and became one of the largest, stablest, and best-known.

Mother Harriet dedicated her life to

the work at Clewer in 1851, at age 40. She was nobody’s idea of a typical nun. She was the seventh child of an Irish Baronet, the widow of an Irish priest, the cousin (by marriage) of A.C. Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury (1868-82), and a friend of Prime Minister Edward and Catherine Gladstone. She was intimidated by nobody, as her correspondence — not least with bishops — makes clear.

In Mother Harriet, the sisters found a superior with a genuine love and concern for their welfare. A practical understanding of what could be achieved and a proper Christian emphasis on both hope and joy shines in her extant writings and in contemporary reminiscences of her.

It was these qualities that made CSJB successful. Clewer avoided the extremes of asceticism and liturgical observance that were a feature of other early orders. The community’s founding charism was the restoration of prostitutes. Prostitution was a substantial problem in Clewer, a deprived urban area close to substantial army barracks. But the work’s scope grew quickly, as did the community. By the 1880s there were more than 20 branch houses, plus the beginnings of work in the United States and India.

Perhaps the depth of Mother Harriet’s discipleship is best reflected in how she turned over the office of superior, amid ill health, in 1875. She retired to a cottage in Folkestone, where she



Mother Harriet Monsell

successfully managed to balance interest in the life of the community — and its individual members — with maintaining a discrete and wise distance, enabling her successors to continue the work without undue interference.

“Easter is such a lovely time to go home,” she said shortly before her death on Easter Day in 1883.

Upon her retirement, Mother Harriet offered her “Ideal of a Religious”:

The one great Aim of her life is
the Glory of God.
The one great Example of her life is
the Incarnate God.
The one great Devotion of her life is
the Will of God.
The one great Longing of her life is
union with God.
The one great Reward of her life is
the Vision of God.

Gracious God, who led your servant Harriet Monsell through grief to a new vocation; grant that we, inspired by her example, may grow in the life of prayer and the work of service so that in sorrow or joy, your presence may increase among us and our lives reveal the mind of Jesus Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

The Rev. Ian McCormack is priest in charge of St. George’s in the Meadows, Nottingham, England.



Photos courtesy of African Palms

Tanzanian staff of African Palms share a laugh amid the bountiful supply of the hand-crafted crosses they export.

Palm Cross Ministry

for a Pandemic Palm Sunday

By Neva Rae Fox, Correspondent

Facing a second pandemic year of no processions, no palms, and no in-person worship, Christians worldwide nonetheless are preparing for Palm Sunday on March 28.

At St. John's Church in Olney, Maryland, an international outreach ministry is helping many face a shortage of palms in their churches through its relationship with African Palms, USA.

Johnna Benson Gilchrist is part of the St. John's team that coordinates with African Palms, USA, selling and shipping hand-woven palm crosses that were designed, styled, prepared, and shipped from Tanzania. She said African palm crosses are an alternative for congregations as the pandemic curtails palm supplies in 2021.

The African Palms website heralds its purpose: "Improving life, one village at a time from the sale of Palm Crosses. Our organization returns proceeds from Palm Cross sales to villages, of all denominations for clean water, schools, and medical facilities."

Gilchrist said the ministry began in the 1965 when the Rev. Alan Talbot visited Tanzania. "He saw Anglicans and Muslims living together in peace," she said. "He saw the extreme poverty and wanted to do something to help."

Talbot's idea for a ministry started when he saw villagers weaving baskets and other arts and crafts with palm leaves. He carried the crosses back to Maryland and a ministry was launched.

St. John's rector, the Rev. Henry McQueen, is thankful for churchwide involvement in African Palms.

"The congregation is involved in doing quality control of

the palm crosses, unloading shipping containers, and spreading the word of our work,” he said. “There seems to be a real sense of pride from everyone about this ministry, even with those who are not actively involved.”

He said African Palms helps congregations look outward. “One of the wonderful aspects of this ministry is that the congregation continually looks beyond the walls of the church,” McQueen said. “The view from St. John’s spans from Olney, Maryland, to Masasi, Tanzania. As a result of this expanded view, the parish sees the work that is needed in the town, county, state, and beyond and is willing to step in and find a way to participate. The ministry of African Palms has expanded the horizons of St. John’s. And, above all, the congregation supports the people of Tanzania.”

Although palms are naturally associated with Palm Sunday, African Palm Crosses are offered for other uses, including Sunday school, vacation Bible school, and other life events. Gilchrist said the St. John’s women’s group, which became involved in 1976, donates them to “funeral parlors, nursing homes, wherever support is needed, wherever a sign of God’s love is needed.”

She added that sometimes youth decorate, color, or add

beads to the crosses. Some years a poppy is added for Veterans Day. Gilchrist said that in this pandemic year, the African Palms are an element in many Palm Sunday packets being prepared and sent to congregants throughout the church.

St. John’s does not keep any proceeds. “All profits are sent back to Tanzania in the form of grants meant for the entire community,” Gilchrist said. “It’s not just a Christian thing, it’s a humanitarian thing.”

McQueen said the parish helps in other ways. “Two years ago, when I mentioned that the Diocese of Masasi was going to send a group of women for theological education, the congregation very quickly came together and contributed the needed funds to pay for their transportation, books, fees, and tuition. There is interest in these women and the people of Masasi. They are our sisters and brothers.”

The rector addressed the pandemic’s effects on the ministry in Tanzania.

“They are in a country whose government has denied the pandemic and stopped reporting data related to the pandemic last spring. We know from some of the medical facilities that we work with that in the big cities entire hospitals

have been dedicated to COVID-19 treatment, and that the needs of the other patients are somehow met by other, less-equipped facilities. And even with all of this, I know that if we were in Tanzania right now, we would be treated as a welcomed guest. Their hospitality is overwhelming. Christian or Muslim, they are a people of deep faith, a faith that supports them with joy each day.”

“While the global pandemic has hit this ministry very hard,” Gilchrist said, “we continue to have faith that these Palm Crosses, reminders of God’s love, will pull this ministry through in order to send much-needed grant money to our brothers and sisters in rural Southern Tanzania for clean water, new schools, and very important medical needs.”

Gilchrist said African Palm Crosses are still available for this year.

“We think that a palm procession in our cars around the community and culminating at the church for a curbside service might be in order,” McQueen said. “We will, like everyone, celebrate in new and creative ways while still holding on to our tradition of Palm Crosses from Masasi Tanzania.” □





Photo by Matt Lake/Fresh Expressions US.

Hikers spread out for a socially distanced gathering of Church on the Mountain, a Fresh Expression in Williamsport, Pa.

‘Filling People with God’

Fresh Expressions Connect with the Unchurched

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald, Correspondent

Once a month in Casper, Wyoming, 15 people roll out yoga mats inside their homes and hop on Zoom for a session with YogaSoul. It’s a gathering for people who love yoga, appreciate sacred texts, and don’t attend church.

“We always start with a centering practice that could be both yogic and Christian,” said Jessika Girod, an aspirant to ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church who coordinates YogaSoul and leads traditional worship at Christ Church in Douglas, Wyoming. “The stillness, the quietness. ... There’s nothing you have to do or be. Just dwell in the presence of God.”

As the body loosens up, so does the spirit. Regulars at YogaSoul look forward to gathering in person as they used to before the COVID-19 pandemic. Then they’ll sit on their mats in a circle, have what Girod calls “an embodied experience,” and share in the Eucharist with a priest who practices yoga.

Come for the yoga, stay for the gospel. It’s a soft form of

evangelism within an international movement called Fresh Expressions, which fosters Christian community among people who are unlikely to enter a steepled building on a Sunday morning.

“Fresh Expressions is the medicine that’s needed to make the church healthy and strong again in its mission,” said Jon Davis, an Episcopal priest, mission strategist, and trainer with Fresh Expressions US. “We thought the mission was to fill the pews with people, but that’s not the mission. The mission of the church is to fill people with God.”

Launched in the highly secular United Kingdom in the early 2000s, Fresh Expressions has grown to encompass tens of thousands of small communities that meet in dog parks, tattoo parlors, hair salons, gyms, burrito joints — anywhere people share a bond. With light guidance, often from laypeople linked to an established church, these new churches aspire to grow as groups that study the Bible, worship God, and change lives through discipleship.

At least 450 Fresh Expression churches have an Episcopal affiliation, said the Rev. Katie Nakamura Rengers, staff officer for church planting at the Episcopal Church Center.



She says most rely on three to five parishes to provide some type of support, whether that means a few dollars for Communion supplies, a space to meet, or guidance from one or more people in a congregation. Many gather around food — a vegetable farm, a food truck, or a diner.

“I’m getting nonstop emails and calls from folks who have been awakened to new possibility for how to do church,” Rengers said by email. “The pandemic, and other events of the last year (including George Floyd’s death and the impeachment), have forced us to look outside the physical boundaries of our churches to see the Holy Spirit at work out in the world. New ministry leaders are chasing after it.”

The time is ripe for Fresh Expressions in the United States, organizers say. While 54 percent of Americans said they attended religious services at least monthly in 2007, only 45 percent said the same in 2018-19, according to the Pew Research Center survey. Pew finds that 17 percent of Americans self-identify as “nothing in particular” in religious affiliation, but they’re neither agnostic nor atheist.

The pandemic’s restrictions might have stirred a pent-up desire among the unchurched and de-churched to connect, with faith in the mix.

“People have been isolated, and they want to move beyond their isolation,” said the Rev. John Motis, a deacon who leads Fresh Expressions in the Diocese of Central Florida.

Spreading the vision isn’t always easy in established church settings, Motis said.

“When I try to pitch Fresh Expressions to groups of clergy, I don’t have a great deal of success there,” said Motis, who leads a Fresh Expression for about 30 men in Lake

Wales, Fla. “By and large, their responsibility is to put butts in their pews. Ultimately, they’re answerable to somebody: a board or somebody like that. We need them to be the empowering person, we need their support. ... But more often than not, it takes someone other than the clergyperson of the church to put together the Fresh Expression.”

An ecumenical movement, Fresh Expressions has found momentum in particular denominations, most notably the United Methodist Church. Leaders include the Rev. Michael Beck, co-pastor of Wildwood United Methodist Church in Wildwood, Fla. and author of several books about Fresh Expressions. His congregation is connected with 15 Fresh Expressions, including a digital community that meets only online. It launched during the pandemic and already has 850 members.

“So many of them begin as affinity groups — a community of people who gather around some common practice, space, or hobby,” Beck said by email. “They evolve over time through a process of listening, loving, building community, discipleship, church taking shape, then repeat. They become a form of church that bears the marks of the historical church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Anyone can lead them. In fact, every single follower of Jesus is called to do this.”

Formats vary widely. In addition to coordinating Yoga-Soul, Girod works at a Fresh Expression called The Table, which launched in Casper a few years ago as a new church plant of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Participants find a smorgasbord of spirituality, from reiki to braiding sweetgrass. A Bible study meets weekly for anyone who is interested, but it’s not required to be part of the community.

At The Table, “we come together in a circular format through contemplation, meditating through Scripture, eating, and sharing food together,” Girod said. “Those non-traditional ways of meeting and being together are a lot more accessible to the wider, modern world” than traditional liturgy is.

In Lake Wales, Fla., reflecting on a Bible passage is always part of the experience — but only after a time of food, fellowship, and male bonding. Hosted by Church of the Good Shepherd, this Fresh Expression invites men even during the pandemic to come in, spread out, wear masks and eat individually wrapped breakfast sandwiches. The group includes men who were once part of churches but stopped attending.

“The headliner of it isn’t necessarily Bible study,” Motis said. “It’s Christian men gathering together, supporting one another, and literally trying to give community to those who have no community. In my opinion, that would be the heart of it.”

Fresh Expressions US offers online events for exploring the prospects, including a Future Church Summit and training through its Resilient Church Academy. Though the purpose isn’t to revive long-established churches, that effect sometimes occurs.

“When traditional congregations plant Fresh Expressions, it awakens them to their missional purpose, releases a spirit of creativity and evangelism, and provides a way to connect with the larger community,” said Beck, who describes the phenomenon in his book, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches*. “They are not intended to revive inherited churches, but they often do.” □

Postcard from the Future?

Church after COVID in Australia

By Robyn Douglass, Correspondent

The Anglican Church of Australia announced Feb. 26 that it has postponed its General Synod until sometime in 2022, another loss to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The national meeting, which had been scheduled for 2020, was planned for May. But the standing committee, and in light of “continuing uncertainty around travel and gatherings,” resolved to postpone the next session until a date to be determined.

The Most Rev. Geoffrey Smith said in a letter to Australia’s 23 dioceses that snap lockdowns and border closures were likely to continue for some time. The possibility of some members attending online was not considered appropriate for the important triennial gathering.

Archbishop Smith expressed his “thanks to God for the way Australia has fared through this time.” And indeed, there have been blessings amid the gloom and Zoom.

Australia began rolling out COVID vaccinations on February 21, weeks behind the rest of the world. But in some respects, the nation is ahead. With some luck, not least our living on an island, the COVID toll has been kept low: nearly 29,000 cases and 909 deaths (in a population of 25 million). Life is pretty normal.

After a 10-week national lockdown from March to May last year, everyone arriving in Australia from anywhere has been placed in a capital city hotel for two weeks of quarantine. The occasional virus outbreaks Australia has experienced, the worst in Victoria in



The new young adult service at St Luke’s Church, Clovelly.

(All photos via Facebook)

July, have all come from flaws in these arrangements.

But now we know the drill — as soon as one or two cases break out, the entire city, or state, goes into a lockdown of about five days to allow mass testing and contact tracers to quarantine vulnerable people.

In Melbourne, where the 16-week lockdown was the longest in the country, the Rev. Canon Dr. Colleen O’Reilly wrote a report after surveying diocesan clergy who led virtual church services.

The question of online attendance is ambiguous, she warned. It raises the issue of how much people are actually attending and engaging with service. “Or, more optimistically, have more

people now engaged with church than for longer than we remember?” O’Reilly said.

She said the best news was from priests who found creative ways to maintain contact. One priest left seasonal service booklets in letterboxes for people to read on service days and invited households with children to create posters that were displayed in the church. One parish sent extensive notes on the Sunday lectionary readings for people to learn more about the Scriptures during lockdown.

“Nearly everyone wrote about wanting to maintain connections,” O’Brien said. “Most did this predominantly through the liturgy, but when this was not possible parishes placed



Pancakes on Shrove Tuesday in Perth.

Worship resumed in most churches about the middle of last year, but it's still not quite the same.

an emphasis on pastoral care, keeping in touch with people and keeping an eye on the most vulnerable.”

Worship resumed in most churches about the middle of last year, but it's still not quite the same. We have no idea how long these rules will apply. The Diocese of Melbourne has been seeking ideas for a celebration when the pandemic is vanquished.

COVID rules are set by state governments, so dioceses set the rules according to what their state permits. This is what our churches look like now.

One Door, Please: You don't have to wear a mask in most places, but you are likely to enter by one door so you can scan a QR code with your smartphone (or sign a logbook if you don't have a smartphone). The records are kept by the state governments for weeks to allow for extensive tracing if a case breaks out.

Most churches have a COVID officer or marshal — lay people who have been trained and accredited to keep records and check that people are following the rules, and clean thoroughly after any gathering. They are greeters with real heft.

You are unlikely to receive a prayer book, hymnal, or Bible on entry — shared objects, including cushions, are still banned in some places. Individual

pew sheets or overhead projections are preferred. Some parishes no longer pass around an offertory basket — donations have turned much more generally online — which may affect church finances.

Church workers, including clergy, have been eligible for the national government's JobKeeper allowance, which tops up wages when a company's income is severely affected by COVID shutdowns. This payment stops in

March, which may leave some parishes struggling.

Smaller Crowd: So far, church attendance counts remain down, around 20 percent less than they were before the pandemic. But it's too soon to tell if that is permanent. The Australian church's dominant age profile — vulnerable elderly — has meant that many people still don't feel confident to come

(Continued on next page)



Summer Kids Club at St. Luke's, Clovelly, January 15.

(Continued from previous page)

out. Many parishes keep posting sermons and whole services on Zoom, something they would not have bothered with a year ago.

Other parishes have taken seriously the introspection prompted by lockdowns to devise some thoughtful ways of meeting and talking about life issues.

Spaced Out: All public gatherings are subject to space regulations — a maximum number of people according to the size of the building. People are advised to maintain personal space of four to six feet between non-family, so in many churches, every second pew is roped off.

There are attendance limits for weddings and funerals, provided personal space can be maintained. In Sydney, for example, it's 300; in Brisbane, 200; in Perth, 500.

Singing: Some dioceses still ban congregational singing, and choirs or song leaders must stand six feet from each other. For some worshipers, not being allowed to sing favorite hymns is hard. Others have relished the experience of listening.

Peace, Not a Contact Sport: The greeting of the peace is no longer a handshake, let alone an all-in parish hug session. It is a more sober, quiet greeting. Personal distance being maintained meant Ash Wednesday was very different when parishioners self-imposed ashes on their foreheads.

Holy Communion: This has been one of the more marked changes. Communion is no longer offered in two kinds — parishioners only receive the bread and the priest alone consumes the wine. When wine is distributed, it must be in individual cups. When people receive a blessing, the priest is not permitted to touch them.

Gathering After the Service: It's still a lonely time for those who love morning tea, chatting after the service or social events. In the Diocese of Sydney, mingling after worship has been specifically ruled out. Home



A new service in in late February for the Rosemeadow-Appin Anglican Churches in the Diocese of Sydney.



Chapel Service for School Leaders Day for the Western Australian Anglican Schools Association, Wollaston College Chapel, Mount Claremont, Western Australia, November 15, 2020.

groups are permitted, with limits on group numbers.

Food can only be served according to strict guidelines, so there are no shared meals or buffet spreads. Individually wrapped cookies are a wise precaution, but they usually leave a lot of plastic waste.

It will take some time before fundraising and social events go on as before.

The Future: Will it be a return to the

past as we experienced? Or have churches learned valuable lessons from the COVID-enforced time in the wilderness?

The Rt. Rev. Brad Billings, Assistant Bishop of Melbourne, reminds us in a paper published on the diocesan website the early church had no buildings either. As much as we long to gather in them, he says, the biblical vision of the universal Church transcends time and space.

For now, it's a waiting game. □



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*—Kathleen Alexander,
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Come into the Fields

Brother Jimmy's Mission in the Cotton Patch

By Stephen Herbert

Neatly tended fields and their boundaries define most of southwest Georgia. More than any other part of the state, the southwest resembles the American Midwest: the skies are open, the land more accommodating. From here across to east central Georgia, the soil is loamy and loose; more fertile and forgiving than the hard, acidic red clay of the Piedmont.

Although most of Georgia's cotton production was devastated by the boll weevil at the start of the 20th century, southwest Georgia's agricultural economy recovered faster than that in many other areas of the state, in part because it had already begun to diversify away from cotton and into other cash crops like tobacco, pecans and, most famously, peanuts.

The peanut farmer who became the 39th president still lives in Plains, about 10 miles southwest of the larger town of Americus. In 1905 a wealthy young man from northern parts (of Georgia, that is) arrived in Americus as the new rector of Calvary Episcopal Church, a congregation that had put down roots in the prosperous farm town, but which had never really blossomed.

The Rev. James Boland Lawrence, a dynamic and charismatic man, soon became known by the un-Anglican appellation of "Brother Jimmy." He encouraged the growth of Calvary and helped plant the seeds of other congregations throughout southwest Georgia. He traveled from farm town to farm town by horseback, later by car and sometimes by train, found a place to preach, and held a revival. In some of these towns he founded congregations



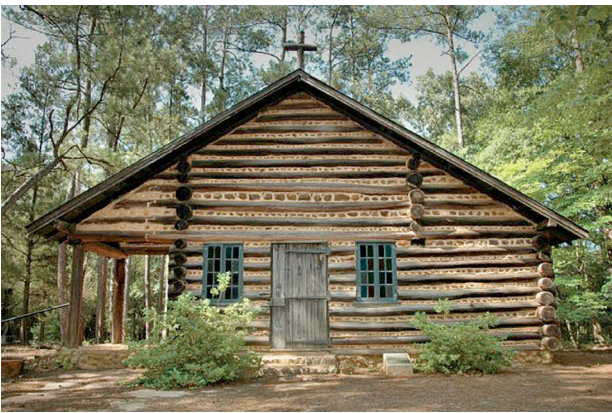
The altar at Calvary Church in Americus

that continue to this day.

I first learned of Brother Jimmy from a visit to Calvary itself. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*: Calvary claims none other than the great Ralph Adams Cram as its architect, supposedly commissioned by Brother Jimmy on one of his return visits to New York City, where he had been a student at

Columbia University. Calvary had long needed a new church to fit its growing congregation.

By 1916, when the vestry at Calvary accepted the design for the new church, Cram was already nationally famous, having already designed St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, with his partner (and competitor) Bertram



Brian Brown photo

St. James Church Pennington, relocated to Andersonville

Goodhue, and having taken on the commission to attempt to finish the Holy Mess otherwise known as St. John the Divine. He had already written a popular book — *Church Building* (Small, Maynard, & Co., 1901) — that may have supplied the initial idea for Brother Jimmy’s visits to Cram’s studio.

Calvary showed that Cram was equally talented with a more earth-bound, parochial English gothic style as he was with a soaring, scholastic French gothic like St. Thomas. Calvary sits charmingly and modestly on its site, the warm russet Flemish bond brick exterior graced by a series of windows on its western façade that came from the first church building. The small entrances are to the north and south of the west front. Twin-gabled transepts give a whimsical touch to the otherwise low, steady roofline.

Although certainly not small, the interior has a charming intimacy, and it is here that Cram’s influence (as well as his considerable artistic connections) paid off for Calvary.

He commissioned German wood-carver Johannes Kirchmeyer for the reredos. A crucifixion scene is transposed over the tree of life in a style that has a folksy formalism, bounded by vinelike tresses that form a tracery framing the reredos.

Cram also designed the paneling, stalls, lectern, and organ case for the church. In the Diocese of Georgia, impressive heritage parishes are usually on or near the coast. With Calvary, Americus, Brother Jimmy staked a

backcountry counterclaim for the magnificent presentation of the Gospel in the Cotton Patch.

When Clarence and Florence Jordan arrived in Americus with Martin and Mabel England to begin their interracial Christian community of Koinonia Farm in 1942, Lawrence was nearing the end of his ministry. Koinonia and its descendant Habitat for Humanity (headquartered in Americus) are renowned for their work of reconciliation within a model of intentional, holy work in the world.

They chose Americus and Sumter County for a reason. Agriculture had barely sustained the local economy through the Great Depression. Most of the residents were poor, and segregation was strictly enforced.

Although Calvary is an impressive church, and Brother Jimmy did good work there, Calvary grew because of his active work in the mission field beyond its walls in the poorer towns and sharecropper communities of southwest Georgia.

Paradoxically, extramural mission work often leads to intramural church growth: the gospel shared makes the gift all the more valued to those who are giving it away. Brother Jimmy’s life also shows that a missionary career can come from wealth, as long as the spirit is willing. He could hire the architect of the country’s wealthiest churches while bringing the gospel to the poorest communities in the land.

Some of the towns in Brother Jimmy’s mission field were sizable, like Moultrie and Dawson. His mission churches remain there, as they do at Cordele and Blakely. Others, however, were in tiny farming communities with sharecroppers still clinging to the land, like Pennington and Benevolence.

His rustic, small log church from Pennington still survives, having been moved near the entrance to Andersonville, the Confederate prison camp where

thousands of Union soldiers died of starvation and disease. I drove far out to the tiny plantation community of Benevolence, where a fine Baptist Church remains, but there is no sign of Brother Jimmy’s mission.

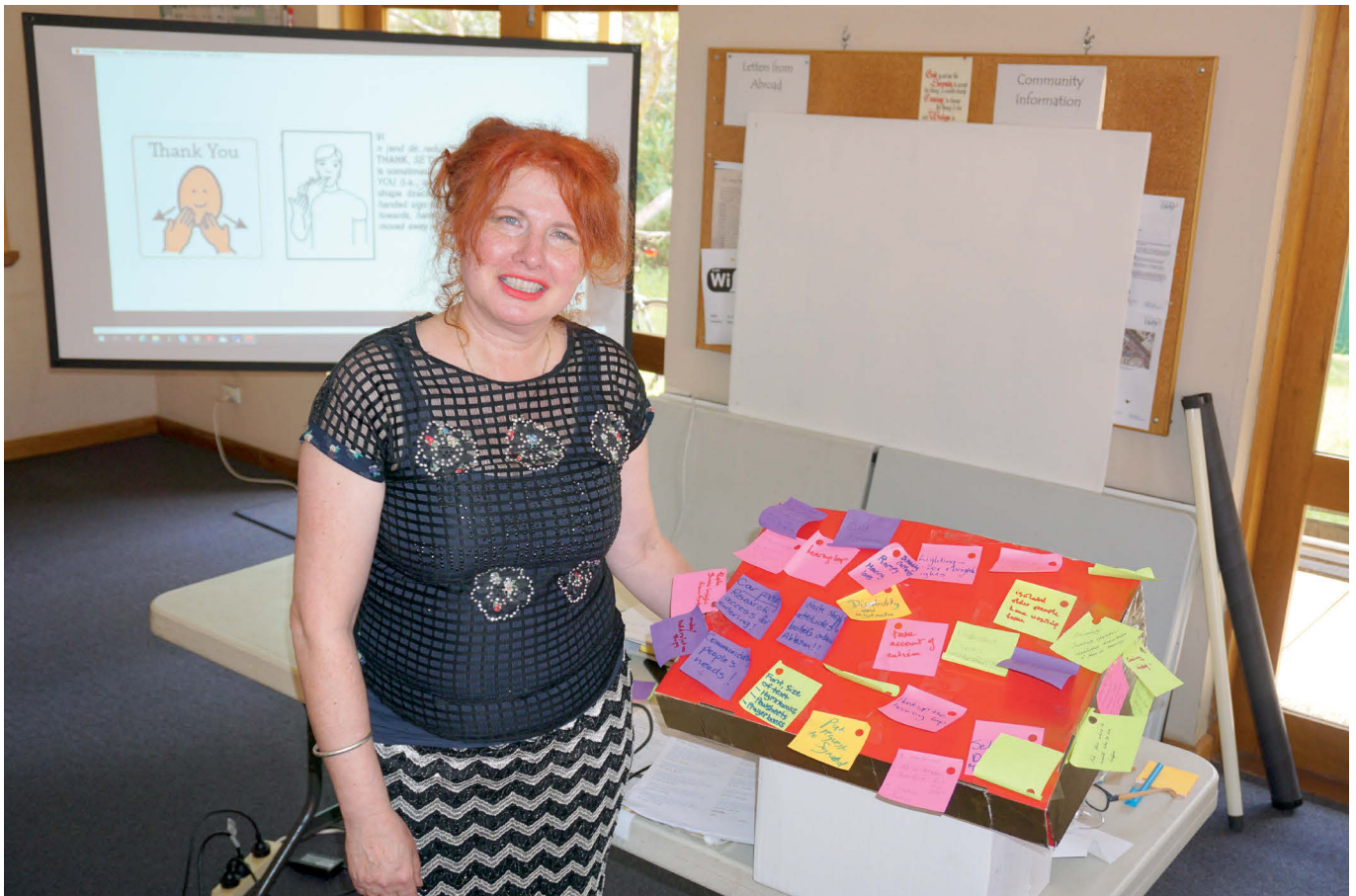
However, in Vienna (rhymes with “bye” and not “bee”) I was excited to find the former Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, transformed into an erstwhile community center, looking a little forlorn and neglected next to an equally abandoned elementary school.

The rough, wooden Prince of Peace is a monument equally fitting for Brother Jimmy as the charming, beautiful Calvary, as a call passed down from him to us. Will you abandon the least of these? Will you continue my work? Come with me into the fields.

Stephen Herbert serves the church in rural Western Georgia.



Prince of Peace Church is now a community center in Vienna.



B.J. Dee-Price shows the tools of her teaching during a break at a parish workshop at St. Oswald's Anglican Church, Parkside, South Australia.

More than Building Design

Australian disability activists discuss 'ableism.'

By Robyn Douglass, Correspondent

Colorful notes are being stuck up as fast as ideas can be written down. It's a sunny Saturday afternoon in South Australia, and in one Anglican parish, people are participating in a workshop on "Ableism."

They are writing down ideas that would make the church more accessible and welcoming for people with a disability. It's not difficult: hearing loops, self-opening doors, wider passages, properly accessible toilets, captions on Zoom services.

Changing physical structures costs

money, but that's probably the easy part. Changing minds is the real challenge. Do people assume you are of average intelligence? Can you move easily around church? Do people look at you with pity? Do people claim you are an inspiration just for getting out of bed?

B.J. (Betty-Jean) Dee-Price trained as a social worker and managed a statewide service for young people.

There was a lot of power in that role, "being the deliverer of good stuff for 'those people — the poor, the needy' described in the Bible," she said.

Sixteen years ago, B.J. and her hus-

band had a son with cerebral palsy. She was told she would never work again and that their marriage would not survive. Sad and depressed, questioning and bargaining with God, B.J. found herself praying for a way out.

But God had other ideas. The answer to her prayer was powerful.

"God said, 'He will be a leader and you need to help him,'" B.J. said. "I became the needy person. But it wasn't a tumbling down, it was a growing up.

"I grew up — in a way that I would not want to go back. It's not an easy path, and sometimes very hard to watch my child suffer, to be dealing

with what he often has to deal with — but, my goodness, what a blessing and what insight.

“A doorway opened up to me and the social worker became somebody very different. It’s like my life began at that point.”

B.J.’s experience has informed her academic career. She completed a PhD in complex communication access needs for those with disabilities. She has consulted on high-powered advisory committees, and ran for state parliament representing the South Australian Dignity Party. She is not shy about challenging structures that make life with a disability more difficult.

The traditional expectation in Australia is that people with disabilities have been hidden, segregated, kept away from the mainstream. Ableism is the assumption that people with disabilities need “fixing” and defines them by their disability.

Around 18 percent of Australians live with a disability, but their lives would be much easier if all buildings were designed well, if they could see and hear and experience what the rest of us take for granted.

Are churches any better?

“No. They are not better,” B.J. says. “They have a potential for greatness, but there are just so many ironies within the church.

“The church is a microcosm of society in general. Most people in church have been segregated from people with a disability,” she said. “Very rarely have kids grown up with someone like my son as a peer.

“Folks not living with disability can form a type of able-privilege where they don’t see the needs or plan for others. Sometimes people with disabilities internalize ableism — they learn to be ashamed and hide and go with the segregation.”

The Bible and liturgy often don’t help, B.J. said. There are many Old Testament rules about cleanliness, wholeness, blemishes. Some readings cry for context, and intercessions often need more thoughtfulness.

Some congregations and schools are bright spots, but these remain the exception, and people with disabilities are not seen in the church’s leadership roles.

She takes inspiration from John 9:3, where Jesus corrects people who suggested disability was a punishment: “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

Some congregations and schools are bright spots, but these remain the exception, and people with disabilities are not seen in the church’s leadership roles.

Lorna Hallahan has wrestled with the church’s attitude for years. An associate professor of social work at Flinders University, Hallahan is also an amputee.

“I think of ableism as the othering process related to enforcement of rigid norms about who is a valued citizen,” she told *TLC*. “The Anglican Church is not one thing. It is a large, sometimes loose, multilayered social organisation that touches ordinary folk through its parishes and human service organizations.

“At these touchpoints we see a wide variety of people many bearing impairments (often related to age), chronic illnesses, including prolonged mental distress and substance abuse; trauma histories, including relationship loss

and domestic violence and so on. Some achieve leading lay roles. The point about this is that people with disabilities tend not to carry socially normative views about who belongs to the body of God. They know that the gospel relates to them.

“There are others who don’t even make it to the door, experiencing the ableism that is reflected in no access, no tolerance for rowdy or [pacing] worshippers. In my experience, some parishes operate as zones of tolerance and are inclusive. All these relationships, however, place people with disabilities in the recipient class (of human services and parishioner status).”

B.J. has a wry smile when she describes how frequently well-meaning Christians approach her, and her son, to pray for his “wholeness.”

“I’ve had it done to me as a mom,” she says. And while she says she is tempted to retaliate with a prayer against bad breath or rudeness, instead she says, “He is already whole.”

B.J. asks instead if they can pray together about the barriers that exacerbate disability.

“The experience of disability would not be so terrible if the world would accommodate him and validate him,” she says.

“If he did not have to fight for his place in mainstream society — his impairments would still be there but his ‘disabilities’ (caused by inflexible environment) would be a lot easier.

“Most of our hardship has nothing to do with cerebral palsy. It’s to do with how the rest of the community responds to it.”

Many will simply not approach the church because they fear being marginalized despite the rhetoric of inclusion.

B.J.’s reflection on their life also frames the most important question for Australian churches.

“It is difficult,” she said. “But the greatest challenge is the knowledge that we were not invited to something because it is ‘too hard.’” □

Reclaiming Our Nomadic Roots

By Richard LeSueur

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck a year ago, many scrambled to learn new online skills to keep our congregations connected to worship.

There was no time for preparation.

I remember scouring the web for tutorials about Zoom.

Eleven months later,

our Sunday morning worship event has evolved into a recorded video with seamless splices, overdubbed music, and sunlit scenery for reflection between the sermon and the Nicene Creed. On Sunday mornings I sit at home with a coffee mug in hand and press *play*.

Is this the future? Those in larger urban congregations may say it is not. Confidence is strong that even if many parishes keep an online option, the Church will regather.

To those of us in hundreds of other congregations across this land, who are only too aware of doubts about the long-term viability of many congregations, the answer is less clear. Some of us are not even certain how many congregants will return after this pandemic-induced, great dispersion of 2020-21.

In *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World* (2000), Walter Brueggemann's nearest analogue for today's Church is Israel's exile. For centuries Israel had enjoyed a period of relative security and prosperity, with Jerusalem and the temple at its center. But in the year 587 B.C., imperial Babylon swept down from the north in two waves. There was initial resistance, but in the end the forces were too overpowering. The catastrophic end saw the destruction of the city, the burning of the temple, and a captive population dragged into servitude in a distant and foreign land.

One might have expected Judaism to collapse. It did not.

Captivity did not erase Judaism's determination to retain its spiritual identity. What emerged, in time, was a form that had not existed before. It was simply called *synagogue*, meaning "the gathering." Perhaps, like Isaiah's envisioned shoot growing slowly from a severed stump, Judaism discovered its capacity to reshape and remake itself. The answer to the loss of the temple was that one could still gather around the Torah anywhere.

There is great truth here for our time. The discovery made by Judaism in the exile was that something central, organized, and institutional could become fluid, flexible, and open. Instead of the faithful taking the road to Jerusalem to encounter God through a complex sacrificial system, God could be encountered anywhere, on any road, wherever the community gathered.

Instead of a hierarchy of priestly classes conferring sacred roles on a few, everyone could gather around the Torah and prayers. Most striking of all was that the emergence of synagogue signified Israel's renewal of its nomadic roots, of becoming once again a people of tent-dwellers, dependent upon the God of the open road, because they were on the move again.

In recent months nearly all our congregations have found ways to reach beyond the practice of congregating in churches. We have created online worship, meetings, and study groups. We have discovered we can meet anywhere, on any road, in any home. Yes, one longs for a return to the collective experience of in-person worship, but the emergence of new variants of COVID may yet impair our confidence to regather in our churches safely.

In a short period, we have seen a quick succession of biological killers: SARS, H1N1, Ebola, and now COVID with its family of variants. We may well have entered a new age of vulnerability, when humanity is knocked back into survival mode: a microbiological age when Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson,

Moderna, and other pharmaceutical companies become the new Microsoft, Apple, and IBM.

In all this, we might ask, what is the Spirit saying to the Church? Perhaps several strands are being woven together simultaneously.

Sustaining stand-alone church structures appears to have become an economic burden that, for many, seems less and less viable. As churches close, the Christian community is being atomized, especially in rural areas. New forms are needed if there is to be meaningful connection for a dispersed Christian community.

Two realities will coexist. Christians will still gather in churches, but there will be an evolution of the church without walls. Christian communities will seek new ways to express what a noticeable, vivid, lived Christian spirituality looks like when there is no longer a church structure to define it.

The Christian faith, as a clerical presentation to a largely passive body of recipients, has less appeal to the post-baby boomer population. If society is increasingly learning and working in a collaborative, freestyle manner, sooner or later that population will want to worship in a similar way.

Digital social engagement is already mainstream. A room is a chat room, online interactions are mutual, leaders are recognized by their number of followers. Learning is livestream, video conferencing, virtual whiteboarding. Leonard Sweet wrote in *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First-Century Passion for the 21st-Century World* (2000) that the patterns of the future church would be "experiential, participatory, communal, and image-rich."

Online worship is not a stopgap that will be discarded after the pandemic. New skills of producing online worship will continue to evolve. Online church will become an integral aspect of the Christian future and worthy of our investment as mission.

Given the far-reaching possibilities of the web, next Sunday's preacher could be the Archbishop of Jerusalem. Recorded prayers could involve a civic official. Scripture readings could be augmented from a pool of clips drawn from across the Communion. At the Ascension of Jesus, a local experience became possible everywhere. We are at an Ascension moment in Christian faith.

Merging congregations will give temporary life, but may not be a long-term solution. Careful stewards of financial resources must realize that the sale of historic properties will produce a precious but onetime legacy. Such resources ought not be squandered on artificially sustained but diminishing models of ministry.

In *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia — and How It Died* (2008), celebrated historian Philip Jenkins observes that the church rarely dwells on periods of major setbacks or when the Church's tree has been pruned and adaptations became necessary.

We are in such a time. The Spirit of God is preparing the church to grow fresh limbs for a new world.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Richard LeSueur is a retired priest of the Anglican Church of Canada and former director of the Desert Program at St. George's College in Jerusalem.

The Secular Carnival of the Internet

By Kara Slade

I remember well my early days on the internet. I was an undergraduate in engineering from 1990 to 1994, just at the time when students in general had access to it. Much of the interface was text-based, and I recall my wonder as I scrolled through the catalog of Cambridge University Library on a black-and-white terminal window.

No matter that there was very little to do with the information. I could see amazing things across the ocean. I remember too the first browser, NCSA Mosaic, and the first web pages I saw. The very first one I found, if I recall correctly, was some guy's rock collection in Switzerland. It all seemed so new and so thrilling. It all seemed so safe. It was a walled garden full of everyday wonders and quotidian pleasures. It promised limitless collaboration and free sharing of information. It promised a utopia.

Like all utopias, its reality was different. Thirty years later, I watched with horror as a mob, many of them adherents of a conspiracy theory spread on the internet, stormed the U.S. Capitol. We were promised a garden of limitless community, but instead we got propaganda and Pornhub, QAnon, and mob rule on Twitter. Christians, above all, should be unsurprised by this development. Eden, after all, never lasts.

As we endure these new self-inflicted wounds, one temptation is to take recourse in nostalgia. There are always golden ages that present themselves to our memories, polished so



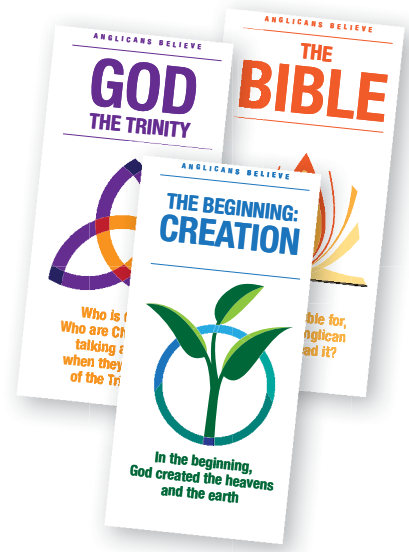
Photo by Umberto via Unsplash

that their disasters and evils are bur-nished away. Whether we look to pre-Reformation catholicity or the Episcopal Church of the 1950s, golden ages are never as golden as they appear. We cannot go back. At the same time, however, we cannot pitch ourselves headlong into a fantasy of the future. While the promise of progress is attended by the allure of leaving the sins and regrets of our past behind, we find that it never quite works that way. It is true for individuals, and it is true for societies as well.

In his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth reminds us that while the retreat into history is an idolatry of memory, faith

in progress is a flight into oblivion. Here, he writes, “we start from the opposite end,” as “we flee from the cathedrals, prisons, inns and catacombs where we were yesterday, into the light of to-day with its promise of even greater light to-morrow.” When we cannot understand how we arrived at our present, “a whole generation finds it impossible to make sense of the past, it glories all the more readily in the ‘spirit of the age,’ that is, of its own age, and succumbs to the belief in progress.”

If we cannot go back to a pristine pre-internet past, and we cannot hope that progress will solve the problems of



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an online society, then we are left to grapple with the realities of the technology we have created. We cannot undo it, just as we cannot hope that the future will improve the ways it amplifies human moral failings. Instead, we are left to think about how to live with it, and in particular to think Christianly about it.

I am finishing this essay on Shrove Tuesday, which we celebrated as Mardi Gras on the Gulf Coast where I was raised. Wherever I have lived after leaving home, I have felt tremendous affection for this particular form of pre-Lent blowout, with its parades, masks, Moon Pies, and slightly threatening undercurrent. Here, one vaguely suspects, anything might happen amid the masks and costumes. This is the reign of misrule.

What if we think of the internet, and social media in particular, as a secular version of Mardi Gras or Carnival, in which some features become permanent and others are undone? I propose, following Charles Taylor in part, that these technologies make permanent the masks of Carnival that remove consequences from society, just as they follow the secularization of Carnival into a humorless spectacle of moralizing that amplifies other consequences to an extreme. The masks are obvious, of course, when they make anonymous harassment, threats, and the speaking of unspeakable hatred and conspiracies an everyday occurrence. They are also obvious in the case of pornography, in which technology that allows users to hide has made its use almost ubiquitous — and has made it accessible to an ever-younger audience. When everything goes, all the time, the rails that safeguard our life together are wrenched away.

The problem of anonymity is easy to identify and to decry in many cases, even as we may also admit that there are times and particular communities where support can only be found within that anonymity. No one would want the members of online support groups, especially in a time when most support groups are online, to be forced to use their full name. At the same time, it is clear that the public side of the internet suffers from the lack of

intervention and content moderation when it is put to nefarious use. It is also clear that as long as social media remain wholly under the control of corporations, which treat humans as mere products to be marketed, the problem of trolls, threats, and bots will be a Gordian knot.

What of the other side of the coin, that easily identifiable users of social media target other users for particular actions or statements? I am hesitant to associate myself with conservative complaints about cancel culture, but they point to a very real phenomenon. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor argues that without traditional rites like Carnival that function as a yearly, time-limited practice of “the world upside down,” societies lose both a “safety valve” and “a recognition of the depth and many-sidedness of human life.”

Now, he writes, “the world upside down is the one we daily live in, in which sin has upset all order.” A “humorless . . . denial of ambiguity and complexity” gives rise to a spirit of “unmixed condemnation” in which sin is identified and policed in an anxiety to separate the sinners from the virtuous.

As Christians, we know that there is no separation of the sinners from the sinless. The beauty and the ambiguity of the human condition in Christ is that we are both justified and sinful, completely both. There is no standpoint from which to judge without beginning from the knowledge that we all stand before the cross equally judged, equally with “no power in ourselves to help ourselves,” equally needing protection against “all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul.” Human beings are judged as sinful; human beings have received the free gift of grace. I wish I could solve the problems of the internet in this essay, but I cannot. I can only suggest that this knowledge of ourselves, in all our complexity and ambiguity, must be our starting place.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Kara N. Slade is associate rector of Trinity Church, associate chaplain of the Episcopal Church at Princeton, and canon theologian of the Diocese of New Jersey.

Dispatches from the Chaplaincy

Review by Joshua Rodriguez-Hobbs

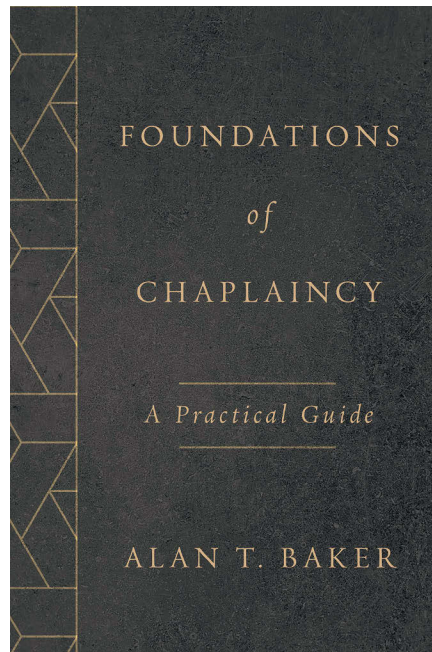
In *Foundations of Chaplaincy: A Practical Guide*, Alan Baker provides a survey of institutional chaplaincy for seminarians and parish clergy discerning a new ministry as a chaplain. Baker writes primarily from his perspective as a retired naval chaplain, although he broadly addresses institutional chaplaincy.

The book describes the joys, opportunities, and challenges that distinguish chaplaincy from traditional, parish-based ministries. Although Baker addresses the interfaith nature of institutional chaplaincy, he writes from a confessionally Christian perspective.

Baker's book is divided into six chapters and various appendices. He begins with a broad chapter, which delves into the call to chaplaincy and the biblical basis of chaplaincy. The next four chapters detail the functional capacities Baker identifies as essential to the role of chaplain: provider, facilitator, caregiver, and adviser.

Each chapter addresses how traditional seminary formation prepares ministers for this capacity and what additional skills and knowledge chaplains need for this ministry. A final chapter integrates all of the material and addresses the spiritual and emotional self-care required to sustain a chaplain's ministry.

Baker provides five appendices that consider chaplaincy contexts, case studies to help in discernment, an example of Clinical Pastoral Education, a checklist to assist parish priests



Foundations of Chaplaincy

A Practical Guide

By Alan T. Baker

Erdmans, pp. 280, \$24.99

as they move from a parish to chaplaincy, and the differences between chaplains and other ministers. These appendices are some of the most helpful parts of the book. Baker presents 13 different contexts in which chaplaincy occurs, with each description written by chaplains serving in that context.

Baker does an admirable job describing chaplaincy, both in the opportunities and challenges it presents. It never seems he is attempting to sell the concept. He honestly offers his

experiences, augmented by examples from other chaplains, to provide a candid picture and help in discernment.

He writes honestly and tenderly about the specific theological challenges posed by the ecumenical and interfaith nature of chaplaincy, and provides helpful questions and scenarios for responding to these challenges. In his chapter on the chaplain as provider, Baker provides useful strategies that all ministers can incorporate into their practice of pastoral counseling.

Baker's experience as a military chaplain dominates the book. He writes at length about the theological challenges military chaplains face in providing ecumenical chapel services that are unlikely to apply to chaplains in other arenas.

His comments on the chaplain as adviser are shaped by his experience as a military chaplain expected to advise the commanding officer. Most non-military chaplains lack this access to their institution's administration.

Baker has written a guide to discern a call to chaplaincy more than a guide to the ministry of the chaplain. Experienced chaplains will glean insights from the book, but they are not the intended audience.

The Rev. Joshua Rodriguez-Hobbs serves as the Episcopal Chaplain and an ACPE Inc. Certified Educator Candidate at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, a joint ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland and the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

A Relatable Look at Clergy Families

Review by Marcia Hotchkiss

Karen Stiller is a professional writer with a keen ability to observe life married to a pastor while also describing fragility and loneliness.

For example, Stiller devotes an entire chapter to the very real disappointment she and her husband felt when he was not picked for a church in New York City. The author describes the interview rituals for clergy and their spouses that can be overwhelming and a bit like being on the show *The Bachelor*.

She candidly admits her initial refusal to see God as being present for her in the midst of this difficult and bewildering time, and reports how support from another pastor's wife helped her muddle through. Stiller's honesty about her hurt hit home for me, as the wife of a priest, as did her certainty that God can handle our raw emotions without rejecting us.

In some of the early chapters I initially thought that Stiller's perspective was a little too rosy. Many of her examples were too nicely packaged. I didn't think I could relate to much of the chapter on doubt. But as I read on, Stiller became more real. She described a women's Bible study she led that reached a particularly difficult Scripture verse.

I guessed she would research this verse on the web, through a study guide, or by asking her seemingly perfect husband. Instead, when the Bible study reached that verse, Stiller admitted she didn't understand it. The women laughed and one said, "Oh, Karen, I love you."

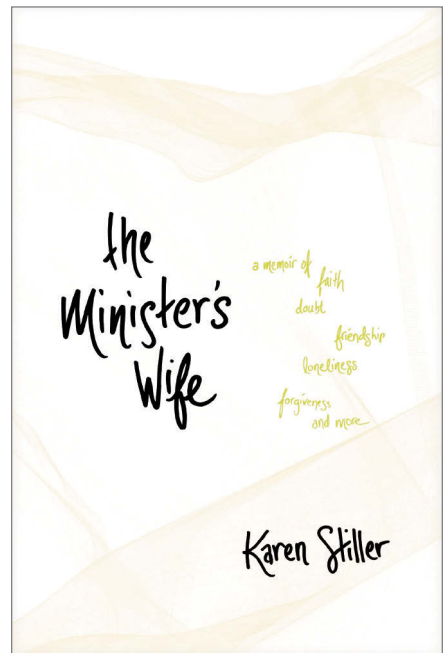
Stiller's writing about prayer and

friendship and many other topics also rang true. Parishioners often treat clergy and their spouses like beings from another planet. This book helps demystify the life of ministers and their families. I found Stiller's honest talk of hardships helpful.

She tells of her struggles with forgiveness in examples that are quite relatable, and she encourages us to allow the Holy Spirit to work on this. "And as forgiveness works out first the grief and then the grace that is among us," she writes, "we might also need to remember that it is for the good of our own big souls and our tender hearts."

The Minister's Wife touched me as another minister's wife, but maybe more as one trying to follow Jesus and navigate the squiggly path along the way.

Marcia Hotchkiss is a spiritual director, speaker, and author who is a parishioner at Good Shepherd, Dallas, where her husband, Tom, is the vicar.

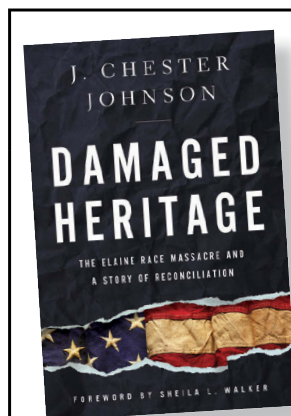


The Minister's Wife

A Memoir of Faith, Doubt, Friendship, Loneliness, Forgiveness, and More

By **Karen Stiller**

Tyndale Momentum, pp. 256, \$25.99



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Wise Choices at Life's End

Review by Jason Poling

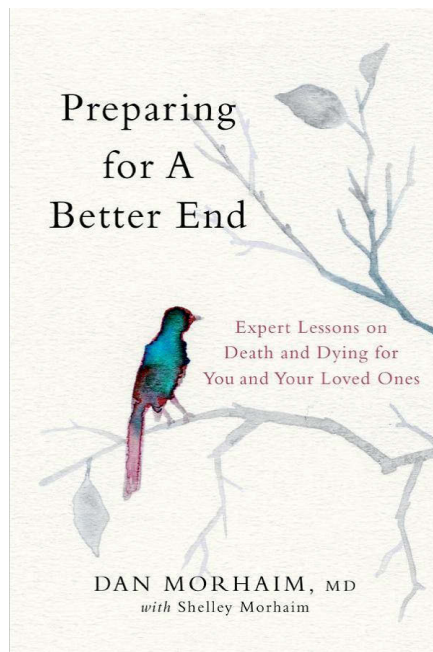
All of us in ministry have walked with a family through the death of a loved one. Too many of us have had the heart-rending experience of doing so amid divided opinions on end-of-life care. Old grievances, suspicions about ulterior motives, and residual guilt can compound the difficulties imposed by uncertainty about the future, lack of medical understanding, legitimate concerns about finances, and sincere ethical commitments. An already painful experience can become still more painful.

In light of these concerns, a wise pastor will encourage congregants to make plans for end-of-life care well before those decisions must be made. Dan Morhaim's *Preparing for a Better End: Expert Lessons on Death and Dying for You and Your Loved Ones* may be a useful tool in that work.

Morhaim, an emergency-room physician, lays out the range of questions that somebody, at some point, may need to answer about the care of a dying person. He offers the means to think through and record a person's answers to those questions, so that intentions are clear.

The book is engaging and accessible to a wide readership. Clergy who were exposed in seminary to older works like Sherwin Nuland's *How We Die* (1995) will find additional case studies that may help implant medical concepts in non-medical brains, and practical theology faculty may find this a useful addition in courses on ministry to the dying.

Morhaim is able to present not only



Preparing for a Better End Expert Lessons on Death and Dying for You and Your Loved Ones

By Dan Morhaim, with Shelley Morhaim
Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 272, \$25

the medical understanding necessary to work through end-of-life questions, but also to speak frankly about what he and his colleagues think. "We physicians have witnessed the dying process," he notes. "We know the medicines, and we know what works."

According to studies Morhaim cites, as well as anecdotal research, most physicians would prefer to die gently and naturally.

Yet conventional end-of-life care very often involves aggressive measures most physicians would not choose

for themselves. One reason for this, as Nuland noted decades ago, is that physicians are trained to see death as the enemy; to lose a patient is to lose a battle, and nobody likes to lose. Morhaim notes concerns about liability, but argues that it is incumbent on physicians to be honest with their patients by offering the kind of care they would want to receive were the roles reversed.

One particular aspect of this book's promise for ministry is its broad suitability. Morhaim manages to address ethically contested issues like assisted nutrition with a generous and respectful spirit, while ensuring that his reader appreciates what is at stake in making decisions about them.

His treatment of death panels and certain cases like that of Terri Schiavo may feel a bit uncomfortable to those especially attuned to the politics of these matters. But any reader looking for an engaging conversation partner rather than a debate opponent will surely find that here. Indeed, the broad and universal applicability of this book could afford opportunities for ecumenical or even interfaith discussion groups.

One of the best ways people can demonstrate love for their family is to make their wishes known well in advance. This book can be a means toward that better end.

The Rev. Dr. Jason A. Poling serves as priest in charge of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Pasadena, Md., and as ecumenical officer for the Diocese of Maryland. He directs the Doctor of Ministry Program at St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute in Baltimore.

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Reception

Southern Ohio: The Rev. **Eugene Michael Hallahan Jr.** (from the Roman Catholic Church)

Retirements

The Rev. Canon **Peggy Bean** as canon for congregations of the Diocese of Milwaukee.

The Rev. **Wilfredo Benitez** as provisional priest in charge at St. John's, Stamford, Conn.

The Rev. **Nigel Bousfield** as rector of St. Mark's, Waupaca, Wis.

The Rev. **Alice Bower** as vicar of Holy Spirit, Battle Ground, Wash.

The Rev. **Douglas Kennedy Dayton** as vicar of St. Clement's, Greenville, Pa.

The Rev. **Michael Dresbach** as rector of All Saints Christo Rey, Watsonville, Calif.

The Rev. **Keith Giblin** as vicar of St. Paul's, Orange, Texas.

The Rev. **Pat Glenn** as rector of Calvary, Louisiana, Mo., and St. John's, Eolia, Mo.

The Rev. **Bob Hamilton** as chaplain at Cone Health, Greensboro, N.C.

The Rev. **Greg Hein** as rector of St. Jude's, Niceville, Fla.

The Rev. **Rebecca Hendricks** as rector of St. James', Milton-Freewater, Ore.

The Rev. **Cindy Howard** as rector of St. Mary's, Andalusia, Ala.

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The Rev. **Cindy VanParys** as deacon of St. Michael & All Angels, South Bend, Ind.

The Rev. Dr. **Monrelle Williams** as rector of St. Cyprian's, Roxbury, Mass.

Deaths

The Rev. **Ray Kline Grieb**, who served rural parishes throughout the West and Midwest for 60 years, died Jan. 22 at 86.

Grieb was raised in Nebraska and Pennsylvania and graduated from high school near Philadelphia, where he was an award-winning runner. He studied at the University of Colorado and at Nashotah House, and returned to Colorado to begin his ministry in 1960, as vicar of St. Andrew's in Cripple Creek. He then served in Ogden, Utah, and then in several churches in Western Michigan, where he was also chaplain at Starr Commonwealth Home for Boys. Grieb returned to Colorado in 1973, and served churches in Colorado Springs, Lakewood, and Alamosa.

After his first marriage ended, he began a new ministry with the Little Snake River Parish in Dixon, Wyoming, shortly before the two communities there were devastated by a flood. He moved to Nebraska a few years later, where he served churches in Sidney and Cozad, where he retired from full-time ministry in 2003.

A few years later, he met his wife Leslie, and moved to Wheatland, Wyoming, to live with her. He continued to serve as a supply priest for rural congregations in Wyoming until the pandemic closed down worship last spring. He and his wife both became seriously ill on Jan. 1. She died on Jan. 21 and he followed her the next day.

He is survived by three children, six stepchildren, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His family has set up a scholarship in his memory, to support the training of seminarians who will serve for at least five years in rural ministry, especially in Nebraska or Wyoming. For more information, write to Andrew Grieb at andrewgrieb@gmail.com.

The Rev. **John Arthur Lawrence**, who became a priest after a successful career in banking, died Jan. 20 at 85.



Lawrence was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and graduated from the University of the South with a degree in economics. He served in the U.S. Army after graduation, working in missile guidance and ordnance electronics, and then worked for several years developing data processing systems for the banking industry in Memphis and Baton Rouge.

He answered a call to the priesthood in his 30s, earned a degree from Seabury-Western, and was ordained in 1971. He served parishes in Hammond, Monroe, and Metairie, Louisiana, and then for ten years at Grace Church in Hinsdale, Illinois. He retired from active ministry in 1999, and resettled in his native Texas, where he assisted in several parishes around Kerrville.

He served on a number of diocesan and national church commissions and was legislative secretary to the House of Bishops from 2000 to 2013. He served for six years of service as an elected trustee of the University of the South.

Lawrence was preceded in death by his wife, Waynoka, by just a few weeks, and is survived by five daughters and four grandchildren.

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Starting Over

The mood is solemn, the tone deeper, the liturgy muted as we continue the long season of Lent, a time of penitence, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. A small measure of the solemnity of this time is the prohibition against the use of a distinctly Christian and joyful word associated with Easter. We leave it off. We dare not say it.

The call to repentance, which begins the Gospel reading and is inscribed in nearly every liturgy and customary in most private prayer, is now emphasized for days and weeks. In a sense, we head into the wilderness with Jesus to face demons and temptations, the wild beasts that stalk without and haunt within. We are exposed, and so we see ourselves not as we wish but as we must. We face the truth.

When we see ourselves, we see our need for help and forgiveness. We know the call to repentance not as a vindictive condemnation of our fallen condition but as an invitation to start anew. With the psalmist, we cry out: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. 51:1-2).

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). We repent with the hope to be restored with a "clean heart" and a "right spirit" (Ps. 51:11). Who does not feel the need, from time to time, for a new beginning? We feel it today, and we feel it deeply. The soul pleads, "With my whole heart I seek you" (Ps. 119:10).

How do we start over? We begin by focusing our attention on what Jesus Christ has done for us while we were yet sinners. He offered prayers and supplications. He embraced a reverent submission and learned obedience in all he suffered, even unto death. Although he is the perfect Son of the

Father, he deigned to be among us and to bear our weakness, our anguish, and our end in death (Heb. 5:7-8).

Nothing human, therefore, is alien to Jesus. God "made him to be sin who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). Though sinless, he bears everything a sinner bears, everything a sinner suffers. He was condemned as if deserving death. He descended to the dead. He went all the way to the bottom. No one and nothing is beyond his reach.

He has done this for us, but not without us. He invites us to follow him into the highways and back alleys of human life, the distortion and squalor in our lives, the unruly force of our desires. He invites us to follow him in his submission, humiliation, and death. "Whoever serves me," Jesus says, "must follow me" (John 12:26). We take up our cross and go to our death.

"Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain" (John 12:24). Jesus truly died. And we are called to die with him daily and to die in his arms in the end. Why? Why are we called to walk the way of the cross?

Jesus meets us right where we are, in our weakness and need, our guilt and failure. Dying with him, we touch the "source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). He is there at the bottom. And yet he is lifted from the earth, drawing all things to himself.

Be not afraid. He is near you, and you will arise new with him.

Look It Up
John 12:32

Think About It

You are descending and rising in the one glory of Jesus Christ.

The Body of Jesus

As Jesus enters the holy city of Jerusalem, the crowds cry out, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David” (Mark 11:9-10). “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord — the King of Israel” (John 12:13).

They look to the king who would restore all things with shouts of admiration and wonder, not knowing that he would soon mount the throne of his cross and from there draw all things to himself. After Jesus humbled himself, after he suffered, after he died and visited the dead, God highly exalted him. Jesus is the unimaginable king. He is the king of every height and all lowliness. All things bow to him, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:10).

His suffering begins not with the cross of Calvary but with the human condition he assumes. He goes out to a suffering humanity with evident disregard for religious scruples about purity. He is often among the unclean, as he is now, as we see him, with our mind's eye, in the home of Simon the leper, sitting at table with him. Mark does not say that Jesus healed him, so we have reason to imagine Simon's flesh still encrusted with scales or sores.

In a sense, this is the reason Jesus was put to death. He violated purity laws over and over again to reach suffering humanity. Indeed, immediately before and immediately after saying that Jesus sat at table with Simon, Mark mentions death in two very different ways. The chief priest and scribes look for a way to arrest Jesus and so foreshadow all the anguish to follow. A woman approaches Jesus with an alabaster flask of pure nard, breaks it open, and pours it over him in devotion. Jesus interprets this action as an anointing for his burial. We see two postures toward the body of Jesus: vicious abuse and tender affection.

We are not, of course, only talking about the Jesus who walked the earth so long ago. The risen Lord said to Paul, “Why persecutest thou me?”

Today, we see what Jesus suffers every time a person is abused. They laid hands on him, arrested him, spat on him, blindfolded him, struck him, beat him, bound him, led him away, handed him over, accused him. Still, they were not satisfied. They put a robe on him and a crown of thorns in mockery. After they hung him on a tree, those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads. The chief priests and scribes mocked him. The story of Jesus is the heart-rending story of mob violence against human dignity and the integrity of persons.

The only reason we tell this story and remember it is because the love and mercy of God exceed all human depravity. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness, here, is not violence with impunity but the power of love to change human beings. The love and forgiveness of Christ change us, change the way we regard each other, and the way we treat human bodies.

There is another way. A woman lovingly anointed the body of Jesus in the home of Simon the Leper. Joseph of Arimathea took the dead body of Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb. Can we learn to revere human bodies and human lives? Can we show some tender love for the human race? Can we see each other anew?

Look It Up

Hymn 172

Think About It

Such love causes me to tremble.

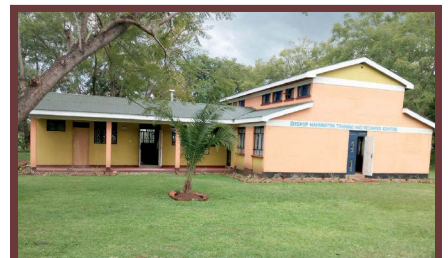
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