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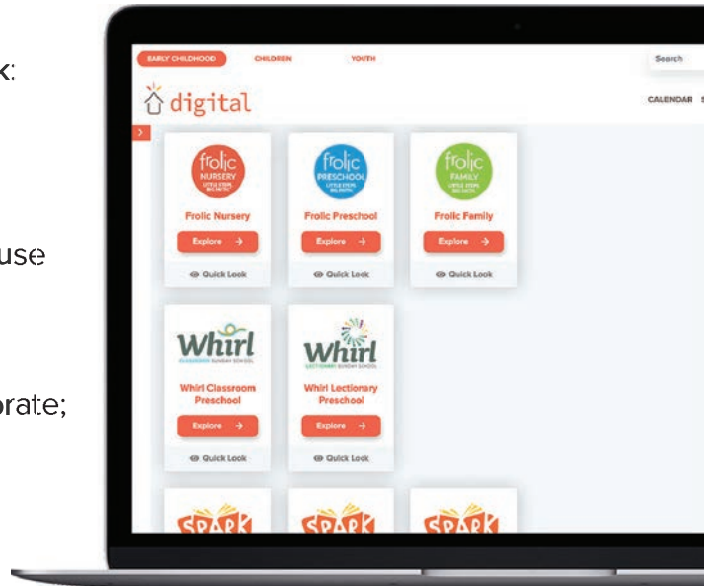
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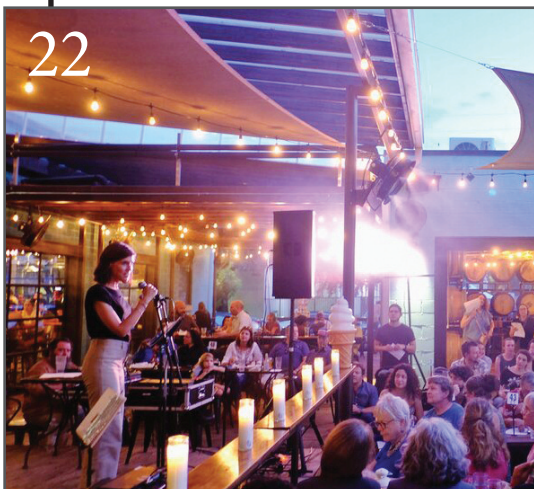


### ON THE COVER

Leslie Burrell and her children, Lucy, River, and Sawyer, participate in Appalachian ministries at St. Thomas Church, Elizabethton, Tennessee (see page 16).



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# Church Court Questions Florida Election's Fairness

By Kirk Petersen

Amid a scathing report from a church court questioning the integrity of the process, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Florida intends to seek the broader church's approval of its second election of the next Bishop of Florida.

A Court of Review has found what it says are significant deficiencies in the November 19, 2022, election, in which the Rev. Charlie Holt was declared the winner on the first ballot. He had been declared the winner on the third ballot at a previous election in May. If his election as bishop coadjutor is upheld, Holt would become the ninth Bishop of Florida when the Rt. Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard retires later this year. Howard, who has led the diocese since 2004, will reach the mandatory retirement age of 72 on September 8.

The standing committee responded in a letter to the diocese, vowing to "continue fighting to uphold your right to choose our next bishop," and saying the episode "presents a danger to every bishop and diocese in the Episcopal Church."

The report and response reflect a sharp escalation of conflict in a diocese where same-sex marriage remains a divisive issue. The report also accuses a sitting bishop of seeking to exclude LGBT priests from exercising ministries in the Diocese of Florida, despite church canons forbidding discrimination because of sexual orientation. Multiple priests in the diocese have reinforced this allegation in interviews with TLC.

The Rev. Joe Gibbes, president of the standing committee, pushed back hard on allegations that Howard sought to exclude priests who disagree with him from voting in the election. Gibbes said he believes "probably a majority" of priests in the diocese oppose Howard's stance on sexuality. "If John



Howard

Howard's aim all along has been to ... defend our diocese for conservatives, let me tell you, he has done a terrible job," Gibbes told TLC.

Holt referred all questions to Gibbes. Howard's canon to the ordinary, the Rev. Allison DeFoor, provided written responses on his behalf to questions sent by email. "Bishop Howard does not seek to exclude gay priests from employment or canonical residency in the Diocese of Florida. There were gay priests in the diocese when he became bishop, and others have been ordained and hired during his episcopacy," DeFoor wrote.

Under the canons of the church, the court has no authority to validate or invalidate the election. To become a bishop, Holt must receive the consent of a majority of all bishops diocesan and of diocesan standing committees. The prospect of that is uncertain, given that Holt prevailed in the clergy order by only a single vote, and the court found that "multiple clergy who were otherwise entitled to vote in the election were denied that right due to disparate treatment in the granting of canonical residence."

The court's report will be distributed to the bishops and standing committees along with the solicitation of consent.

Gibbes said on February 21 that he expected to make the formal request for consent within a few days, which will begin a 120-day window for

responses. If a majority of consents are not received by that deadline, the election will be declared null and void.

Seeking consents is risky. Holt and Howard both hold to the traditional Church teaching that marriage is reserved for a man and a woman. More than 90 percent of the bishops who lead dioceses are on the other side of the issue. So is the church's General Convention, which in 2018 approved Resolution B012, mandating that same-sex marriage rites be available in every diocese where the practice is legal under civil law.

Bishops-elect nearly always receive the necessary consents. An exception occurred in 2019, when Joseph Kerwin Délicat failed to receive consents to become Bishop of Haiti. In that case as in this one, objections focused not on the candidate but on allegations that the retiring bishop had improperly determined the pool of voters.

Holt has said repeatedly that he supports the compromise in B012 that creates a mechanism for bishops opposed to same-sex marriage to invite another bishop to oversee such marriage rites. The objections filed with the court of review do not overtly focus on Holt's perspective, but rather on allegations that Howard skewed the results by disqualifying progressive priests who should have been eligible to vote.

"Our interviews suggest a pattern and practice of LGBTQ clergy and those who opposed the Bishop's stated views not being treated equally with similarly situated clergy in the securing and exercising of their rights to ordination, licensing and the granting of canonical residency," the court wrote.

DeFoor flatly rejected this contention. "Bishop Howard has never denied canonical residency to anyone who disagreed with him on issues of marriage upon the basis of such disagreement. The vote in the clergy order at both bishop elections in 2022

should make it clear that Florida is home to clergy with a wide variety of positions on marriage. In fact, my own theology has no objection to same-sex marriage, and that is also true of a number of other lay and clergy, at the highest levels of leadership in the diocese. It is simply not a litmus test.”

Some other parts of the court’s report were more favorable to the bishop and the diocese. Opponents raised five objections to the election, and the court considered each individually. It dismissed two of the objections as harmless or irrelevant, and said a third objection was troubling but inconclusive regarding its effect on the election.

Another objection dealt with the way lay delegates were allocated based on the size of the various congregations in the diocese. After a complicated analysis, the court found fault with the allocation process, labeling it “fundamentally unfair” and saying some legitimate lay delegates may have been disenfranchised.

“The court cannot state conclusively whether the addition of these delegates would have changed the outcome of the election; we can state that this disenfranchisement casts a shadow over the election process.” Holt received 79 lay votes in the November election, well above the 67 needed.

But the court repeatedly emphasized that the alleged disenfranchisement of LGBT and supporting clergy could have affected the outcome of the election. “Given that the asserted candidate-elect only secured the majority needed in the clergy order by one vote, the potential impact on the election of denying the right to vote in at least three instances is plain.”

The court described its findings in a 33-page report (accompanied by 156 pages of exhibits) dated January 31. The report was distributed on February 17 by the diocesan standing committee, along with a letter that was deeply critical of the court.

“We believe the Court has grossly overstepped its charge, committed a number of significant factual errors, shown canonical disregard throughout the objection processes, and operated

in a way that intentionally attacks and disenfranchises the will of the majority of the Diocese of Florida,” the committee wrote.

The committee also declared that the court should have confined its examination to the procedures on the day of the election, and had no authority to assess the bishop’s governance before the election.

“The Court found no irregularity in the voting conducted on November 19,

2022,” the committee wrote. “But, ranging far beyond its mandate, it speculated — based on a faulty grasp of diocesan policies and practices — on how a number of anonymous allegations — reported so vaguely they cannot be independently verified — might have affected the outcome of the balloting.”

Or, as Gibbes said more succinctly, the allegations against Howard amount  
(Continued on next page)



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to “running a Title IV allegation through a Title III process.” Under the canons, Title IV concerns disciplinary actions against bishops and other clergy, while Title III governs a variety of processes related to ministry, including the election of bishops.

The allegations of discrimination raise the specter of potential disciplinary charges against Howard, although no charges have yet been filed. In 1994, before Howard became a bishop, General Convention approved this canon: “No one shall be denied access to the selection process for ordination in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by these Canons.” The provision subsequently was expanded and reaffirmed, and is now Canon III.1.2.

Despite the committee’s description of vague, anonymous allegations, some of the allegations were specific, and not all were anonymous.

The report cited the Rev. Ted Voorhees, a recently retired priest who agreed that the court could identify him. The report says that when Voorhees “first entered the Diocese and informed the bishop diocesan that he had performed same-sex blessings in his former diocese, he was told that he would not be permitted to perform such blessings in the Diocese of Florida and would not be permitted to become canonically resident in the diocese. He further alleges that he was instructed that he would be required to apply annually for a license to exercise his ministry and that his license was subject to revocation at any time. The clergy complied by never seeking canonical residence during his subsequent 14 years of ministry, serving as the vicar of a congregation in the diocese.”

Voorhees also told the court he was explicitly threatened with losing his license after he voiced “disappointment” with the bishop’s 2015 declaration that he would continue to forbid

same-sex marriages in the diocese.

“I contend that past and present discrimination against LGBTQ+ clergy has had a material impact on both elections,” the Rev. Elyse M. Gustafson wrote in a letter to the court that was attached as an exhibit. She described the experiences of eight priests who said they either were denied employment because they are in a same-sex relationship, or who were employed only after taking a vow of perpetual celibacy with no possibility of marriage. She added that the priests “would like to remain anonymous to the public but are willing to speak directly with the court if requested.”

“The inevitable consequence of these discriminatory practices is that queer clergy either 1) do not request residence because of unsafe conditions; or 2) leave the diocese altogether even when their preference is to stay,” she wrote. Gustafson, who is an assisting priest at Church of the Good Shepherd in Jacksonville, declined to be interviewed by TLC.

Voorhees has retired with his wife to Albuquerque, New Mexico. In a telephone interview with TLC, he described Howard as consistently hostile to and uncommunicative with clergy who did not share the bishop’s views.

After B012 required traditionalist bishops to create a process so that “all couples have convenient and reasonable local congregational access” to same-sex marriage rites, Voorhees said, Howard held a clergy conference and told priests interested in conducting same-sex marriages that they would have to bring their wardens to a meeting and “look me in the eye and say that you will not take my spiritual direction. I will look you in the eye and say I love you, but I’m no longer your bishop in this matter.”

DeFoor pointed out that when a similar comment was reported in 2021, a priest in the diocese who had conducted a same-sex ceremony spoke in support of the bishop. “He just wanted to hear from the wardens,” said the Rev. Louanne Loch, rector of St. Paul’s by-the-Sea in Tallahassee, in 2021. “He and I disagree on this one thing, but we

have a good relationship.”

Voorhees said that during his 14 years as vicar of St. Cyprian’s Episcopal Church in St. Augustine, the city experienced two severe hurricanes. “I never heard a word from him. He did not call to say, how’re things going for you? How about people in the parish? How did the church survive?” One of the duties of a bishop diocesan is to serve as pastor to all clergy in the diocese.

In addition to Voorhees, some of the priests and lay people who are cited anonymously in the report spoke with TLC on the record, alleging that Howard discriminates against LGBT people. They echoed Voorhees about the bishop’s treatment of those who disagree with him.

**Randall Sartin** retired early as rector of Church of the Advent in Tallahassee after a confrontation with Howard, sparked by Sartin allowing two gay, seminary-trained parishioners to preach while he was on sabbatical in 2017. He said the two parishioners were told by the bishop’s office not to preach again, and that he was summoned to a meeting with Howard after he cut short his sabbatical to respond to the controversy. “He got upset with me for an hour,” Sartin said, and then the bishop said, “Why don’t you retire? You’ve got 30 years.” Sartin agreed to retire, but alleged that Howard “tried to mess with the severance package.”

One of Sartin’s parishioners who preached, Pierce Withers, sought to become a priest in the diocese after previously being ordained as a non-denominational minister. He told TLC that Howard refused to meet with him to discuss his potential call to the Episcopal Church. Withers is described but not named in Exhibit 14 of the report, where he reported being told by the canon to the ordinary that he would not be ordained in the diocese, and he should seek ordination “up north.” Withers now lives and worships at an Episcopal church in California.

**Laura Lane** is a lay person who facilitated a discussion with Howard at St. John’s Cathedral in 2015 or early 2016, as recounted in an appendix that the court chose to redact. She said, “I remember clearly him saying that he

would not hire openly gay clergy.”

**Susan Gage** is a priest and partnered lesbian who started discernment for the priesthood in the Diocese of Florida. She said after she met with Howard in 2013, the bishop told her, “While you might have a call, we have a rule in the diocese that we don’t ordain people who are partnered and gay.” Gage now serves as priest in charge at St. Barnabas Episcopal in Valdosta, Georgia, and is canonically resident in the Diocese of Georgia.

“It may be helpful to understand that these allegations span a number of years, during which both canon and civil law have changed significantly,” DeFoor wrote. “In 2013, when the Rev. Gage spoke with Bishop Howard, same-sex marriage was not legal in the State of Florida or in the Episcopal Church. In the ten years since then, both civil and canon law have changed significantly, and Bishop Howard has always complied with the laws and canons in effect at any given time.”

If Holt does not receive the neces-

sary consents, the Standing Committee automatically would become the ecclesiastical authority upon Howard’s retirement. The committee then would likely select a provisional bishop to serve for a defined time while the diocese regroups. Some conservatives have suggested that the goal of the election opponents is to run out the clock so the Episcopal Church Center can install a liberal bishop. But Gibbes said the Standing Committee would interview two to three candidates, then present one candidate to a special diocesan convention for an up-or-down vote.

### Synod’s Decision on Blessings Draws Sharp Responses

By Rosie Dawson

The decision by the Church of England’s General Synod to authorize blessings for people in same-sex relationships has prompted individuals on

both sides of the debate to say they cannot remain within the Church of England.

“Orthodox provinces in [the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches] are not leaving the Anglican Communion, but with great sadness must recognize that the Church of England has now joined those provinces with which communion is impaired,” a GSFA statement said.

The bishops’ proposals, published in January, arose from a five-year process called Living in Love and Faith. The motion before synod began with a call for the church to repent of its treatment of LGBT people. It asked synod to welcome the bishops’ decision to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991) with new pastoral guidance, and to welcome *Prayers of Love and Faith* once the drafts have been refined and published.

The debate was scheduled to last for five hours. In the end it lasted for eight, running into a second day. Bishop

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Sarah Mullally of London, who led the bishops' Next Steps Group, referred to the "uncomfortably sharp disagreements" among its members.

"We do not agree about the nature of holy matrimony. We do not agree whether the biblical theological understanding of marriage can be extended to same-sex couples," she told synod.

Nevertheless, she said, the bishops had recognized "the urgent necessity for pastoral change in welcoming and celebrating the Christian virtues of faithfulness, mutual love, and lifelong commitment of so many same-sex couples in our churches." She said this is what *Prayers of Love and Faith* would enable the church to do.

Synod tabled 28 amendments to the motion and passed just one, which stipulated that any future prayers for blessings should not depart from the Church of England's doctrine of marriage. The motion was eventually passed by 250 to 181, with 10 abstentions.

As anticipated, the proposals were a step too far for some and not far enough for others. The Rev. Robert Lawrance, a parish priest who favors same-sex blessings, said the proposed prayers "risk creating a fog that will please no one" and will leave people on all sides dissatisfied.

Members spoke with passion from personal experience. Several spoke of the cost to gay people of not having their relationships recognized by the church or of not being allowed to minister within it because they were joined in civil marriage to someone of the same sex.

Ros Clarke called the proposals "an outrageous piece of formalized homophobia," adding: "What we have in front of us is a report that calls us to celebrate, welcome, and affirm same-sex relationships, just not as much as opposite-sex relationships. It says we'll bless people, but we won't marry them. Without any attempt at rationale, this is quite simply discrimination."

The synod also heard from single

## Global South Leaders Respond to Synod's Vote

The Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA) asserts in a statement on February 20 that "the Church of England has departed from the historic faith passed down from the Apostles by this innovation in the liturgies of the Church and her pastoral practice."

The statement, signed by 11 primates and Archbishop Foley Beach, as chairman of GAFCON, adds that "the GSFA is no longer able to recognize the present Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rt. Hon. and Most Rev. Justin Welby, as the 'first among equals' leader of the global communion."

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gay and heterosexual people who have chosen to remain celibate in accordance with Scripture, and who see any change in the church's position on same-sex relationships as undermining their sacrifice.

They included Sophie Clarke — due to marry in two months — who said she would be devastated if her decision to remain celibate until after her wedding had not been necessary.

"The message will be, you needn't have bothered," said the Rev. Vaughan Roberts of St. Ebbe's Church in Oxford, who described himself as same-sex attracted. "If these proposals proceed, we will be allowing clergy to bless sexual relationships outside of marriage between a man and a woman, and that will mean a de facto change in our doctrine."

The synod heard from several speakers who were concerned about the effect of synod's decision on the wider Anglican Communion.

"We are throwing our brothers and sisters under the bus," said the Rev. Folli Olokose, vicar of St. Mary Oatlands, who was born in Nigeria. "We

are putting a nail into the coffin of the Anglican Communion. Let us consider the cost."

Busola Sodeinde, a church commissioner, asked for more consultation with primates from other Anglican provinces. "There is an arrogance which I recognize, maybe unintended, of onetime colonialism, which insists that Western culture is progressive while dissenting voices in Africa and everywhere else are silenced," she said. "I want to address the impending racial injustice, disunity, and racial segregation in the church if we were to introduce same-sex blessings without further consultation."

In response, the Archbishop of Canterbury came close to tears as he spoke of his love for the Anglican Communion and the dangers faced by Christians in parts of it. "There is nothing in my life or heart or prayers that comes as high as the safety of the people I love in the Anglican Communion," he said. "We must also do what is right here."

The Most Rev. Samy Shehata, Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Alexandria and a visiting speaker, warned synod against crossing a red line.

"Blessing same-sex unions will alienate 75 percent of the Anglican Communion," he said, "Please, please, do not surrender your unique position as the mother church of the Anglican Communion."

## ACC Approves 'Good Differentiation' Study, Discussions

By Mark Michael

The Anglican Consultative Council, meeting only days after the Church of England's General Synod, authorized a study of "good differentiation," exploring "theological questions regarding structure and decision-making to help address our differences in the Anglican Communion."

The ACC approved the resolution February 14 by a show of hands in



what appeared to be a fairly close vote. It followed a series of comments from the floor by ACC members, many expressing exasperation about protracted divisions and concern that the project would normalize the current state of conflict or revert to patriarchal models from the past.

### Defining Terms

The Rt. Rev. Graham Tomlin, chairman of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith, and Order (IAFUSCO), which proposed the resolution and will undertake the project,



Tomlin

said it developed out of an initial meeting of the body in December in Nairobi.

The resolution was revised during the ACC meeting to include a mandate for exploring the communion's structures in the aftermath of the Church of England's decision to bless same-sex couples, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's proposal that the Instruments of Communion be reformed.

The good differentiation project, Tomlin said, "is not aiming to take sides in our disputes. It's not trying to resolve them in that sense. It's working out how we manage our differences, how we do that structurally in the meantime."

"If we need to walk together at a distance sometimes, to respect each other's conscience, how can we do this in as theologically responsible, charitable, and Christian a way as possible? Can we do 'good differentiation,' as opposed to 'bad differentiation?'"

### Mixed Responses

ACC members were offered the opportunity to comment on the proposal twice during the day's sessions. Some, like Episcopal Church delegate Canon

Ranjit Mathews, expressed support for allowing the project to proceed. "There's no binding language, right?" he said. "It's talking about exploring ways to walk together. ... It's an invitation to move into this process that we have already been moving into."

The Rev. Andrew Atherstone, a dele-

gate from the Church of England, said he warmly welcomed the proposal, and that he hoped the group would consider the place of his church in the communion's life at a time of increasing division.

"We need to think about the dominance of England [in the Anglican

(Continued on next page)



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— Psalm 80:14

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Communion]. What will that look like going forward? England always likes to think of itself as first among equals. ... Is that really appropriate in the new communion?"

But the Rev. Joseph Bilal, an ACC member from South Sudan, expressed deep skepticism: "I wonder if we actually listen very carefully to each other. It seems to me that in the Anglican Communion, the degree of our listening to one another in making decisions is completely impaired in one way or another. If we listen to one another and take decisions that affect the other simply because of 'my autonomy,' it means that we are actually even breaking down the communion rather than making it united and walking together."

"We have known for many years that we have differences," said Carlos Romero, an ACC member from Chile. "What's the point of reviewing what we already know? It will be an endless circle."

The Ven. Arthur Copeman of Australia said his table group had "explored the idea of times in family conflicts where people are given space. And we recognized that — particularly in marriage situations — that there is always a huge risk. Once there is a separation, there is no guaranteeing that people will come back."

Archbishop Maimbo Mndolwa of Tanzania said he wasn't "keen and clear on what 'differentiation' means," and



Archbishop Welby at the ACC opening service

Neil Turner photo for the Anglican Communion Office

added that "the proposal seems as if ACC is trying to go back into the kind of paternalistic model. Traditionally, decisions that touch provinces have to be made by the provinces. ... Is this taking part of the authority from the provinces?"

### Welby Urges Structural Reforms

Archbishop Welby urged the Anglican Communion to consider a reconfiguration of its Instruments of Communion — including a recasting of the archbishop's role — to help it meet the challenges of a changing world and protracted division over human sexuality.

In his February 12 presidential address, Welby acknowledged that the Church of England's decision February 9 to permit the blessing of same-sex

unions challenged the communion's continued unity. He also alluded to tension between his roles as primate of the Church of England and chief spiritual leader of the communion.

"The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the See of Canterbury, is a historic one. The instruments must change with the times," Welby said. "I will not cling to place or position. I hold it very lightly, provided that the other Instruments of the Communion choose the new shape — that we are not dictated to by people, blackmailed, bribed, to do what others want us to do. But that we act in good conscience before God, seeking a church that is not for our power, that exists for the new world, with its extraordinary and terrifying threats, to proclaim Christ and turn our opportunities into realities to bless the world."

"A crisis, we all know, is a moment of decision, and the churches and the communion must listen to the Holy Spirit. And while doctrine and actions are called to be the same always — the five marks [of mission], the [Chicago-Lambeth] Quadrilateral — those are our foundations. The instruments may change."

### Interdependence vs. Unity

Any change in the communion's structures, Welby noted, should aim to answer a "huge question," namely, "How



can we bridge the gap between interdependence and autonomy without the abuse of power?"

Intensifying trends toward individualism, he noted, have made the first commitment scandalous to many in the West, where "where community and mutual responsibility have almost been eliminated philosophically over the last 75 years. ... You find them in families and in small communities, but they are no longer the main way we relate to each other, and to others around the world.

"In the last few weeks, as part of our discussions about sexuality and the rules around sexuality in the Church of England, I talked of our interdependence with all Christians, not just Anglicans, particularly those in the Global South with other faith majorities. As a result, I was summoned twice to Parliament and threatened with parliamentary action to force same-sex marriage on us, called in England 'equal marriage.'

"When I speak of the impact that actions by the Church of England will have on those abroad in the Anglican Communion, those concerns are dismissed by many. Not all, but by many in the General Synod.

"The instruments must give us the tools for mutual help, tools which mean that we consciously, explicitly, say that obedience to God comes ahead of loyalty to country," he added later in the address.

### Repenting at Cape Coast Castle

ACC members visited Cape Coast Castle, a historic trading fortress deeply associated with the Transatlantic Slave Trade, on February 15. Built by the British beginning in 1762, the UNESCO heritage site is believed to have imprisoned four million people who were sold into slavery in the Americas.

Their tour of the complex was followed by a service of reflection and reconciliation at nearby Christ Church Cathedral, Ghana's oldest Anglican church. They also visited the palace of the Omanhene, the traditional king of the region, who designated the Archbishop of Canterbury an honorary

chief of the Oguaa people.

Within Cape Coast Castle, ACC members visited the slave dungeons, where up to 1,000 men and 500 women were crammed into dark stone chambers with little food and sanitation for up to three months before transportation across the Atlantic. They also spent time in the slave punishment cells, where resistant captives were shackled and starved to death. They were shown the castle's chapel, Ghana's first Anglican church, which

was erected over the male slave dungeon with an observation port cut into its porch floor.

"Into this part of the coast of Africa, Europeans of different nations brought the same industrial approach to cruelty as has been the characteristic of Europe over the centuries," Archbishop Justin Welby said during a homily at the service in Christ Church Cathedral.

"Its deepest element is the denial of

(Continued on next page)

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humanity. . . whether it's the governor building his home and his chapel above the dungeons, ascribing no value to them, unless they were women who were desirable. Whether it was that dreadful precursor of Auschwitz, where those who struck their prisoners were put in a cell with no food or water in the dark until they died. In all of this, we see a coherent pattern, a conscious pattern of denying the humanity of others."

The Rt. Rev. Eugene Sutton, Bishop of Maryland and one of the Episcopal Church's three ACC members, said this was his second time visiting the site. The first time, he said, his overwhelming emotion was grief. "I held my friend and we cried together for five minutes. But this time, I was feeling anger: anger at those responsible for this cruelty, and anger at the Church for justifying it and profiting from it."

## Former Lost Boys Greet Sudan Pilgrimage

By Jesse Masai

When the Archbishop of Canterbury addressed an estimated 50,000 people at an ecumenical prayer vigil in Juba on February 4, two former Lost Boys — Bishop Abraham Yel Nhial of the Diocese of Aweil and the Rev. John Chol Daau of the Diocese of Bor — listened attentively.

Archbishop Justin Welby and the Rt. Rev. Iain Green Shields, the Church of Scotland's moderator, joined Pope Francis on his pilgrimage of peace to South Sudan's capital on February 3 to 5.

Both of these Sudanese leaders, who were boyhood friends, survived for several years as refugees alongside an estimated 35,000 other Lost Boys in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda — displaced by the Sudanese civil war.

The gospel spread fast in Nhial and Daau's southern region, which is partially animist.

Civil strife and a steady flow of refugees have plagued South Sudan, Africa's youngest nation, despite a comprehensive peace agreement in 2005 with its predominantly Muslim northern neighbor, Sudan.

Hostilities have particularly intensified in the Upper Nile and Jonglei states, affecting two of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan's eight internal provinces. These hostilities sparked calls for humanitarian intervention, including a Christmas Eve appeal last year from Archbishop Justin Badi.

"The coming of the three Church leaders has been well-received by the people and government of South Sudan," Nhial said. "It was the first time in more than 50 years for a visit of this kind to have happened. And it was the first time for this pope to visit us. . . . We are surprised how God is thinking and blessing the people of South Sudan. They spoke openly to the people and Church of South Sudan that God loves us."

Nhial, author of *Lost Boy No More: A True Story of Survival and Salvation* (B&H Publishing, 2004), added: "They encouraged us that peace will not come from anybody else, but us. We are praying that the Church will take the lead in building peace. It is no longer simply about our President, Salva Kiir, and his deputy, Dr. Riek Machar, visiting Rome, as they did in April 2019. God is with us here. We have seen it within the South Sudan Council of Churches, an ecumenical body comprising seven member churches and associate congregations. It is quite rare to have a council bringing together Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and others. This is a model for others in East Africa and beyond."

Nhial believes his country's best days are still ahead.

"Let us keep praying that the visit will bring final peace, and for a return of refugees, so that we rebuild our nation. God has picked me among my brothers and sisters to be a part of the rebuilding our nation through a gospel of forgiveness," he said.

At the height of Sudan's civil war, Pope John Paul II and Archbishop of

Canterbury George Carey visited the former Sudan in separate trips. Daau, author of *God's Refugee: The Story of a Lost Boy Pastor* (CreateSpace, 2022), believes it was important for the Vatican to allow another papal visit.

"The latest visit gives us hope that Christian leaders are thinking about us and are concerned about the suffering of God's people in South Sudan. Our hope is that it will motivate political and religious authorities to work for harmony, peace, and stability. It encourages South Sudanese people to truly consider themselves as one nation and people," he said.

Still, Daau expressed his sense that it is "hypocritical for Archbishop Welby to promote South Sudanese unity while failing miserably to keep the Anglican church united.

"Even though the three heads of churches visit South Sudan to urge unity, they are unable to mend the Church's fraying fabric over the issue of homosexuality. It would reassure the world if the three read and confirmed the true gospel of Christ, preaching that all must repent and be forgiven in Christ."

## General Seminary Plans to Reverse Deficit

By Douglas LeBlanc

General Theological Seminary has announced a five-year plan that involves cutting the size of its faculty in half and shifting to a hybrid M.Div. program that does not require residential students. The plan will preserve the seminary's 186-year presence in the historic Manhattan neighborhood of Chelsea, albeit one in which students live on campus only for one-week intensive studies.

Under the plan, some students eventually would become part of a residential "intentional worshiping community modeled on St. Anselm's at Lambeth Palace." But General plans to first overcome an annual budget deficit and embark on campus restoration.

"GTS currently has an operating

budget deficit of more than \$2 million per year, due to a downturn in the market, a fall in revenue, rising operating costs from urgent campus maintenance, and increased staffing costs,” the announcement said.

The Very Rev. Dr. Ian Markham, president of General under its affiliation with Virginia Theological Seminary, told TLC through email that some decisions are in place regarding faculty, while others would be announced March 1.

“There will be some faculty that serve both institutions in an official way, namely Markham and Knowles,” he said, referring to himself and the Rev. Dr. Melody Knowles, Virginia’s vice president of academic affairs and associate professor of Old Testament. “We will soon announce the appointment of the Rev. Dr. James Farwell as the H. Boone Porter Chair of Liturgics.”

The Very Rev. Michael DeLashmatt, senior vice president and dean of chapel, will continue to teach theology, and the Rev. Dr. Eric Thomas, professor of New Testament and queer studies, will continue as a Louisville Scholar, an externally funded position.

“There will be positions in three additional fields, namely Church history, Bible, and practical theology, and current GTS faculty (both full- and part-time/affiliate) have been invited to apply. These three positions are tenure-track and the decision regarding who will be appointed will be made on March 1,” Markham said.

The announcement added that Lord Rowan Williams, 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, and Brian McLaren, evangelical pastor turned Episcopal parishioner, will become adjunct faculty members.

The announcement said General’s hybrid M.Div. will free space for more revenue-generating activities. General’s website promotes the campus as “A Private Oasis in the Heart of Manhattan” that hosts weddings, corporate meetings, catered social gatherings, and fundraisers for nonprofits.

The intentional community, a more distant vision, would involve a steadier presence of some students, and

Markham casts it as a return to General’s roots.

“The intentional community that is imagined — and this is very much in early stages — will be made up of a small group of 10-15 students who are living in the student residences on the campus and are also studying on the seminary’s hybrid M.Div. program,” Markham said. “All students in the hybrid M.Div. program are required to be engaged in some kind of contextual learning placement for the majority of their program of study, and this is in addition to any further work commitments that they might have.”

## Diocese of New Jersey Elects a Canadian ‘Rebel’

By Kirk Petersen

She grew up in Canada in a committedly secular household, and rebelled as a teenager by finding Jesus. She met her husband at the University of Toronto, and they both became priests in the Anglican Church of Canada. While they were visiting a friend in New York City, her husband got an interim job offer, and they both fell in love with the Episcopal Church.



French

Two decades later, the Rev. Sally French has been elected the 13th Bishop of New Jersey.

French, canon for regional ministry and collaborative innovation in the Diocese of North Carolina, prevailed on the third ballot from a field of five on January 28. Assuming she receives the necessary consents from diocesan bishops and Standing Committees, she will be consecrated on June 24, succeeding the Rt. Rev. William H. (Chip) Stokes, who has served since 2013.

“I grew up in a home that did not value church attendance, but was culturally Anglican Communion-oriented,” she told TLC. “When I got to university as an undergraduate, I found myself sort of wondering about the bigger picture,” so she started sampling churches, beginning with the Presbyterian church on campus. “After repeatedly asking other students where they went to church — which it turns out is not the most popular question — eventually, somebody dragged me to the Trinity College chapel,” also on the University of Toronto campus.

There she discovered “this profound sense of God’s presence,” she said. “I felt almost instantly like I had come

(Continued on page 15)

The advertisement features a light orange background with a collage of images on the left: a church interior with a stained glass window, a church tower by a lake, and a medieval manuscript page with the word 'Alleluia'. The text is centered and reads: 'Gregorian chant retreats' in large teal letters, followed by 'April 27 - May 1: Chants of Easter', 'July 9-13: Feast of St. Benedict', and 'Sept 11-15: Chants of the Holy Cross'. At the bottom, it says 'COMMUNITY OF JESUS CAPE COD, MA', '508-240-2400', and 'COMMUNITYOFJESUS.ORG'. A small credit line at the bottom right reads 'Church photo: © Robert Benson'.



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(Continued from page 13)

home, and that I was somehow being invited into this community and fellowship.” She stayed for the coffee hour, and “by the end of the month, I think I was mostly running coffee hour.” That was an October Sunday, and she was baptized and confirmed at the next Easter Vigil.

She immersed herself in the chapel community. She had been headed toward an academic career in economic history, “which I was never really good at, anyway, if I’m perfectly honest,” she said. She realized she wanted to go to seminary instead. “One of the hardest things I’ve ever had to do was to tell my parents, not only that I was going to study this thing that they weren’t keen on me studying, but that, in fact, I was called to ordination.” They tried to steer her toward law school.

How do her parents feel about her becoming a bishop? “Surprisingly excited, overjoyed, and perhaps not entirely with a sense of what this might entail,” she said. “One thing that was always important for my parents was that they wanted me to grow up knowing I could do anything I wanted to do.”

She enrolled in the University of Toronto’s Trinity College seminary, where she met this fellow a year ahead of her named Clarke French. (She was Sally Johnson at the time.) “We were friends for many years before realizing that maybe God was calling us to a different kind of relationship. We both ended up in Edmonton in Western Canada. And we were married there.”

She was thinking about possibly doing some graduate work at General Theological Seminary in New York. She didn’t, but while they were visiting the city her husband was offered a job as interim rector of Christ Church, Staten Island.

“We loved the Episcopal Church, we found that we were welcomed and there were opportunities for connection and ministry that were just amazing,” she said. They were young

and childless and living in New York City. “I really loved that season in New York. Our son was born in December 2005, at which point the subways became a whole lot less fun,” she said.

After a few years in upstate New York, the couple moved to North Carolina. Before joining the diocesan staff in 2020, she spent six years as associate rector at St. Philip’s in Durham — one of the largest churches in the diocese, with more than 300 worshipers on an average pre-pandemic Sunday.

The Rev. Clarke French serves as rector of Church of the Holy Family in Chapel Hill.

The other nominees were the Rev. Canon Dr. Dena Cleaver-Bartholomew, canon to the ordinary, Diocese of Rhode Island; the Very Rev. Troy Mendez, dean, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Phoenix; the Rev. Janine Schenone, rector, Good Samaritan Episcopal Church, San Diego; and the Rev. Dr. Mauricio Jose Wilson, rector, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Oakland, California.

## George Werner, 1938-2023

By Kirk Petersen

The Very Rev. George L.W. Werner, who led the House of Deputies through a turbulent time with what many remember as humor and grace, died on February 6. He turned 85 on February 3.

Werner served two terms as the 31st president of the House of Deputies, from 2000 to 2006, and his successors were among those offering accolades upon his passing. Julia Ayala Harris, who was elected president in 2022, wrote by email: “George and I began corresponding several months ago after I announced my candidacy for president of the House of Deputies. George was always gracious, kind, and affirming in our conversations. After my election, George started sharing more about his experiences and I will always treasure the advice that he gave me.”

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, who preceded Ayala Harris, also hailed Werner as a mentor. “George led the



Werner

House of Deputies with wisdom, patience, courtesy, and a fine sense of humor, and I was honored to follow in his footsteps. When I was fortunate enough to be elected president, George shared his wisdom generously with me and gave me some of the best advice I ever received about how to navigate the job,” she wrote.

“He was a really remarkable teacher,” Bonnie Anderson, Werner’s immediate successor as president, told TLC by telephone. “He always made something enjoyable, even if he was giving me information that could have not been enjoyable. He would have a way to look on the positive side of things.”

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry said: “While we will surely miss his humor and good spirit, we can give thanks that he passed along our way. President Werner provided leadership in our church that that was both deeply faithful and open to new insights — truly just and genuinely kind.”

Before his initial election as president in 2000, Werner served for 20 years as dean of Trinity Cathedral in Pittsburgh, and was active in local civic affairs. In a profile reporting his election, Steve Levin of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* wrote: “In the Pittsburgh diocese, regarded as one of the most conservative in the Episcopal Church, Werner is considered a liberal. Yet within the church as a whole, he is more of a moderate. As is his nature, he deflects such political tags with self-deprecating humor, a tool he uses often in negotiating church politics.”

In an interview in the April 30, 2006, issue of TLC, Werner said “There is a time to be called away from a place. Too often people in positions of leadership try to hang on too long. I will rest content.” His tenure continued until the closing day of the 2006 General Convention, when he handed the gavel to Anderson.

# Bluegrass Revival

## Appalachian Music, Anglican Liturgy Resonate in East Tennessee

By Lauren Anderson-Cripps



Thomas Cassell (left), Josiah Benjamin Nelson, and Tray Wellington, from East Tennessee State University, have led worship at St. Thomas Church. Recently Nelson was named the recipient of the church's first Appalachian music scholarship.

Guitar, fiddle, mandolin, banjo, dulcimer, and harmonica often ring out alongside the organ and piano from the 1861 brick building in the historic district of Elizabethton, Tennessee.

In recent years, St. Thomas Episcopal Church has focused on integrating bluegrass music into the Anglican liturgy, and the resonance of the two traditions has helped revitalize the parish, says its rector, the Rev. Timothy Holder.

When Holder arrived in 2015, weekly attendance at the 108-capacity church had ebbed to a low. After his earlier career in state and national politics and subsequent work as a priest in Alabama, New Jersey, and New York, Holder's call to serve St. Thomas marked a homecoming for the Elizabethton native. While in New York, Holder spearheaded a liturgy infused with hip-hop — a project that drew teens and young adults to his South Bronx parish.

Upon his return to eastern Tennessee, he again considered the question of contextualization. What would it look like, he wondered, to embrace Appalachian music and the spirit of its people in the context of Episcopal liturgy?

"If we have any authenticity and appreciation for this ground, this beautiful area, the mountains, the people we agree with and disagree with, might music have something to do with being a little closer and more appreciative?" Holder said.

St. Thomas's earliest foray into what Holder calls "liturgical bluegrass" happened serendipitously. In 2017, Holder invited several local artists and musicians to join St. Thomas for its midnight Christmas Mass, resulting in an eclectic mix of mountain gospel, African American gospel, and tradi-



Vivid quilts drape the backs of pews at St. Thomas Church.

St. Thomas Church photos



tional Methodist music, all within the frame of the 1982 Hymnal and the Book of Common Prayer. Holder considers that evening a turning point for the parish.

“That was the beginning, and it was a big beginning,” Holder said. “It was [happening] in the beauty of the Episcopal space and liturgy, and we knew we had something very beautiful.”

A more concerted effort to weave Appalachian music into the parish’s life came with a trio of worship services in late 2018 and early 2019. St. Thomas hosted its inaugural Appalachian Evensong with Lessons and Carols in Advent 2018, a liturgy that included the traditional lessons, interspersed with live bluegrass performed by local musicians.

That service was followed by its midnight Christmas Mass and then a community celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during Epiphany. Each service brought more musicians through the doors and more congregants into the pews.

From the outset, Holder said, the intention has been for Appalachian music to be blended into the liturgy to lead congregants in worship, not to be a performance for an audience.

“We’re not doing this for entertainment. This is who we are, this is our liturgy, this is our worship,” Holder said.

Now five years into the endeavor, St. Thomas has settled into a rhythm of integrating bluegrass — some light banjo and fiddle, for example — into the Sunday morning liturgy on the first week of the month and hosting Appalachian music services throughout the year.

During Advent 2022, the parish hosted its fifth annual Appalachian Evensong with Christmas Lessons and Carols. The service was led by Thomm Jutz, a Grammy-nominated songwriter, producer, and guitarist from Nashville and Johnson City, and Tim Stafford, a three-time Grammy-winning guitarist, songwriter, author, and singer. Both men have become friends of the parish through the music ministry.

“The music was heavenly. . . . We had people from all over northeast Tennessee, and the church was packed,” Holder said. “The spirit was very high.”

Over the years, the parish has tapped into the region’s community of local musicians and artists, who have assembled into a loose affiliation

dubbed the Doe River Ensemble, a nod to one of the two rivers that flows through Elizabethton.

“It’s whoever shows up,” Holder said of the ensemble. “That’s part of the culture.”

Holder’s ability to connect with people has been integral to the effort’s success, said Dr. Timothy Sedgwick, professor emeritus at Virginia Theological Seminary, who was the adviser for Holder’s Doctor of Ministry dissertation.

“It’s been word of mouth — especially his mouth,” Sedgwick said of the church’s growth. “He knows everyone.”

The embrace of Appalachian culture at St. Thomas has prompted unexpected ecumenical partnerships, Holder said. Members and pastors of other area faith communities, drawn by the music, regularly participate in the liturgies at St. Thomas, and Holder has been invited to speak to their congregations.

Meanwhile, the parish’s membership base has grown, largely thanks to Latinos in Elizabethton, because St. Thomas is a bilingual congregation.

Holder attributes St. Thomas’s revitalization to the Episcopal Church’s welcoming ethos and the authenticity of Appalachian music.

“It has been a unifier,” he said. “It has been a source for new funding, for new members, both Hispanic and Appalachian. . . . There is a beautiful blending together of the Hispanic culture along with the Appalachian music.”

While church-growth strategies often focus on stemming decline, Sedgwick said St. Thomas’s efforts understand the parish’s life as being bound up with that of its surrounding community.

Holder “understands what it takes to connect with people and thereby bring to the fore the community that’s already there, to celebrate that, and to help draw it forth. And that’s really what the Christian faith is all about; it’s forming, if you will, the people of God,” Sedgwick said. “It works because you have a priest who sees what a parish is, what a community of faith is, and what it is to be connected to the people and their lives in the community.”



Fr. Timothy Holder, Loretta Bowers, Teresa Bowers Parker (who preached at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. community celebration at St. Thomas Church), Dan Parker, and Johvan Bowers.  
Back: Carol Brodeur, server and senior warden of St. Thomas, and parish musician Annie Hopson.

Dan Boner photo



Wikimedia Commons/tarainephotography.com

# Waxing the Surfboard at Holy Trinity, West Palm Beach

By Dylan Thayer

**T**he Rev. Rutger-Jan (R-J) Heijmen — rector of Holy Trinity, West Palm Beach, Florida — talks a lot about water, appropriately enough for a man whose congregation is a few miles west of the Atlantic Ocean. “All ministry is waxing the surfboard and waiting for God to send the waves,” he says.

The past three years of Coronavirus

have been filled with waves for Heijmen and for Holy Trinity. But God’s waves have nevertheless brought opportunities for him and his church, whose average Sunday attendance has grown by over 30 percent since 2019. When Heijmen arrived at Holy Trinity in January 2020, he appreci-

ated the church’s strong culture — Heijmen repeatedly mentions his gratitude that the parish called him — yet was determined to make his mark.

“I’m not afraid to take risks,” he also repeats, and his résumé proves it. Heijmen has a highly entrepreneurial outlook on ministry, honed during many years of evangelistic outreach to youth and young adults and his role in planting a church in New York City.





But when the COVID-19 pandemic began, the waves only grew higher. Before accepting the call to Holy Trinity, Heijmen served at St. Martin's in Houston for seven years. Heijmen and his family decided that he would commute between West Palm Beach and Houston while his son finished his senior year of high school. After flights were grounded in March 2020, Heijmen remained in Houston for months, and had to shepherd his congregation through Lent, Easter, and beyond from hundreds of miles away.

In Houston, Heijmen produced as much digital content as he could, including not just the typical Coronatide fare of Zoom fellowship, worship, and ministries, but also YouTube daily devotionals for Lent, and sermons interspersed with clips from popular movies and TV shows. Holy Trinity's vestry members and other laity were instrumental during Heijmen's absence, creating a phone tree that ensured every parishioner remained connected to the broader congregation. "Our congregation was determined to do everything they could to stay in touch with each other," Heijmen said.

Holy Trinity relaunched in-person worship in October 2020. Despite his comfort with digital media and the parish's continued reliance on it — "streaming is going to be here forever," Heijmen says, adding that more than 100 people still participate online each Sunday — Holy Trinity

remained "determined to bring everyone back together as soon as possible."

Again, Heijmen and his congregation were not afraid to do something bold and innovative to make it happen. "Our vestry worked courageously during this time," Heijmen said, especially in launching an outdoor ministry in

early 2021, which began as "Lent in a Tent" but lasted far beyond that liturgical season.

At first it looked as though Lent in a Tent might not launch. Heijmen awoke multiple times during the night before the first service, startled by a huge storm that drenched and

much and that worship at Holy Trinity was the highlight of their week.

Heijmen credits Holy Trinity's inclusive culture, diverse congregation, and relatively casual worship setting for this atmosphere. "You can truly be yourself at Holy Trinity," he says.

That attitude extends to political identity. "We are not here to be Fox News or MSNBC," Heijmen says. "We are here to talk about eternal things, and we are here to talk about your things." Heijmen believes the gospel demands our votes as well as our hearts. But he worries that being too political can distract from a Christian's true focus: Christ.

Heijmen has not always thought this way, but he now appreciates that his younger, more politically vociferous self "did not change any minds or any hearts. It only hardened people who did not agree with me and emboldened those who did. I try to ask people to draw their hearts closer to Jesus, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. When people draw near to Jesus, their hearts begin to change, almost in spite of themselves."

It is a recurring theme, and one Heijmen emphasizes when asked about how churches can better help their neighbors. Heijmen is full of pragmatic solutions: keep the service to a reasonable length, make sure the bulletin is newcomer-friendly, be missional in your outlook, make sure the rector has a good therapist, and do not be afraid to take risks.

Waxing the surfboard takes a lot of time and energy. But Heijmen is also clear on who moves the waves. "People really want to know about Jesus. That is why they are here," he said. "Preach God's mercy, grace, love, forgiveness for broken people who don't deserve it. Teach the Bible as much as possible. People want to know what's in there." □



Fr. Heijman at the Eucharist (above) and a teaching time for children  
Holy Trinity Church photos

battered West Palm Beach. But come morning, the tent was still standing, along with 80 worshipers, many of them new to both Holy Trinity and the Episcopal Church.

"Our parishioners were really excited about what we were doing, and that energy fed on itself, and they did a great job of inviting their friends, family, anyone they could think of, to church," Heijmen says. By June, the outdoor service had grown to more than 300. Many of the newcomers told Heijmen and others that they had never enjoyed church so

## What I Witnessed at Asbury

By Theresa Wilson

Asbury University has a history of revivals, from 1905 to 2006. In February 1970, Asbury canceled classes for a week and worship continued for 144 hours. About 2,000 witness teams spread from Asbury across the nation, and this revival became a significant part of the Jesus movement (see [bit.ly/asburyrevivals](http://bit.ly/asburyrevivals)).

That history does not diminish the spontaneity of this new movement of the Holy Spirit. Olivia Reingold of *The New York Post* reported that this year's revival began with a simple sermon by Zach Meerkreebs, a volunteer soccer coach, who preached: "If you need to hear the voice of God — the Father in Heaven ... who is perfect in love, gentle and kind —

you come up here and experience his love. Don't waste this opportunity.

"I pray that this sits on you guys like an itchy sweater, and you gotta itch, you gotta take care of it." A small group of 18 students lingered after the chapel service, and the momentum began to build.

On February 16, I made an 80-mile journey southeast from Louisville to Wilmore, the town of 6,000 people where Asbury is based. I arrived just before noon and stood in line with about 2,000 other people, filing slowly into Hughes Memorial Chapel, which seats just under 1,500 people.

As we sat, a campus leader invited us to join a time of silent confession and then to stand and worship God as we were ready. A few students led the worship, using only a guitar and a piano.

There was no hype, no attempt to

drum up emotions — only the sweet sound of voices crying out to God together. We were united as brothers and sisters in Christ, from all different races, denominations, and backgrounds, worshipping before the throne of God.

As I write, this outpouring of rebirth, renewal, and reconciliation at Asbury has lasted more than two weeks. The numbers of people coming to Wilmore have been so dramatic that the university and city have turned some traffic away.

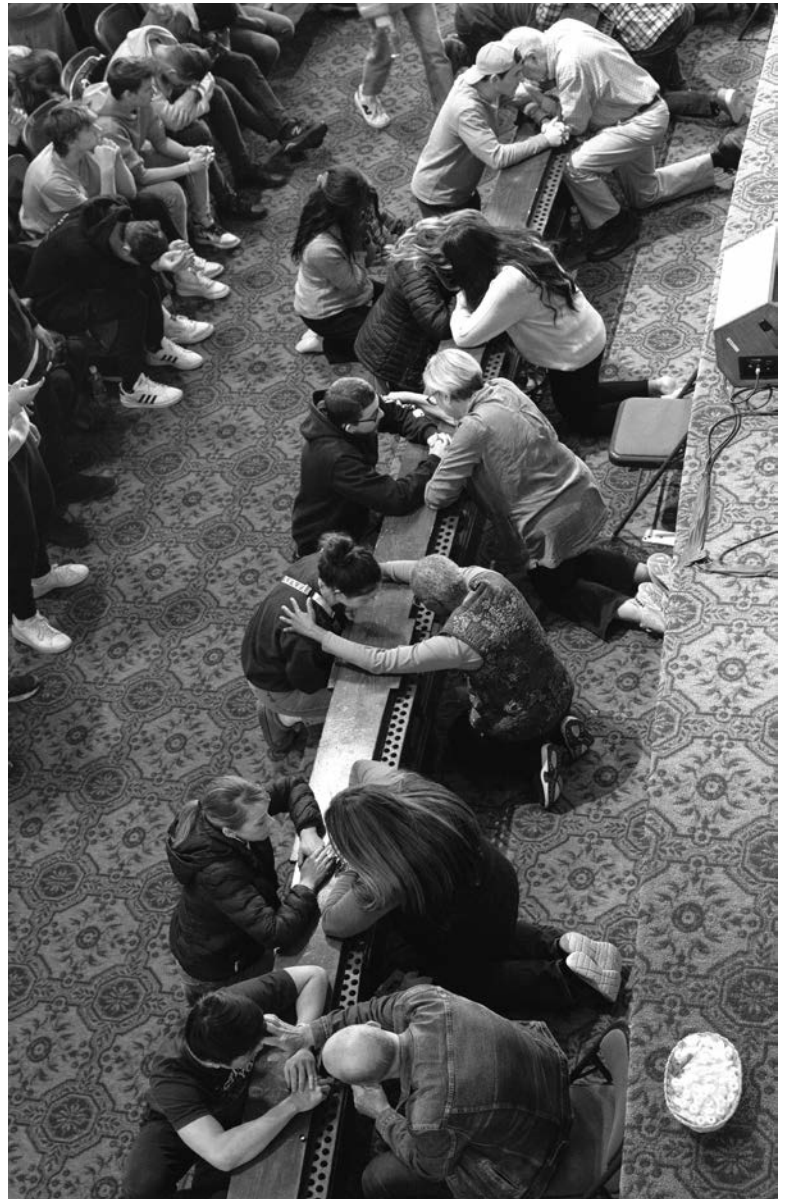
University leaders are seeking an alternative location in central Kentucky for worship, and similar movements have begun in more than 20 other locations across the nation. May the Church be one as the Father and the Son are one (John 17:21).

*Theresa Wilson is director of the Louisville Fellows program.*





Asher Imtiaz photos



# Uniting Poetry and Ritual

By Christine Havens

Many Episcopalians find something inherently beautiful in the Elizabethan cadences of the Rite I liturgy and describe that love in terms of poetry, likening it to Shakespearean sonnets. As a clergy friend says it, “Rite II does not get into the bones the same way the meter of Rite I does.” There is a certain nostalgia here for tradition, and a perception that this traditional liturgical language has more value in terms of making meaning — the more formal language is the more poetic and resonant compared to the more contemporary language of Rite II or *Enriching Our Worship*.

However, some congregants might consider Rite I liturgy wordy and stilted, not representative of 21st-century worldviews and not offering the laity as much opportunity for interaction, especially during the eucharistic prayer. That formal mode of poetic language and that desire for tradition may not resonate with contemporary poets either. Many currently popular poets use little or no punctuation, experiment with grammar and syntax, play with enjambment and fragmented sentences, rely on rhythm and sound rather than rhyme, and ground much of their work in personal experience.

That lack of resonance might hold true for traditional poetry readings, too. Most poetry readings follow a ritual, albeit one simpler than the rites of an Episcopal worship service. A group gathers, usually in a coffee shop, possibly a library, or another secular, literary space. Poets stand at a



Poet Carrie Fountain at LOGOS, September 2019

EcoTheo Collective photos

microphone and read one or more poems. The audience listens and participates through the snapping of fingers or clapping. The poet may be a professional — who has had poems published in literary journals, maybe even a book — or an amateur.

Ritual is important, but sometimes can fall flat if the people perceive themselves as passive recipients rather than a vital part of a whole, whether it be the body of Christ as expressed in worship, or a secular poetry reading in which the person is collectively participating in an expression of transcendence.

The Rev. W. Travis Helms, poet and associate rector at St. John’s Episcopal Church of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, describes ritual as “embodied poetry.” American poet Jane Hirshfield says in *Ten Windows: How Great Poems*

*Transform the World* that a poem “is, more complexly, a living fabrication of new comprehension ... the bringing of something freshly into being.” This “new comprehension” might equate to an awareness of grace. As Helms says, “poets can help us feel those theological realities,” like grace, “more than academic theological texts.” Grace can be embodied through poetry, then as ritual in the secular world, for those who long to experience God and the spiritual but who find church dogma unacceptable or unaccepting of who they are.

It’s this view of incarnation, combined with a complaint from a poet friend about the “way readings can sometimes feel stagnant and transactional — readings where you either passively receive poetry as an audience member, or actively discharge it



on people as a reader,” that prompted Helms to open space for a new

expression of church in the secular world. In June 2018, LOGOS Poetry Collective, now simply known as LOGOS, held its first gathering.

Helms was serving as a curate at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, at the time. In addition to support from the Diocese of Texas, the Rev. Merrill Wade, rector of St. Matt’s, and Fr. Stephen Kinney, Helms gathered a few local poets and creatives, such as Jason Myers and Britanni Sonnenberg, into an advisory cohort. Christian Crydor, owner of Lazarus Brewpub in East Austin and a Presbyterian pastor, was intrigued by the project, as he was also church-planting and he offered space for the monthly gatherings.

The original liturgy was printed on a small bulletin: the gathering opened with the reading of a poem responsively. Two poets then shared three poems each (the last of which was printed for everyone to read). Time allowed for participants, regardless of poetic expertise, to engage in dialogue with each other and then communally with the poet who created them. The poet had a chance to listen and respond. The liturgy of the Word closed with a recitation of “The Final

Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour” by Wallace Stevens. The evening finished with food and libations at table with one another.

Monthly in-person LOGOS Poetry Collective gatherings thrived in the eclectic, creative atmosphere of Austin through March 2020, featuring local poets such as Abe Louise Young and musician W. Joe Hoppe, as well as attracting nationally known artists like Carrie Fountain and Jericho Brown. The faithfulness of those attending and the “community connectedness” to poetry resulted in small groups — Creativity Cadres that provided instruction in reading and writing poetry. Some of those cadres are still meeting, even though LOGOS gatherings are no longer in person and the collective is no longer based in Austin. In 2020, the COVID pandemic forced a “recalibration,” as Helms says, to online-only gatherings and the liturgy adapted to Zoom technology, which allowed for breakout rooms.

In the five years since its inception, LOGOS has grown and deepened, becoming more than a single liturgy. In 2021, Helms and the Rev. Jason Myers, poet and new associate rector at Trinity Church in Fort Worth, launched EcoTheo Collective, a deeper partnership between *EcoTheo Review* and LOGOS Collective, which now includes the Starshine and Clay

Fellowships, a collaboration with Cave Canem. Board members include Roger Reeves, National Book Award finalist, and the Very Rev. Cynthia Kittredge, dean and president of Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest and a poet in her own right. The latest vir-



LOGOS founder Travis Helms

tual gathering featured Gregory Orr and Maya Popa on February 21.

The liturgical work also continues in other projects like Wonder in Wyoming, which connects the sacred spaces of the Grand Tetons with creative and contemplative practices. The 2023 festival coincides with the fifth anniversary of the first LOGOS gathering, and will feature former United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, as well as Roger Reeves.

“There is a way in which every poem is both a singular expression and a gathering of voices,” Myers said. “We are individuals who become communal through the recitation of Scriptures. When a psalm is read responsively, it originates with a single voice, but becomes all voices, overlapping and echoing. This creates a particular kind of listening, in which we hear the past and the present. ... We feast on language, and are always adding more leaves to the table, to accommodate more guests.”

This feast of language, in which Christian liturgical tradition and contemporary poetry embody grace and God’s love for people who might not otherwise encounter it, rather than falling flat, resonates more widely than ever, “evoking transcendence through poetry, ritual, and conversation.”

*Christine Havens is a poet and writer and a graduate of the Seminary of the Southwest whose work has appeared in The Anglican Theological Review and Forward Movement’s Daily Devo.*



A typical liturgy of the Word

# How Do You Measure Online ‘Attendance’?

By Kirk Petersen

Perhaps the emergence of online worship is God’s way of telling us that we care too much about attendance figures.

Excessive focus on average Sunday attendance is a problem that long predates the pandemic. But at least ASA was a simple, objective measuring stick. Not anymore.

It’s still easy to count the people in the pews, of course. An usher walks quietly up the side aisle with one of those little clickers. But how do you account for the multitudes of people who worship via Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube, Vimeo, Webex, Microsoft Teams, Instagram Live, Twitch, TikTok, or PajamaChurch?

OK, I made that last one up. Think of it as a placeholder for the dozen or more other legitimate options mentioned in the instructions to the parochial report — the annual effort to measure the size and financial strength of the Episcopal family.

The church releases statistics annually, late in the following year. For 2022, the church reported a decline in ASA of a staggering 35 percent — a number heavily burdened with caveats, and based solely on in-person worship. It sure would be comforting to offset some of that decline by including online worship.

As every parish priest knows, the deadline for submitting parochial report data is March 1. With that in mind, I set out to determine the emerging consensus on the best way to measure the number of people worshipping online.

The simple answer: There’s nothing even approaching a consensus. There probably never will be.

“You need to talk about online worship and engagement in context, and by platform, because the experience of engaging and how they count is so distinct,” said the Rev. Dr. Molly James, deputy executive officer of the General Convention, who oversees parochial reports. “Zoom, YouTube, Facebook all measure differently.”

Show of hands, parish priests: Who thinks the parochial report questionnaire should be longer and more detailed? This

year, the parochial report asks three questions about online worship: Do you measure online participation? If so, how? And what’s your weekly average?

This is part of a long-term journey toward developing best practices. It will not soon yield statistics that are comparable across churches or dioceses.

Platform-specific differences are only the start of the obstacles to measuring online worship participation.

Let’s say two parents and three kids gather in front of the computer screen with printouts of the bulletin. They sing the hymns, listen to the readings and the sermon, recite the creed, bow their heads in prayer. Thus, five people have had a meaningful experience of family worship — but they’re going to show up as one livestream feed in the statistics.

Let’s say I play solitaire during the hymns and bail out after the sermon and announcements. (Hypothetically.) Should my participation count as much as that family of five? No — but it probably will.

How about the people who are at work Sunday morning, but watch the whole service later: should they be counted? Sure — but they won’t be.

“All of us could tell different stories about how to measure,” said the Rev. Paul Canaday, rector of Christ Church in New Bern, North Carolina. He chairs the Task Force on the State of Membership in the Episcopal Church, authorized at the 2022 General Convention by Resolution A156.

Online participation is one of the topics the task force will consider, but it faces calendar challenges because of the delayed General Convention. Canaday was named chair of the task force in January 2023. It has not yet met as of this writing, and its Blue Book report to the 2024 General Convention is due December 1.

There’s also a longer-term, well-funded, ecumenical effort in progress,

under the name Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations (EPIC). It’s a five-year project funded by the Lilly Foundation, and led by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. EPIC’s interest is far broader than attendance statistics, but that’s one of the things it examines.

“Churches reported a median attendance for in-person worship at 45 with a median attendance for online worship at 20 for a total median attendance of 65,” according to the group’s first report. The finding was based on a survey of more than 2,000 congregations in 38 Christian denominations.

It all sounds simple and authoritative — but how many different methods did those congregations use to count online attendance? Oh, and the survey was conducted in the summer of 2021, at a very different stage of the pandemic, so the numbers do not necessarily resemble current reality, if they ever did.

The lesson here is that you should be highly skeptical of *any* data about online worship. And that may never change — the difficulties are inherent in the nature of online participation. It cannot ever become as straightforward as counting people in the pews.

Maybe that’s OK. Maybe the focus should remain on in-person attendance. While priests will welcome you online, they would much rather have you sitting in a pew. “You can’t do Communion on Zoom,” James noted.

You also can’t share the peace, or have fellowship before or after the service. The music is more inspiring coming out of the organ than out of your laptop or smartphone. If you’re surrounded by worshipers, it’s much harder to play solitaire without getting caught.

Still, although in-person, corporate worship should be the standard, online worship is much better than nothing. “I think there can be tremendous spiritual value in it, especially if it’s a way to stay connected to a faith community that you couldn’t otherwise be connected with,” James said. □





# ‘Living Out the Faith’: Five Minutes with Joshua Caler

By Richard Mammana Jr.

In June 2022, the Borough of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, charged Christ Church with a zoning code violation for giving free meals and essential items to the poor, which the borough saw as outside of church activities. A fine of \$500 per day plus court costs has accrued from that time.

The church, with the support of Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez, immediately appealed the zoning citation. “We will not be dissuaded; we will continue to live into our call as followers of Jesus Christ,” the bishop said. “Our faith compels us to reach out to people in need. We will not leave anyone behind. For us, it not about optics or the next election. It is about not abandoning those who are cold, hungry or lost.”

Pottstown — a community of about 23,000 in Montgomery County and a center of the colonial American economy — has been a regional hub for dairy, farming, and iron production. Its population peaked in 1960. Christ Church was chartered in 1824 and is now one of the northernmost churches of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

About one in ten families in the county lives below the poverty line, and about one in three Pennsylvanians has experienced food insecurity since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic.

TLC reached the Rev. Joshua Caler, Christ Church’s rector, for an update in the new year.

## How many people visit you each week for food and other support at Christ Church?

Our weekly community lunch — one of the specific ministries cited by the borough — routinely welcomes 60 guests. The most popular recovery meeting Christ Church hosts averages around 75 participants.

Along with our pantry and laundry ministries, a breakfast we host each week, and the space we make available to unhoused friends each evening before the shelter is open, I’d estimate we welcome between 200 to 300 guests seeking the church’s ministries and hospitality. We also welcome dozens more volunteers from religious communities and nonprofits in the region with whom we partner in this work.

## Do you have a sense of what is driving the zoning restriction on ministry to the poor?

There’s not an easy answer to this. There’s no question that, since COVID, community need, hunger, and a lack of affordable housing have grown. But these aren’t new problems: many of the ministries for which we’ve been cited have roots that go back decades, in some cases more than 50 years. Only recently have they caused concern for local officials, and that’s coincided with the borough’s redevelopment efforts of the main business district of town.

I think the visibility of poor and unhoused people has caused concern for local officials who worry their presence will discourage investments from developers and business owners. Since Christ Church is the only church in that part of town, and actively welcoming the folks borough officials would prefer to be less visible, they’ve decided to exert some pressure on our ministries directed to the poor, hungry, and homeless.

## Your congregation’s diaconal work has made national headlines. How is your daily and weekly life different?

Aside from a few more meetings and Zooms, our legal matter hasn’t disrupted life at Christ Church too much. Our ministries have continued uninterrupted as we work toward resolution with the borough.

If anything, the last several months have been so heartening for me, the wardens, and the vestry. The outpouring of support and prayers from every corner of the church has just been extraordinary. Our bishop’s investment in seeing this through and his encouragement have been so good for the people of Christ Church.

Folks with whom we have no connection have written to encourage and commend us. Often, we hear from visitors that they read about what’s been going on and thought they’d check us out. All of that is just a sign to me that people are eager to see the church living out the faith in recognizable, tangible ways.



# Lisboa: A Figural Reading for a Crippled Church

By Trent Pettit

*This essay was first published on January 26 on Covenant.*

Slaves were brought from Africa to work in mines soon after gold was discovered in the backlands of Brazil. The discovery of gold made inland settlements possible for the first time around the largest of these mines. In the 1700s, cities like Vila Rica became populous and lucrative sites, where Portuguese settlers lined streets with two-story houses and ornately adorned churches. The town's gold provided the funding for decorating the more important of these structures by sculptures like those fashioned by Antônio Francisco Lisboa, a mulatto (1738-1814).<sup>1</sup>

He was later, somewhat affectionately, referred to as the “little cripple,” because his hands had been deformed by leprosy. Given the state of his hands, he could not hold onto his hammer and chisel, so he had his assistants tie them to what remained of his hands to continue his work. In this way he went, ornamenting church after church with expressive statues of biblical figures and saints. Though the names of his Portuguese father and African mother are known, during his lifetime he was known as a bastard, but he was also known as one of the greatest exemplars of Baroque sculpture in Latin America and the world. This was the work of one servant of the Church.

Lisboa's status as “servant” cut both ways. He was one who dedicated his gifts to the work of the gospel and was the son of Isabel, an African slave woman. Lisboa's talents as a designer were tutored in his father's workshops, not by his father but by his uncle (stone carving he learned from the famous sculptor Francisco Xavier de Brito). His father disowned Isabel

and trained Antônio under the guise of an adoptee. His father's mercies were, of course, a fraud.

Today, some have found the documentary proof backing up what we know of Lisboa's biography to be lacking, so for many his works are slowly being loosed from their numinous repertoire as Lisboa's biography is being reframed as partly fictitious works of aficionados if not pious hagiographers — not dissimilar, perhaps, to stories like that of Pope Leo's miraculous hand.<sup>2</sup>

It is said that the documentary and oral proof insufficiently demonstrate just when Lisboa's leprosy took hold and when his work took to its heights. The impressiveness of his work relative to the time of his disease has consequently led skeptics to question if Lisboa had a disease at all or if it was not his assistants that created his later works in his name. Perhaps it is just that his work is too good for us to believe that his hands could have borne such fruit while enduring such disfigurement.

Furthermore, it is also true that neither Lisboa nor his works can be dislodged from their entanglement in the colonial and ecclesial interest that gave shape to his skill. Yet Lisboa's works cannot be reduced to these incriminating influences, either to Portuguese colonizers or to the catechization of Jesuit missionaries, the latter of which brought the rococo style with them to Brazil. Lisboa gained from both, even if he was rejected as that empire's bastard son. The sculptures and their imposing beauty remain with Lisboa.

Miraculously, nearer the end of his life, while suffering the full effects of his illness, Lisboa created what is considered his greatest work: a dozen ten-foot-tall prophets that play sentry to Bom Jesus do Matosinhos's parvise. The figures' exaggerated limbs and



Supposed posthumous portrait of Alejandrino  
Wikimedia



Detail of the prophet Isaiah  
Wikimedia



Lisboa  
Geraldo José Garcia/Pixabay image



Angel with the chalice of Passion, in the Via Sacra of Congonhas (Wikimedia)

expressions appear to guard the sanctuary of the church. All of this pays homage not only to Lisboa's talents but also, if his biography is true, to his faith and perseverance.<sup>3</sup> After Lisboa's death, his choice to fashion prophetic sentinels for the church seems fitting. Not only did these figures loom then over the colonial and extractive aegis, entradas and bandeiras, and episcopal aids who came to worship there, they continue to loom over us.<sup>4</sup>



Nossa Senhora das Dores, traditionally attributed to Aleijadinho. Museum of Sacred Art of São Paulo

In the Global North, the fruit of the church is, like Lisboa, subject to scrutiny. Unlike Lisboa, though, this scrutiny is inlaid with oracles of divine judgment; but, like Jeroboam's withered hand, the church can be restored to stretch out again before the altar of the Lord with newly chastened intent (1 Kgs. 13:4-6). If prophets are to remain stationed in the Anglican Communion in the minority world, holding fast to its remaining apostolic façades, they can do so only as they do *not* try to purify themselves and escape the judgment befalling its mixed legacy. In this way sentries remain.

Whatever glory this church might

still bear witness to, it can only do so with hands like Lisboa's. Though not leprous, its hands are disfigured by chronic partisan, sexual, colonial, and schismatic disease. Nevertheless, it must and can, with hands propped, chisel away, keeping scriptural forms at its fore. Even if we who "stay" as bastard sons and daughters, permitted to do so by the blasphemous multitude's supposed mercy, the work must go on in hope and obedience to divine will — not in cynical regroupings — in anticipation of surprising beauty to come, like the beauty wrought from Lisboa's preservation in the face of the mixed responses of onlookers. Indeed, this is how the Church is in every age: crippled but enduring.

By the age of 39, Lisboa was known as the leading practitioner of Brazil's rococo style. Yet, his racial identity and origins prevented his admittance to any professional artists' guild in his lifetime, even though during it he was understood to be equal with the likes of Italy's Serpotta and Austria's Fechtmeyer.<sup>5</sup> In the crippled hands of Lisboa, received Portuguese technique gave way to something new in Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio, and Pará: what is known as the Baroque Mineiro period. In short, from a mixed legacy reformation and sanctity came to Brazil, of which Lisboa was a great and enduring contributor.

With all the calls for a "new Benedict" since the 1980s following the publication of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, it is sometimes forgotten that Benedict's Rule was just this: reformation. Benedict's Rule was no novel *synderesis*, but rather a Marian treasuring of received gift, *conscientia* (Luke 2:19). Like Elijah standing amid warring Israel, or Benedict's infighting brothers, staying meant holding out forgiveness and hoping for the renewal of divine presence.

Lisboa's prophets stay today for Brazil, and serve as a reminder for us. Whatever hope remains for the Anglican Communion, it is given through Christ's constant desire to forgive and, indeed, to reapply himself to the suffering his remaining prophets endured to serve the ends of that forgiveness (Job 5:18; Col. 1:24;



Detail of Christ carrying the cross, in the Via Sacra of Congonhas (Wikimedia)

Acts 16:29–34). Perhaps, when the time comes, the goodness that God brings will, like Lisboa's, apply more skepticism to our illnesses rather than to our works.

*The Rev. R. Trent Pettit serves as an associate priest at St. Matthew's Anglican Church in Riverdale, Toronto.*

<sup>1</sup> John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 83.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Walter Boechat's Jungian analysis of Lisboa in "Cultural Complexes and Cultural Identity in Brazil: the Development of an Individual Identity," in *Research in Analytical Psychology: Applications from Scientific, Historical, and Cross-Cultural Research*. Joseph Cambay and Leslie Sawn, eds. (Routledge, 2018): 252-54.

<sup>3</sup> James E. Hogan, "Antonio Francisco Lisboa, 'O Aleijadinho': An Annotated Bibliography," *Latin American Research Review* 9, no. 2 (Summer, 1974), 84.

<sup>4</sup> Colonial expeditions into inland Brazil were economically motivated and took the form of two types: the entradas and the bandeiras. Entradas worked for the Portuguese crown and colonial government, while the bandeirantes worked for private investors.

<sup>5</sup> Pal Keleman, *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America* (Dover Publications, 1967, p. 248), referenced in James E. Hogan, "Antonio Francisco Lisboa, 'O Aleijadinho': An Annotated Bibliography," *Latin American Research Review* 9, no. 2 (Summer, 1974), 83.

# Mauriac: The Brave Little Nun's Basilica

By Simon Cotton

The Cantal is one of the emptiest parts of France. When you hear what sounds like cow bells, it is not ringing in your ears or even a Mahler symphony; it most probably *is* the bells of the Cantal cows.

One of the few towns in this rural idyll, Mauriac stands on the zero meridian. The church of Notre Dame des Miracles is a largely Romanesque building, made into a minor basilica by Pope Benedict XV in 1921, the largest and finest church in the region. The west portal has a Romanesque sculpture (c. 1120) of the Ascension of Christ; though mutilated, with Our Lady and the Apostles headless, it is of high quality.

Inside you first see a splendid, generously proportioned Romanesque font, its colored and sculpted bowl decorated with figures including the Baptism of Christ, Christ in Majesty, the Agnus Dei, St. Michael and the Dragon, and the Evangelistic symbols, while above the high altar is the venerated statue of Notre Dame des Miracles (said to have stopped droughts and a cholera outbreak in 1832). A characteristic 16th-century



statue of the Virgin and Child, a *Vierge à l'oiseau*, flanks the chancel arch, while the altar in the south chapel has a retablo of the virgin donating the rosary to St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena. On the outside wall is a plain cross that commemorates the Abbé Filiol, executed on May 14, 1793.

The Basilica of Notre Dame des Miracles at Mauriac has a quite wonderful silence (sadly lost to most of us

today). There is no coincidence that this has produced saints. Catherine Jarrige (1754-1836), known as Catinon Menette ("Cathy the little nun") in the local *patois*, was born on a farm at Doumis in the Cantal. The youngest of seven children, she worked on the farm before becoming a lacemaker when she was 20.

Devout, even from childhood, she looked after the poor all her life, begging to provide food and clothing for





riac, on August 22, 1764, and baptized the following day. He studied at Mauriac, then went to the seminary in Clermont-Ferrand in 1786; he was ordained priest on March 26, 1789, and became the assistant priest (*Vicaire*) of Drugeac, near Mauriac, in October 1790.

The next year he refused to take the oath and decided to go into exile in Spain, along with other clergy, but soon after he set off, he had a change of heart, and retraced his steps to exercise a clandestine ministry in his hometown, hiding in farms and the woods.

Betrayed, he was sent to the guillotine by the revolutionary tribunal of Aurillac. Catherine Jarrige walked with him to the scaffold by the church in Mauriac on May 14, 1793. After his martyrdom, she dipped a cloth in his blood and applied it to the face of a blind child, who saw again.

After the Revolution ended, Catherine went back to begging alms for the poor. No one would refuse her. She fed whole families and took particular care of orphans.

Blessed Catherine Jarrige was beatified by John Paul II in 1996.

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them. She became a Third Order Dominican, taking vows and becoming a member of the tertiary order, but really came into her own in 1791 when the French Revolution's leaders began persecuting the Catholic Church. Priests were asked to swear an oath to the state, which many regarded as apostasy.

A death sentence awaited these non-jurors and their helpers. Priests who would not *prêter le serment*, as it was called, went into hiding, often in the forests, or caves; in the straw in barns; in the lofts of houses; or dove-cotes. Working under cover of night, Jarrige visited the priests in their hideaways, providing them with vestments, wine, wafers, and sacred vessels, so that they could celebrate Mass.

She brought them babies to baptize. She also escorted them to remote locations; as they were in mufti, she could pretend to be their wife, often scolding them to fool the troops and gendarmes. They would pray to Our Lady of Miracles to help them. Her eye was open to all that was going on, and was always on her guard. She went into areas where even the strongest men would not venture after dark.

People said to her, "Weren't you afraid?"

"Oh, no," she said. "When leaving Mauriac I'd make my act of contri-

tion, put my rosary in my hand and set off. In any case, I wasn't alone."

"Really, who was with you?"

"Oh, *le bon Dieu!*"

Sometimes she'd sing the *Marseillaise* or put a cockade on her hat. She was arrested several times but the Revolutionary tribunals she appeared before set her free each time. She had immense support in Mauriac and the civil authorities simply couldn't believe that someone of such a wretched appearance could trick them as Catherine did. She saved all the priests she looked after, except one.

The 11th of 14 children, François Filiol was born at Bouval, near Mau-





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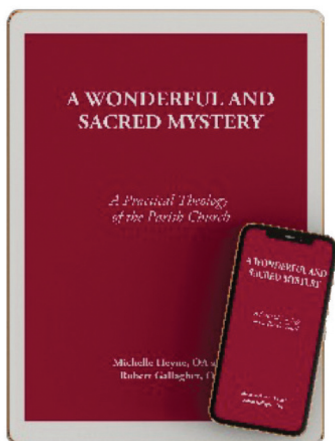
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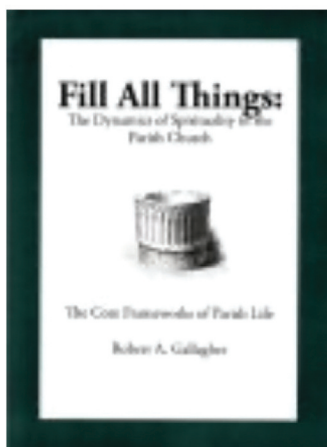
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# Unlocking the Lewisian Imagination

## The Medieval Mind of C.S. Lewis

How Great Books Shaped a Great Mind

By Jason M. Baxter

IVP Academic, pp. 176, \$22

Reviewed by Ben Lima

Why did C.S. Lewis write such good books? Jason M. Baxter provides an enlightening and encouraging answer: Lewis had an encyclopedic knowledge of the great Western literary and intellectual tradition, and he recognized that tradition as a living, breathing one that could be deployed against the demystification and desacralization of the modern world. The great success of Lewis's popular works of fiction and apologetics rests on both the vastness of his scholarly knowledge and on his determination to translate that knowledge into plain, vivid images and tales that can be easily understood by any reader, with no special background required.

Thus, readers who enjoy Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, or his *Space Trilogy*, are not merely being entertained by lively stories; rather, they are (perhaps unwittingly) being given glimpses into an entirely different way of seeing the world: a worldview that was second nature for those in pre-modern times, but that has become increasingly unfamiliar since Newton, Descartes, Hobbes, et al., ushered in the reductive and mechanized worldview that dominates the modern world today. Lewis's world, by contrast, is chock full of what Thomas Aquinas called "the splendor of form": a wonderful radiance that bursts forth from every created thing, and with which human beings are called to joyfully participate as fellow creatures in celebrating God's glory.

In taking readers through Lewis's achievement, Baxter's accomplishment is itself noteworthy. Baxter alter-

nates between discussing various aspects of Lewis's medieval scholarship as seen in works such as *The Allegory of Love*, *The Discarded Image*, and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, and explaining how this scholarship shaped particular scenes and characters in Lewis's fiction, or illustrations in his popular lectures. Still, Baxter's book remains reasonably compact and very readable; not a page is wasted.

Among countless such examples, one is Lewis's understanding of the musicality of creation. "The long, Platonic tradition," Baxter writes, taught Lewis "to see the world as a symphony but always to take this symphony (or cathedral) as a symbol or sacrament or transposition, which gestures at something beyond." In Lewis's fiction, this idea appears in the creation scene in *The Magician's Nephew*, when Aslan sings the cosmos into existence.

Along with musicality, another important aspect of the splendor of creation was the quality of "atmosphere" that makes a particular thing what it is. (For example, he used the word "Donegality" to indicate the totality of what makes the city of Donegal itself and nowhere else.) So achieving the correct "atmosphere" was central to his fictional vision; he wanted the characters to breathe "Narnian air."

Lewis realized that by showing Christianity in its beauty and wonder, he could bypass the sense of obligation and inhibition that had made the faith seem so unappealing in his childhood. Lewis wanted to remove the dutiful and didactic "Sunday school associations" in order to make the things of God "appear in their potency" via the imagination.

The unity of the medieval world picture held a particular appeal. Whereas modern society tends to segregate fields of knowledge, leaving many people ignorant of practical

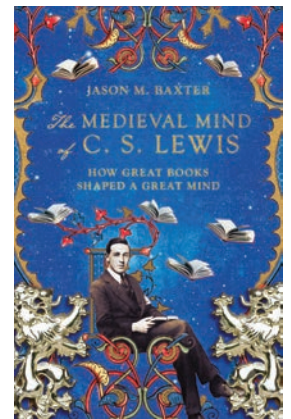
affairs outside their specialization, Lewis noticed that medieval education closely combined the practical and theoretical, such that an educated person was likely to know something about "farriery, forestry, archery, hawking, sowing, ditching, thatching, brewing, baking, weaving," along with law, rhetoric, theology, and mythology. In medieval education, the abstract and the concrete were integrated.

Lewis looked to medieval cathedrals as models for creativity: "At Wells we see

something on which many generations labored, which no man foresaw or intended as it now is, and which occupies a position half-way between the works of art and those of nature." Medieval authors and artists realized that beautiful literature and art don't come *ex nihilo* from the mysterious depths of an individual artist's mind, but rather through an artist's participation, together with generations past and future, in work on a particular corner of the magnificent tapestry of creation.

By contrast, reflecting on the post-Newtonian world picture, Lewis realized that what he called an "empty universe," in which objective reality is fundamentally nothing but matter in motion, contains nothing but "cold, eternal silences." In such a world, all qualities of value are first "transferred to the subjective side of the account," but eventually "the same method which has emptied the world now proceeds to empty ourselves."

Is, then, modernity just a curse, that produces only backward-looking resignation about the fate of living in a



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disenchanted age? Not at all. Baxter writes that “the positive result of our exile is our painful sense of loss and longing, which speaks to a desire, not just to see beauty, but to be beauty.” Having been exiled from the medieval enchanted cosmos, modern people don’t have the option of resting in an enchanted landscape as pagans and medieval Christians did. Instead, we must look ahead, toward the new heavens and the new earth that are

promised by Christ’s resurrection. Baxter’s conclusion, “Nostalgia for the Future,” efficiently rallies his readers toward this end.

Who is the new Lewis? To be sure, such towering gifts of both scholarship and storytelling are rarely combined in the same person. But even so, readers here will see that from a Lewisian point of view, such a question is probably misguided. The highest good for an author is not to ascend the mountain of fame, and then join other greats

in a literary pantheon. Instead it is, as Lewis did, to join fellow artistic laborers, like the team of masons building a cathedral, contributing to, and sharing together in, a great tradition to be enjoyed by all. Baxter’s book is among the best possible introductions to this tradition.

*Ben Lima (@lectionaryart on Twitter) is an art historian and critic, and a parishioner at Church of the Incarnation in Dallas.*

## An Odd and Brilliant Book

### Dante the Theologian

By Denys Turner

Cambridge, pp. 310, \$39.99

Review by Matthew Rothaus Moser

Dante Alighieri’s 14th-century poem, the *Commedia*, is an epic narrative of 14,233 lines that tells the story of a pilgrim’s journey through the realms of the afterlife, as he makes his way to the beatific vision of God. It is often heralded as *the* great Christian poem. Despite its influence on the Christian imagination, the relationship between the *Commedia*’s poetry and its theology has often been the subject of controversy and debate in the last 700 years of its life.

Denys Turner’s recent book on Dante as a theologian rides a wave of recent interdisciplinary scholarship, resisting interpretations of Dante that assume the *Commedia* is poetry *rather than* theology. In fact, Turner’s book is an extended argument against that “rather than.” For Turner, poetry and theology converge in the *Commedia* as each requires the other to speak well of the truth of things.

Turner gives each of the *Comedy*’s three *cantiche* — *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso* — a two-chapter treatment governed by a central theological concern, developed in various directions.

The two chapters on *Inferno*

identify the possibility and nature of hell and what it means, theologically, to exist *infernally*. For Turner, hell’s world is “the place for each sinner of that specific [moral] self-harm that is theirs, the place where the implications of choosing [their sin] spins out in the specific shape of a life so defined” (p. 50). Damnation means living out the logic of one’s sin without reprieve. Turner calls this the “moral

psychology” of Dante’s hell, a truthful — if infernal — self-knowledge in which moral disorder has become a kingdom of the sinful self. It is “disorder regnant” (67).

The payoff of Turner’s exploration of the infernal logic of *Inferno* comes when he interrogates recent discussions of Dante’s “infernalism” that keep arising in debates over universal salvation. Turner asks if Dante’s *Inferno* is rightly judged by some universalists as a morally abhorrent imagination. Turner helpfully intervenes on this point by exploring *Inferno* as an “anti-narrative”: a narrative whose logical consistency is inherently self-refuting.

*Inferno* expresses the conditional possibility of how human beings can

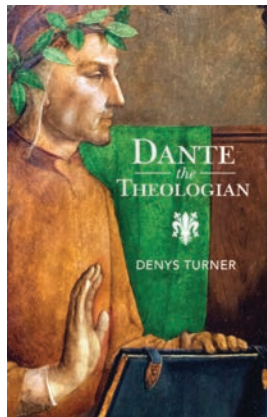
come to will nothing positive, nothing even parasitic of the Good, in short, to will *will*. Dante’s hell is a world of “pure [negative] will” (100). But is it possible to “will to nothing” or to will hell?

No, says Turner. There is no “there” there for us to will. Hell can only exist within the larger theater of the Good that it parodies and exploits. *Inferno*, considered theologically, is not a statement of what is there in hell, but rather of how a hell of unchecked, eternal egoism would look

and feel, of what the “perfection” of wicked desire would look like.

This is the theology that lies behind that famous inscription above the gate of hell, insisting that those who enter must “abandon every hope.” Yet Dante *does* enter hell with hope; Turner insists that there could be no possibility of him ever leaving hell if he followed the warning above the gates. This means the pilgrim’s journey through hell is *his* purgatory.

Dante’s journey through the inferno is ultimately salvific. And insofar as he takes his readers along with him, *our* journey through *Inferno* has the possibility of being salvific as well. Though Turner does not put it this way, Dante’s journey through hell in *Inferno* is a literary harrowing of hell,





an exposure of the infernal lies that we so often tell ourselves that *Inferno* dramatizes. To read *Inferno* theologically is, for Turner, to read it *purgatorially*.

The heart of Turner's book lies in the two chapters on *Purgatorio*. As Turner rightly insists, Dante is a *purgatorial* writer (p. 20). One cannot understand the theology of the *Comedy* from the perspective of *Inferno* alone. To put it more strongly, one cannot even understand the theology of *Inferno* from within the confines of its narrative. One needs *Purgatorio* to understand *Inferno*, for "Purgatory is the truth of Hell when turned right-side up" (p. 124).

The two chapters on *Purgatorio* explore the character of conversion. An especially compelling aspect of these chapters is Turner's focus on the purgative healing of personal narratives. In a way distinct from the hopeless self-knowledge of hell, purgative self-knowledge brings with it responsibility and choice. It requires the recognition of myself as I really am (*Purgatorio* 9.96). Turner says that purgatorial self-knowledge requires abandoning — not hope, as in *Inferno* — but false "self-told stories" in favor of the true story of my life and identity in relationship to grace and salvation.

Turner focuses mostly on the pilgrim's confrontation with Beatrice at the top of Mount Purgatory (*Purgatorio* 30-33). Dante has already traveled up the seven terraces of the mountain, healed from his vices, and returned to a state of moral innocence. Turner says that Dante's journey through Purgatory has left him in a dangerous state of moral smugness.

In Turner's reading, Dante's self-told story at the top of Mount Purgatory is that he has reached the goal of his journey, his conversion is complete, and, most important and erroneously, that *he* achieved it through his agency and the exercise of moral will. It is his self-confidence and self-satisfaction that, Turner

thinks, will hold Dante back from fuller conversion.

Conversion, considered theologically and not just morally, involves the reformation of the will *and* the memory — including those stories of ourselves that we tell and inhabit. The healing of memory requires "remembering a first self," who is inserted into a narrative of grace and forgiveness. Dante's theology of conversion, Turner shows, is one in which sin is neither original nor inevitable, God's grace has priority, and forgiveness isn't earned through moral exercise but received by a heart made gentle by love.

The central concern of Turner's chapters on *Paradiso* is the "mystical" reality of heaven present in hidden ways in the ordinary (p. 202). Turner reads the *Comedy* as culminating in the attunement of the pilgrim with the music of heaven that has been hidden within every moment of his journey so far. It is this transcendent and mystical reality that Dante's poetry in *Paradiso* attempts to signify and to make present.

But Dante's poetry is only up to that task if it learns how to fail at that very task, to follow a paradisaic pedagogy that leads poetry into the depth of theological silence that comes when all metaphor and concept, all speech and thought, exhaust themselves before the plentiful mystery of the "Love that moves the sun and the other stars" (*Paradiso* 33.145).

What is especially striking about Turner's chapters on *Paradiso* is the way that, despite all talk of politics, eternity, silence, mysticism, and the apophatic, one of his most extended discussions is on the role of the *smile* in Dante's heaven. The theology of *Paradiso* allows no disembodied spirituality, no mysticisms of extraordinary experience, but insists instead that the heavenly is revealed in the most earthly and prosaic of forms: the human smile.

The smile is a sign that contains its own signified; there is no distance between the smile and the pleasure it

expresses. A true smile is a sign of itself, just as in heaven "the meaning of everything signified is complete in itself" (272). The smile is what heaven is, and it is what Dante's paradisaic poetry aims to become. By the time we reach the closing of the *Comedy*, Dante's poetry and theology will meet. His verse effects what it signifies, as theology and poetry both culminate in holy silence as the perfected excess of language.

This is an odd and brilliant book. Its brilliance lies in its compelling drawing out of the theology running throughout the whole of the *Comedy*. Its oddity stems from how it does not fit easily into established academic categories. It cannot be simplistically cataloged as Dante scholarship, or historical theology, or historical reconstruction, nor does it fit neatly under the heading of doctrinal or spiritual theology. This oddity is the book's best feature. For in its stubborn refusal to fit into tidy academic categories, Turner's work mirrors Dante's.

Part of what Turner does so well here, in a way that Dante does when his commentators allow him, is expand the register of what theology and poetry both sound like, how they are written, and how they aim at truth. Turner's Dante expands the boundaries of such categories, allowing them to bleed into each other. The result is not simply an interesting take on Dante, but an expanded vision of both theology and poetry, an image of how they might work together today by undergoing the kind of infernal, purgatorial, and paradisaic education that Dante dramatizes. The goal of this education is so that they might together learn to speak truly by failing — that is, by eliciting a holy silence that is an efficacious sign of the fullness of the Word.

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# Sharing the Vision

## Christian Socialism

The Promise of an Almost Forgotten Tradition

By Philip Turner

Cascade Books, pp. 286, \$29

Review by John Orens

In his first *Tract on Christian Socialism*, published in 1849, F.D. Maurice imagined a “person of respectability” asking, “Do you seriously believe that a Socialist can be a Christian, or a Christian a Socialist?” To which Maurice replied that not only is Christianity “the only foundation of socialism,” but “a true socialism is the necessary result of a sound Christianity.” Of course, few of Maurice’s contemporaries agreed. And although secular socialism is now a familiar part of our political landscape, many American Anglicans think of Christian Socialism, if at all, as a remedy for bygone Victorian evils.

But, as Philip Turner observes, Christian Socialism remains an important movement in the Church of England, and the evils that Maurice and his companions addressed have not disappeared. Like the early Christian Socialists, we are haunted by the gulf between rich and poor, and by an amoral economic system that idolizes wealth and competitive individualism. Like them, when we look to the Church for guidance, too often we find its response to these ills confused and inept. Which is why, Turner believes, we need to recover the wisdom of the English Christian Socialist tradition.

Turner does not embrace the tradition in its entirety. He complains that Christian Socialists have yet to reckon seriously with the limits that sin places on social reform. He is suspi-

cious of their paternalism. And he contends that they have yet to properly weigh the competing claims of liberty and equality. Indeed, it is neither the Christian Socialists’ politics nor their economics that Turner commends.

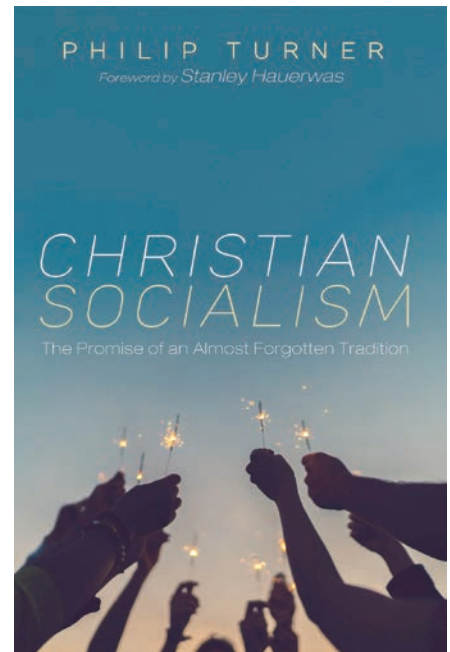
Rather, it is their communitarian vision. They remind us, he writes, that love, not competition, is the first truth of human relations. They emphasize that the duties we owe one another are more important than the right to pursue our self-interest. And they understand that a society recognizing human dignity as a divine gift rather than a social construct can

*Turner emphasizes the tradition’s underlying theology.*

nourish authentic personhood.

There is much to ponder in this volume. Unlike many historians of Christian Socialism, Turner emphasizes the tradition’s underlying theology. This allows him to trace the thread connecting writers as different as Maurice and John Milbank with admirable lucidity. He explores how Christian Socialists have wrestled with the perennial tension between the need for social reform and the danger of relying on the state. And like Milbank, he argues provocatively, if not always convincingly, that with the liberal social order in disarray, the Church should turn from promoting legislation to enabling parishes to become the alternative moral communities God is calling them to be.

This emphasis on theology does have drawbacks. Most notably, Turner does not provide the historical context we need to understand how Christian Socialism has changed



since Maurice’s day. The late-Victorian economic crisis that gave birth to the Labour Party and radicalized the Christian Socialist movement, for example, goes unmentioned. And by devoting almost all of his attention to eminent ecclesiastics and academics, Turner passes over the important role parish clergy and urban theologians like Kenneth Leech have played in shaping the Christian Socialist tradition.

But if Turner has not written a definitive study of English Christian Socialism, the book he has written is both thoughtful and timely. In the fractured age in which we live, it is easy to lose sight of who we truly are and what God intends the world to be. Scripture teaches that without vision, the people perish. For sharing the Christian Socialist vision with us, Turner deserves our heartfelt thanks.

*John Orens is professor of history at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.*



Mosaic detail from Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna

Lawrence OP/Flickr

## Judaism and Jews in the Revised Common Lectionary

By Ellen T. Charry

### The Beginnings of Christian Anti-Judaism

Two decades after the Nazi genocide, the Roman Catholic Church dropped its claim that all Jews are forever guilty of killing God. Of course, with Jesus' death God did not die. "Deicide" is a misnomer. The charge intended was that Jews had killed Christ, although it was Romans, not Jews, who executed him. Of course, the Church believes that salvation came through that execution and named that Friday "Good" for that reason.

The anger driving the charge was utterly confused. Had Jesus died of influenza, would Gentiles have come to God through him? But none of that stopped Christians from hating Jews for the "crime" of "deicide" for nearly 2,000 years. In 1965, the charge was modified to say that only those Jews

involved in the execution at the time were culpable. But that still perpetuates the self-contradictory confusion about Christ's death that enabled the salvation of Gentiles. Rather than being angry at Jews, or even Romans, for that matter, perhaps the Church should have been celebrating whoever facilitated that execution all along.

In the 1970s, a handful of Christian theologians awoke to the destructive power of Christian theological scorn for Judaism as a way that one is properly related to God after Christ (anti-Judaism) and began writing. Previously Jewish and Christian historians had begun exposing the history of Christian maltreatment of Jewish people both for resisting conversion and for killing Christ (antisemitism). Christian anti-Judaism supports antisemitism. The former is theological, the latter is social, economic, and political. In the following decades, awakened Christians have courageously faced into the contributions of both anti-Judaism and anti-

semitism to Nazi ideology and its failed attempt at a "final solution" to "the Jewish question."<sup>1</sup>

The scope of the Nazi genocide extended far beyond Jews, but Christianity was implicated in the murder of 6 million Jews, including a million children, in ways that did not apply to other Nazi victims. Some of Germany's most influential theologians and biblical scholars were Nazis. Even the Confessing Church that protested Nazism said nothing about the systematic removal of Jews from society that preceded the 1,000 concentration camps, which in turn preceded the six extermination camps in Poland.

Theological anti-Judaism begins at the very dawn of Christianity. Texts that became Christian Holy Scripture by the third century struggle with what Judaism should be, considering Jesus and then considering the intense conflict among Jews after the burning of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. Paul's letters in

(Continued on next page)

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the 50s paved the way for the Gospels and Hebrews, along with materials that became the Mishnah that drew heavily from Phariseism. They all address the question “How shall we worship God now?”

Jews who accepted Jesus, along with Gentiles who came to know God through him, gradually had to separate from Jews who could not recognize God through him but through their heritage. The separation was gradual and bitter, each side arguing against the other that it alone constituted God’s people, the Israel of God. The competition proved irresolvable and was sustained in each succeeding century. Once Christians gained legal, political, and military power, they condemned Jews for worshiping God through rabbinic Judaism, which assumed final shape at about the same time that Christian orthodoxy emerged. As they separated, Christian voices claimed that the Church had superseded, displaced, or replaced Judaism and was “the new Israel” or even “the true Israel” of God.

Christians and Jews today inherit this painful history, along with the unrelieved competition for the identity of God’s Israel. Is God’s Israel defined as Jews who worship in the synagogue, or Christians who worship in the Church? Everything is at stake for both communities in this theological dispute.

### **Rethinking Christian Anti-Judaism**

During the past six decades, Christian liturgies and teaching materials have been cleaned up. Biblical scholarship turned a corner with the work of E.P. Sanders, who read Paul through concurrent rather than later Lutheran lenses that shaped German biblical scholarship. There has been limited attention to anti-Judaism in preaching, however, so that denigrating Jesus’ opponents and honest questioners can be unrecognized as offensive.

This essay highlights problematic texts in the Revised Common Lectionary, which originated in the Roman Catholic Church after the

Second Vatican Council. It was adopted by many Protestant denominations in 1974 as the Common Lectionary. The Revised Common Lectionary appeared in 1994. It revised the presentation of women and, to a very limited extent, egregious presentations of Judaism and Jews. Nevertheless, it remains laden with texts that celebrate Jesusites *at the expense of* Judahites who remained faithful to God by following their heritage. When “Jews” and “Christians” are retrojected onto characters to promote Christian superiority to Judaism, the Church can become smug.

The pulpit is a “bully.” It is the only place remaining in our society able to speak to people. Preaching is a daring and delicate responsibility suitable for only the stout-hearted. Responsible preaching must become sensitive to the presentation of Judaism and Jews. One group, Readings from the Roots, is retranslating the RCL with this concern in view.

To address the danger of Christian smugness, TLC offers my comments on selected problematic texts from the RCL. The task is daunting for many reasons, chief of which may be that troubling texts are deeply loved and embedded in Christian consciousness. Seeing a problem with the source of our comfort and strength stretches us in ways that may rub roughly. But Jesus taught us to remove the beam from our eye before casting out the mote from another’s (Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42). In this spirit of self-criticism, my comments on the RCL lections aim to equip preachers, teachers, and counselors to avoid possibly harmful applications of beloved texts.

There are, of course, many ways of treating texts that can easily distort “Christians” and “Jews” into texts that depict Jews arguing with one another, given an evangelist’s presentation of Jesus’ teaching. Before I offer one strategy for approaching difficult texts, four orienting observations will frame the endeavor. One is that the lectionary exposes people to about 20 percent of the Christian Bible, while popular texts appear multiple times.

The lectionary is skewed toward the Gospels and Acts, which displaces Hebrew Bible lections for a considerable stretch of time each year. That leaves people with little or no liturgical exposure to huge swaths of text. Intensifying this skew is the prevalent practice of preaching primarily on the Gospel lection, in which case other lections for the day also gray out.

Another observation is that when the grayed-out texts are from the Hebrew Bible, God’s life with Israel loses its voice and becomes the prelude to what really matters. The Apostles’ Creed, for example, jumps from creation to “and in Jesus Christ,” silencing two-thirds of the Bible and leaving the impression that God’s long life with biblical Israel has nothing to teach us on its own terms.

A third observation comes from the Christian desire to have the Bible say but one thing. Paul anachronized Scripture when he read Isaiah 11:10 as being about the anointed Savior (Rom. 15:12). Following him, Christians both Christologize and otherwise Christianize Scripture’s many voices using allegory and typology. If preachers aren’t careful, the author, his location, theology, concerns, and audience disappear, and the text comes to mean something other than what it says.

Hebrew Scripture and rabbinic literature also cite Scripture out of context, and read fresh meanings into it for later contexts. But as it became clear that animosity made separation of what were becoming Judaism and Christianity, hostility became engraved in stone, and the “old” was preserved only as it made way for the “new.” Hebrew Scripture lost its voice on the view that the Bible says only one thing and it is hidden in the texts, because God has only one thing to say to us. Appending the Gloria Patri to the recitation of a psalm in worship is yet another anachronizing of the text.

A fourth and final observation comes from considering the four lections for any Sunday as a unit. Some units sustain a single theme. When that is the case, the Israelite texts are selected to support the Christian text,

usually the Gospel. Here, the centuries of God's life with biblical Israel speak a message unknown to their immediate authors.

With these four observations noted, I suggest one of many alternative strategies for preaching delicate texts. Preaching without contempt requires acknowledging the text's distance from us. But it is sacred because the author of a pericope may speak directly to us. For example, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew 20, like the story about the angry faithful son in Luke 15:11-32, depicts God as favoring dubious characters. In Luke, God prefers the wastrel and in Matthew he treats late-comers equally with hard-working, faithful people. The reality of justifiable anger at God jumps off the page. The exhausted elder brother and the sweaty laborers are us. The preacher's task is to help parishioners deal with righteous indignation for the sake of the common good.

Contrary to Christian supersessionism, in neither story does God abandon the hard workers. The question is whether they can respect God, who favors the undeserving. These texts must be allowed to challenge us, when Paul's teaching that God chopped limbs off his olive tree in Romans 11 has given rise to much Christian disdain for those in the situation of the elder brother and the sweaty laborers.

### Truth in Advertising

Who am I to undertake this delicate work? I am a Christian theologian who taught theology in Christian theological schools for nearly three decades. Further, I am both a Jew and a Christian. Quite on my own I wrestled with the Jewish-Christian conflict, beginning at age 3. My Jewish identity taught me that regardless of what individual Christians may think, Christianity wants Judaism to disappear, because after Christ it has no theological purpose. That would most easily be accomplished by converting Jews to Christianity. That never happened on a large scale, and Christians did not pause to ask themselves if

there was a theological reason for that.

I went to the baptismal font as an adult for a purely theological reason — not in compliance with that Christian desire or because I was morally or spiritually lost and was found by Jesus. God must love more than Jews. He must love Gentiles too. In an act of pastoral mercy, I permitted myself to be baptized to stand with Gentiles whom God has taken to himself through one of my kin. My blood is Jewish; my bones are Christian. Although Christians have harassed us and sought to put an end to us by various means, I believe that God loves them even in their sinfulness.

At my baptism, the liturgy would have had the congregation say, "We receive you into the household of God" (BCP, 308). That is the case when baptizing Gentiles, but it was not so in baptizing me. Indeed, it is I, a Jew who welcomes Gentiles into the household of God, as did Peter (Acts 10.34-48). I was never apart from God. I have known only life guided by God from birth.

Having wrestled with the Christian-Jewish clash all my life, I now invite you, faithful readers, to wade into these "hot" waters with me. As challenging as facing Christian anti-Judaism and antisemitism are, the reward of secure Christian integrity is the promise on the other side of searching self-examination. The Church has been strengthened by careful self-scrutiny throughout its life, the fourth century being perhaps the most decisive. The Protestant and Catholic Reformations of the 16th century are other major renewals. Modern critical biblical scholarship was yet another. Each was controversial as it unfolded, yet each taught the Church that judicious self-criticism is for its well-being. This reform of the Church is essential.

With Jewish encouragement, "Nostra Aetate" (1965) inaugurated the current reform of the Church regarding Judaism and Jews. The Church is slowly turning from saying No to Judaism and Jews for two millennia to saying Yes to the complete and permanent faithfulness of God to

Jews apart from Jesus Christ. This reform is as far-reaching and significant as any of the others. Penitential turning from disrespect to respect, even friendship, is nothing less than the work of the Holy Spirit with, in, through, and for us.

Prayers of repentance for the corporate sins of the Church are warranted, and tenderly offering them to local synagogues is appropriate. To participate in this work of the Spirit, Christian leaders must be knowledgeably prepared to take ownership of derisive Christian history, worship, hymnody, sacred choral music, preaching, and teaching. They must also take the further step of learning about Judaism on Jewish terms. Jews study history carefully. They may be more aware of Christian anti-Judaism than are Christians. Soul-searching can begin by tending particularly to sermons when denunciation of scribes, Pharisees, the law, and "Jews" are ready to hand. Preachers may want to seek guidance from a knowledgeable Jewish mentor.

The commentary on the RCL here at TLC invites Christian preachers and teachers to join the Church's repair of its unpretty side. That will not be easy, but the effort is to the glory of God.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1843, Bruno Bauer wrote *The Jewish Question*, arguing that Jews should only be granted political emancipation if they gave up being Jewish. The question was hotly debated, including by Karl Marx. Precedent for the discussion came from Martin Luther, who had written a 65,000-word rant, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), in which he recommended that Jews be exiled from German lands. That treatise was widely disseminated by the Nazis in celebration of its 400th anniversary. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* laid out the "final" solution to the Jewish question, which he would begin carrying out once he was elected chancellor of Germany in 1930, but it was ignored.

# Facing the Legacy of Christian Anti-Judaism

**Palm Sunday, the Liturgy of the Passion**

**Matthew 27:11-54**

By Ellen T. Charry

In reading the Gospels, it helps to keep several things in mind. One is that those who wrote, collected, or edited them were not intentionally writing the Bible. Another is that the writers, in this case, the one we know as Matthew, was not a Christian. He was a Jewish follower of Jesus arguing vociferously against other Jews for what Judaism should become now that it was in ruins after the Romans destroyed the temple and the priesthood and controlled the nation politically and militarily. Further, even if material in Matthew's Gospel originated during or even shortly after Jesus' lifetime, Matthew's biography of Jesus was constructed from multiple sources at least 60 years later.

The Gospels realistically report confusion and conflict surrounding Jesus' identity at the time of his ministry and the purpose of his movement following his cousin John. He was teaching, healing, and encouraging people, yet threatening, reproaching, and excoriating them by turns. Jesus was causing trouble throughout the land and did nothing to quell it. Titles applied to him — "king of the Jews," messiah (in a purely human sense), and "Son of God" in this passage, along with "son of man," "prophet," and the one who inaugurates the reign of God in other Matthean passages — amply illustrate the confusion swirling around him.

It could seem that the confusion flummoxes Jesus as well. After all, he nearly starved himself to death in the desert struggling with whether to support his cousin's claim that God was about to pierce the world and separate docile "sheep" from gruff, kicking "goats." Without the priestly sacrificial structure of the Jerusalem temple,

personal repentance becomes the way to prepare oneself for what Jesusites thought was the imminent divine judgment of individuals. The shift from bringing a gift to the priest to atone for cultic infractions to self-recrimination for moral shortcoming was vast. Battling universal temptations to power, from the crass to the subtle ("the devil," Matt. 4:5-11), Jesus struggled to emerge from his 40-day wilderness self-examination grasping the fullness of his identity and calling. Who was he to be now?

Roles with titles of king and messiah are politically, not religiously, threatening to occupiers, while the religious roles people consider might apply to Jesus suggest what he wanted Judaism to become in totally uncharted territory. Perhaps "king of the Jews" was the most provocative of all. There had been no formal king of Judea since Herod the Great (d. c. 4 B.C.E.), and he had imposed heavy taxes to pay for his colossal building projects and planted a Roman eagle at the temple entrance. Jews chafed under him. Pilate was asking implicitly if Jesus aimed to be another Herod.

What later became the ontologically weighted roles of Messiah and Son of God, and the biblically freighted roles of prophet and son of man (Dan. 7:13-14), were each shocking in a different way that would recreate Judean religion in unanticipatable directions. With Rome's sword poised above everyone's head, should Jews try to appease the military giant, or give their lives to expel it? This is the question that preoccupied Jewish leaders devoted to maintaining peace with the Romans, delicate as it was.

Now the situation has heated up to a point that Rome feels it needs to protect its interests in the region, and some leaders of the people agree that the only way to sustain the fragile peace is to eliminate Jesus. The opportu-

nity comes at the customary Roman practice of releasing one prisoner before Passover. Trusting their leaders' judgment that sacrificing one man would save all their lives, the people reportedly call for Jesus' death and for good measure take responsibility for it.

Jesus' execution did postpone a bloodbath for about a century, but when it came, in 135 with the crushing defeat of Bar Kokba at Betar, it came with vengeance. There was utter devastation, and those who could fled the country.

Matthew 27:25, meant to ward off the sword, was deftly yet wrongly turned around against the Jews by the Church. It and 1 Thesalonians 2:15 perhaps fused in the mind of Melito of Sardis, who created the absurd misnomer of deicide, the accusation that the Jews killed God. The deicide charge, dropped by the Roman Catholic Church in 1965, was wrongheaded to begin with, and misleading. The whole Godhead did not die by crucifixion. But making that distinction did not occur to Church leaders who held all Jews responsible for murdering God for nearly two millennia.

Naturally, Jesus' followers were distraught at his death, but the Church turned that in the opposite direction. For the Western church, the cross became the saving event of history. Would there be Christians if Jesus had died a natural death? Gentiles came to the atoning power and love of God in that seemingly tragic moment that was a gift in disguise. If Judas and Caiaphas cooperated in identifying Jesus to the Roman police, we might ask, why has the Church not been celebrating and thanking them for undertaking that dastardly deed that, as no one at that time could anticipate, enabled the salvation of Gentiles?

The liturgical renewal movement of the late 20th century cleaned out a lot of anti-Jewish rhetoric from Christian liturgy, but readings like this one, if taught without great care, can keep contempt for Judaism and Jews alive.

How to read this passage without blaming the Jews, either explicitly or implicitly? Contextualizing the story can surely help. One way is to locate it in its appropriate political context regarding both Romans and Jewish leaders and people. Another would be to place it within the context of the religious chaos following the destruction of the Temple in 70. A third would be to contextualize it among the options for reconstructing Judaism offered by Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, Paul, Mark, Luke, and Matthew.

Contextualizing is helpful but not sufficient. Next should be considering how the context recurs in Christian minds today, as Charles Dickens did in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and Francis Poulenc did in "Dialogues des Carmelites," based on the true story of nuns who refused to leave their convent during the French Revolution and were guillotined for their resistance to the state. Our own moment in the United States is divided blue-red, in a political civil war in which we cannot talk across these lines. Political violence is now part of the reality. An analogy between the triangle of Jesus caught between Rome and his followers, and that of democracy caught between blue and red citizens, is not exact, but the fragility and contentiousness of Jesus' movement and what has become the fragility and contentiousness of democracy suggest frightening parallels.

## PEOPLE & PLACES

### Appointments

The Rev. **Theresa Brion** is priest in charge of St. John's, West Point, Va.

The Rt. Rev. **Franklin Brookhart** is dean of Deanery 4, Diocese of Los Angeles.

The Rev. **Julie Bryant** is rector of St. John's, Arlington, and St. Patrick's, Falls Church, Va.

The Rev. **Donavan Cain** is rector of St. Thomas, Huntsville, Ala.

The Rev. **Annie Calhoun** is vicar at St. Anne's, Washougal, Wash.

The Rev. **Clay Calhoun** is rector of St. Timothy's, Southaven, and vicar of Holy Cross, Olive Branch, Miss.

Ms. **Amy Campbell** is director of children's and youth ministry at St. Mary's, High Point, N.C.

The Very Rev. **Melissa Campbell-Langdell** is co-dean of Deanery 1, Diocese of Los Angeles.

The Rev. **R. Douglas Carter** is rector of St. Michael and All Angels, Cuernavaca, Mexico.

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The Rev. Dr. **Luigi Gioia** is associate for

(Continued on next page)

## PEOPLE & PLACES

(Continued from previous page)

adult education and formation at St. Thomas, New York.

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The Rev. **Lauri A. Kerr** is the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania's West Branch Missioner.

The Rev. **Kurt Kovalovitch** is priest in charge of Trinity Church, Pottsville, Pa.; St. James, Schuylkill Haven; and North Parish (Holy Apostles, St. Clair; and St. John's, Ashland).

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The Rev. Canon **Anthony Powell** is the Diocese of Florida's canon for the Santa Fe Region.

Mr. **David Powell** is an honorary canon of Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral, Kansas City, Mo.

Ms. **Charlette Preslar** is the Diocese of San Diego's director of Christian formation.

The Rev. Canon **Betsy Randall** is the Diocese of Oklahoma's canon to the ordinary.

Ms. **Rachel Ravellette** is the Diocese of Central New York's communications director.

The Rev. **John Reardon** is priest in charge of Emmanuel, Cumberland, Md.

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Ms. **Renzi Ricketts** is summer camp director at St. Christopher Camp and Conference Center, Seabrook Island, S.C.

The Rev. **Daniel Robayo-Hidalgo** is vicar of St. Mary Magdalene/Sta. María Magdalena, Manor, Texas.

The Rev. **Fred Robinson** is interim rector of Emmanuel Memorial, Champaign, Ill.

The Rev. **Shawn Rutledge** is rector of St. Peter's, Casa Grande, Ariz.

The Rev. **Meghan Ryan** is rector of St. Timothy's, Creve Coeur, Mo.

The Rev. **Columba Salamony** is rector of St. Mark's, Pen Yan, N.Y.

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The Rev. **Claudia Scheda** is priest in charge of St. John's-Grace, Buffalo, N.Y.

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The Rev. **Kyle Dice Seage** is rector of St. Stephen's, Belvedere, Calif.

The Rev. **Jessica E. Sexton** is rector of Trinity Church, Glen Arm, Md.

The Rev. **Christy Shain-Hendricks** is co-pastor of Grace, Buena Vista, Colo.

Ms. **Malinda Shamburger** is executive director of the Diocese of Atlanta's Chattahoochee Valley Episcopal Ministry.

The Rev. **Jason Shelby** is rector of St. Francis, Palos Verdes Estates, Calif.

The Rev. **Samuel Sheridan** is priest in charge of St. Paul's, Petersburg, Va.

The Very Rev. **Robert Shives** is rector of Trinity, Martinsburg, W.Va.

The Rev. **Matthew Simpson** is deacon at St. Mary's, Falmouth, Maine.

The Very Rev. **Patrick Skutch** is dean of the Diocese of Chicago's Elgin Deanery.

The Rev. **Scott Slater** is interim rector of St. David's, Roland Park, Baltimore.

The Rev. Dr. **Jacqueline R. Soltys** is rector of Good Shepherd, Norfolk, Va.

The Ven. **Tim Spannaus** is archdeacon of the Diocese of Michigan and deacon at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit.

The Very Rev. **Frank St. Amour III** is dean of the Diocese of Easton's Northern Convocation.

The Rev. **Jim Stanley** is rector of Calvary, Lombard, Ill.

The Rev. **Barbara Stewart** is a canon of the Diocese of Los Angeles.

The Rev. **John Stonesifer** is interim rector of St. John's Western Run, Reistertown, Md.

The Very Rev. **Jonathan Stratton** is dean and



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rector of Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, Pa.

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The Ven. **Howard Stringfellow** is supply priest in charge of St. James & St. George, Jermyn, Pa., and will continue serving at Good Shepherd, Scranton.

The Rev. **Joseph Summers** is an honorary canon of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit.

The Rev. **Christine Sutton** is deacon at Trinity Church, W. Pittston, Pa., and will continue as deacon at Prince of Peace, Dallas, Pa.

The Rev. **Cynthia Bronson Sweigert** is the Episcopal Church in Minnesota's ecumenical and interreligious officer.

The Very Rev. **Kay Sylvester** is dean of Deanery 9, Diocese of Los Angeles.

The Rev. **Clifford Syner III** is president of RISEN Wellness and rector of Resurrection, Clarksville, Tenn.

### Ordinations

#### Diaconate

Missouri: **Mtipe Dickson Koggani**, **Erin Michelle Pickersgill** (ministry developer for children and youth, Diocese of Missouri), **Jessica Brooke Wachter**

Nebraska: **Lisa K.P. Aguilar** (curate, Trinity Cathedral, Omaha)

Newark: **William Adams** (associate rector for church growth, St. Elizabeth's, Ridgewood)

Northern Michigan: **Sarah Diener-Schlitt** (priest in charge, Trinity, Houghton)

Ohio: **Leah L. Romanelli DeJesus**, **Maureen M. Major** (priest in charge, St. James', Boardman)

Pennsylvania: **Josiah M. Daniels** (assistant rector, St. Paul's, Chestnut Hill, Pa.)

Southern Virginia: **Jean Mackay Vinson** (priest in charge, Emmanuel, Franklin, Va.)

Southwestern Virginia: **Samson Mamour** (curate, Grace, Lexington), **Cara Modisett** (curate, Trinity, Staunton), **William Yagel** (curate, Grace, Radford)

Springfield: **Danté Anglin** (priest in charge, St. Barnabas, Havana, Ill.), **Jonathan Butcher**, **Michael Clark**

Tennessee: **Charlie McClain** (vicar, St. Matthew's, McMinnville), **David Nichols** (curate, St. Michael's, Raleigh, N.C.)

Texas: **Kristin Braun** (curate and director of community engagement, St. David's, Austin), **Joshua B. Kulak** (curate, St. Michael's, Austin), **Michael J. Thomas** (Our Saviour, Colorado Springs, Colo.)

Vermont: **Bram Kranichfeld**, (priest in charge, All Saints, South Burlington), **Darcey Mercier**

West Missouri: **Collin Larimore** (assisting clergy, Grace, Carthage), **Jean Long** (associate rector, St. Andrew's, Kansas City)

West Texas: **Barbara Duffield**

West Virginia: **David Johnston** (campus ministry, Trinity, Huntington), **Nancy Martin** (Ascension, Hinton)

### Retirements

The Rev. Canon Dr. **Jay Geisler** as rector of St. Peter's Brentwood, Pittsburgh

The Rev. **Sally Joyner Giffin** as rector of Harriet Chapel, Catotcin Parish, Thurmont, Md.

The Very Rev. **John Horn** as dean of Trinity Cathedral, Davenport, Iowa.

### Deaths

The Rt. Rev. **Edward Cole Chalfant**, Bishop of Maine from 1986 to 1996, died January 24 at 85.



He was born in Pittsburgh, and was a graduate of Wesleyan University and Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1963, and served parishes in Florida and Ohio. He was elected Bishop Coadjutor of Maine in 1984, and served in that role for two years. As bishop, he focused on strengthening lay ministry.

The bishop resigned in 1996 after admitting to committing adultery. His marriage survived that challenge. He and his wife, Marydee, whom he met while working at a waterfront inn as a college student on summer break, were married for 63 years.

Chalfant's ministry entered a new chapter after he returned to Florida. The Rev. James Cooper, rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Ponte Vedra Beach, invited him to join the parish clergy. When Christ Church launched a mission congregation a few miles south, the bishop served on a clergy team and then became its vicar in 2004. It is now known as Christ Church Among the Oaks.

"He always said that the years working with this dedicated congregation were the happiest time of his ministry," a family obituary said.

The bishop's survivors, in addition to his wife, include his brother and sister, a son, a daughter, and four grandchildren. As the bishop requested, he will be buried during a private service in Maine.



The Rev. **John William Conrad**, a commercial pilot and flight instructor before his ordination, died January 16 at 70.

Conrad was born in Victorville, California, and spent all his years of ministry in the state. He was a graduate of Thomas Edison State College and Church Divinity School of the Pacific. He was ordained deacon in 1996 and priest in 1997, and led several churches in the dioceses of Los Angeles and San Diego. He was rector of All Saints' Church, Riverside, from 2008 to 2018.

Conrad had a broad range of interests. He once described himself as "priest, pilot, poet, counselor, confessor, confidant, and spiritual proctologist." He wrote in his book *To the Least of These: A Better Church Response to Homelessness* that the issue would not be solved until Christians saw the poor as their true siblings in Christ.

Shortly before his death, Conrad wrote: "I do accept Jesus as my Savior, and I do put my whole trust in his grace and love. It feels good. I go into the welcoming arms of my Lord Jesus feeling the warm embrace of an all-loving and all-forgiving God. I am truly at peace, and greet the prospect of the next life with guarded

anticipation."

He is survived by his wife, Shannon M. Murphy, two sons, and two grandchildren.

The Rev. Canon **Brian Desmond Freeland** died December 8 at St. John's Convent and Guest House, Toronto, at 97.

Freeland was an associate priest at St. Thomas's Anglican Church, Toronto, for 60 years, worked as director of religious programming for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for decades, and was an avid supporter of the arts.

He served on the Anglican Church of Canada's General Synod Worship Committee, was secretary of the Bishops' Liturgical Commission for the Diocese of Toronto, columnist on liturgy for the *Anglican Journal*, sometime chairman of the Canadian Liturgical Society, sometime chairman of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, and superior-general of the Canadian Province of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.



The Hon. Rev. Dr. **Joseph N. Green Jr.**, who began his ministry under Jim Crow laws but later served for two decades in the city government of Norfolk, Virginia, died January 13 at 96. Green served in the U.S. Navy beginning in 1943, working as pharmacist's mate in Great Lakes, Illinois.

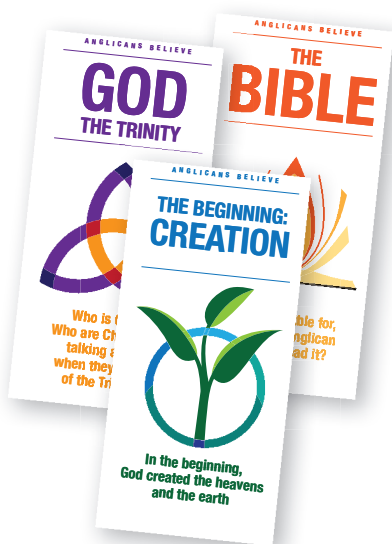
He "was a beloved public servant who spent 20 years on Norfolk City Council starting in 1977, including three terms as vice mayor, and served as rector of Grace Episcopal Church from 1963 to 1993," Katrina Dix wrote for the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*. "He is recognized for breathing life into housing, education, and transportation in Norfolk, from the downtown Tidewater Community College campus to the light rail system."

Green was born in Jenkinsville, South Carolina, and was a graduate of St. Augustine's College, Philadelphia Divinity School, and the School of Theology at the University of the South. A portrait of Jenkins now hangs in an administration building at Sewanee.

He was ordained deacon in 1953 and priest in 1954. He served churches in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, and was chaplain at St. Augustine's College. At Sewanee, he earned a Master of Sacred Theology degree. He was an important advocate for St. Paul's College, a historically Black Episcopal college in Lawrenceville, Virginia, that closed in 2013.

Fr. Green is survived by Evelyn G. Green, his wife of 67 years, a son, a daughter, two grandsons, and one great-grandson.

"What I most admired was that, for the sake of the Gospel, he was larger than his pain from the institutional racism inflicted by the Church and, by the grace of God, kept his soul," Bishop Nathan Baxter wrote in a tribute published by the Union of Black Episcopalians, which Green helped create and led as president (1975-77). "And God blessed the church (local and national) through his faithful labors."



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## SUNDAY'S READINGS

3 LENT: MARCH 12

Ex. 17:1-7 • Ps. 95  
Rom. 5:1-11 • John 4:5-42

### Need and God

If the account of the Israelites thirsting in the desert were merely a human story of biological need, our sympathies would lie entirely with the people. “Give us water to drink” is surely a desperate plea, and so we hardly wonder that they complain against Moses, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” (Ex. 17:3). On a deeper level, the story is primarily about quarreling and putting the Lord to the test, that is, failing to trust that the Lord who has delivered will deliver again. A question arises. Do we trust God to give us all we need in the wilderness of this world, in this valley of tears?

We are warned, in the words of the psalmist, “Harden not your hearts, as your forebears did in the wilderness, at Meribah, and on that day at Massah, when they tempted me. They put me to the test, though they had seen my works. Forty years long I detested that generation and said, ‘This people are wayward in their hearts; they do not know my ways.’ So I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter into my rest’” (Ps. 95:8-11).

There are many reasons to be in church, but one of the most important is that we should ask again for a heart of flesh, a heart pure and responsive to God. Indeed, this is precisely the emphasis at the beginning of the liturgy. “Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit.”

Opening our hearts, we discover again all that resides there. Justified by faith, the faithfulness of God toward us, we have *peace with God*. We have *access to this grace*, a free and fearless entry to the courts of heaven. Astoundingly, *we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God*. We see and experience anew *God’s love poured into our hearts*, an inexhaustible source of refreshment and life.

Through the lens of God’s grace and

faithfulness, his peaceable presence and open welcome, his love poured endlessly into the deepest places of the heart, we see our suffering in a different way. “[W]e boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:3-5). Hope amid suffering is the result of divine intervention, “love poured into our hearts.”

Returning to the image of water and the experience of thirst, we see Jesus, tired from a long journey, sitting at Jacob’s well. “A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’” (John 4:7). We see Jesus’ humanity in his thirst. He became what we are. And yet he is more than what we are, being himself, in his divinity, the source of his own eternal refreshment. Jesus is “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:14). He experiences all our need and yet remains divinely above need, receiving and being in every moment all that God is. Jesus invites us to this experience, although it will always be incomplete for us in this life. Our need lays bare our dependence upon God. “We have no power in ourselves to help ourselves” (2 Cor. 3:5).

Jesus is our daily bread, saying to us, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work” (John 4:34). In our need, Jesus says, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you” (John 4:26).

**LOOK IT UP:** Psalm 42:1

**THINK ABOUT IT:** So longs my soul after you, O God.

#### 4 LENT: MARCH 19

1 Sam. 16:1-13 • Ps. 23  
Eph. 5:8-14 • John 9:1-41

### Beautiful Eyes

The mysteries of existence, the unsolved problems, the perplexities for which there is no single and easy answer, often open a space where “God’s works might be revealed” (John 9:3). The question in John’s gospel (“Why was this man born blind?”) stands in for all suffering we do not understand, for all injustices visited upon the innocent. And because we can hardly bear the pain of a world out of balance, we search for clear and simple moral explanations.

“His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parent, that he was born blind?’” (John 9:2). This kind of reasoning persists today. We commonly hear that “everything happens for a reason,” a saying designed to protect us from a world of moral disorder. The problem with this way of thinking is that, in one way or another, it blames the victim. Some misfortunes are undoubtedly the consequences of previous moral failings and bad choices, but the exceptions to this equation are innumerable.

Why was this man born blind? “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus says (John 9:3). Surely, the parents of the blind man and the man sinned, but sin is not the *cause* of the blindness. Causation aside, the man’s condition is a metaphor for all human existence and an invitation for God to act. “That blind man,” says St. Augustine, is the human race” (Tractate XLIV on the Gospel of John). Remarkably, as if to include the blind man from the very beginning, Jesus says, “*We must work* the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).

Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,” indicating that we are enlightened by him and through him. Enlightenment, in this story, entails a new creation, for Jesus acts in a way that recalls the creation of the first human being from the dust of the ground. “When he had said this, he

spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes” (John 9:6). The inclusion of the blind man is further emphasized by the command, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (John 9:7). To every gift of grace, there is a corresponding *fiat*, a “let it be,” a “your will be done.” The blind man is a participant in his own healing!

By degrees, the man born blind, subject to several interrogations, becomes more and more confident. “The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, ‘Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?’ Some were saying, ‘It is he.’ Others were saying, ‘No, but it is someone like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the man’” (John 9:8-9). He recalls the details of his healing, not once but twice. As the questions about this healing and whether Jesus was a man of God continue, the man, as if to say, “Here I stand,” declares, “One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).

The man preaches to his interrogators: “We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (John 9:31-33). Now a disciple of Jesus, he says, “Lord, I believe” (John 9:38).

We want to explain suffering to protect ourselves from it. Jesus enters our suffering to heal us and to make us heralds of the gospel.

**LOOK IT UP:** 1 Samuel 16:7

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Learn to see as the Lord sees.

#### 5 LENT: MARCH 26

Ezek. 37:1-4 • Ps. 130  
Rom. 8:6-11 • John 11:1-45

### Easter in Lent

Deep in the heart of Lent and befitting the season, we hear of loss and death, but we also anticipate the wondrous mystery of the resurrection. We are, in a sense, at the threshold of two times, Good Friday and Easter.

The valley of dry bones is a picture of “the whole house of Israel” during their exile in Babylon. In a foreign land, they sat down and wept; they lost hope, and their lives languished. They counted themselves as good as dead. In the gospel reading, the story of Lazarus in the tomb stands in as a picture of our common humanity, subject as we are to frailty and death. “When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days” (John 11:17). “When Jesus saw [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly distressed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, ‘Where have they laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” (John 11:33-36).

These two stories are about death and sorrow, love and tears. The dry bones and Lazarus in the tomb depict humanity fallen into sin and death. “The hand of the LORD” that sets Ezekiel down in the middle of a valley, a valley full of bones, and Jesus standing in sorrow at the grave of Lazarus, offer the consolation of knowing that God is, even in our death, among human beings. We are not alone. “See how [Jesus] loved him!” (John 11:36). It is no small thing to feel and know that God is with us in sorrow.

But is that all? Do we stand before death in defeat and tears?

No. Listen to the Lord speaking to the dry bones: “I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you and you

(Continued on next page)

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THE LIVING CHURCH is published 12 times per year, dated Sunday, by the Living Church Foundation, Inc., at PO Box 510705, Milwaukee, WI 53203. Periodicals postage paid at Milwaukee, WI, and at additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$65 for one year; \$115 for two years.

Canadian postage an additional \$10 per year;

Mexico and all other foreign, an additional \$60 per year.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE LIVING CHURCH, P.O. Box 510705, Milwaukee, WI 53203-0121. Subscribers, when submitting address changes, should please allow 4-6 weeks for change to take effect.

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

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(Continued from previous page)

shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek. 37:5-6). Ezekiel prophesies as instructed. “[A]nd as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the LORD God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live’” (Ezek. 37:7-9).

In this great story, we see in pictures the faith we confess. “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting” (The Apostles’ Creed). God is our consolation in sorrow, to be sure, but God is the promise also of a final victory. As Jesus speaks to Martha about her brother Lazarus, we hear him speaking about us and to us. “Your brother will rise again” (John 11:23). “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Jesus gives an audacious command: “Take away the stone.” And then, crying with a loud voice, he says, “Lazarus, come out!” Do we not hear the voice of Jesus addressing our sorrows and our many deaths? He calls us to life and hope, renewal and restoration. He is mighty to save.

Strangely and beautifully, Jesus calls us to participate in the resurrection of our fellow human beings: “Unbind him, and let him go” (John 11:44).

**LOOK IT UP:** Romans 8:10

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Christ is in you. The Spirit is life.

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 2

Isa. 50:4-9a • Ps. 31:9-16 • Phil. 2:5-11  
Matt. 26:14-27:66 or Matt. 27:11-54

Suffered for You

We feel and know, perhaps even tremble, at the images we have seen in our mind’s eye, the words we have heard and spoken. We know and feel a deep-down recognition that God has stepped upon the human stage. The eternal Son of the Father has been thrown into a colosseum of depravity and blood lust. Jesus empties himself in a way we can hardly imagine. Let it be known that *this* is the eternal Son of the Father. And this was all for *you*.

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-8). Emptying himself, he retained all the fullness of God. Coming to earth, he remained in heaven. Assuming our human nature, he retained his divine nature, by which we are divinized in Christ, lifted, even now, in some sense, to the gates of heaven. But we could not rise without the total identification of Jesus with humanity in all its horror. In classical Christian language, “If he did not assume it, he did not save it.” Today, we see Jesus take upon himself all the suffering of the world, not merely the sorrows intrinsic to mortal life but the unjust sufferings humans inflict upon one another.

Jesus suffers for us willingly. He is grieved and agitated, grieved even to death at what awaits him, and yet he says to his Father, “Thy will be done.”

In the story we tell about the death of Jesus, he often appears as a passive victim. He stands in the place of and stands for those who are powerless. “I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting” (Isa. 50:6). “[T]hey came and laid hands on Jesus

and arrested him” (Matt. 26:50). “When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor” (Matt. 27:1-2). “[A]fter flogging Jesus, [Pilate] handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him” (Matt. 27:26-27).

We do well to remind ourselves that a Roman cohort is a military company of nearly 500 men. While there were Jewish regulations regarding the flogging of a person no more than 39 times, no such limitation restrained Roman soldiers from issuing abuse. What did they do? “They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, ‘Hail King of the Jews!’ They spat at him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him” (Matt. 27:28-31). And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; they sat down there and kept watch” (Matt. 27:35-36). Even “those who passed by derided him” (Matt. 27:39).

This is what humans, depraved and vicious, do to each other. And insofar as anyone has abused, derided, or destroyed another human being, they have done it to Jesus. Today’s story is a dramatic judgment, grave and heavy, but it is not the end.

LOOK IT UP: Matthew 27:59

THINK ABOUT IT: Enfold and love the body of Jesus.



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