



Iowa Connections

FALL 2021
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 3



**The Election of the Rev. Betsey Monnot
as the 10th Bishop of Iowa**

From Bishop Scarfe

Ever had one of those recurring dreams where you think you have come to the end of something only to have it manage to re-present itself? For me it was always a hurdles race in which as I jumped over the final hurdle, the finish line would move back ten yards and another set of hurdles popped up! Little did I think I would come to see it as a metaphor for a diocesan convention. Yet here we are—with what has become for me at least, through the COVID delay of our episcopal election, an additional convention to plan and preside over. In the end it is a wonderful gift, as we are able to celebrate the completion of one episcopacy and express our excited anticipation of the episcopacy to come under the leadership of Bishop-elect Betsey Monnot.

We have been accustomed to planning convention in two parts—we enter by reviewing the theme of the passing year and we shift our focus to a new theme for the upcoming year during our second day together. My bishop's address normally does both those things, and this year Betsey and I will split up that responsibility. I know that I will take the opportunity to express my deep gratitude for the honor of being your bishop over these many years, and assess where God has taken us this past year. In turn, it will be Betsey's joy to lead us into an expression of our future as she sees the Spirit's leading. In addition, I have invited Betsey to preside at our pre-convention Eucharist on Friday evening while I preach, and we will switch roles for the Closing Eucharist on Sunday morning.

The theme for convention takes up the phrase, "The love of God ignites" from our virtual Revival led by the Presiding Bishop in July. There will be an opportunity for congregations to give witness to how they have seen God's love igniting them, maybe even since the Revival. And, of course, this is our time to introduce ourselves and God's work among us to the bishop-elect, and to put flesh on that excitement that was ours during the election.

There will be some time to celebrate our common life together over almost two decades. It amazes me to think that we managed to keep within focus of the mission statement which we set up early on in our days together, namely to be "In mission with Christ through each and all." We put this statement on all of our desks, and on letterhead. And it has served as a pretty complete expression of our life together as we have sought to live into its meaning and its challenge in the context of the world we have known since 2003 to the present. There is only one mission, as I understand it, and that belongs to the one whom God sent—Jesus Christ. Our blessing is to be poured into his life in baptism, where we die to ourselves and are risen into Christ's life. That life is then distributed among all of us who call ourselves his followers, and also among, I believe, a lot more known only to God.



This is how we are in mission with Christ through each and all. And it is as God's love ignites us that we grow increasingly aware of the amazing capacity of mutual honoring, receiving and giving of gifts, as we learn to be deepened in the ways of love. And that is also why we are able to celebrate in one place the transition from one bishop to another, praying for it to be happening within the light of that ignited Love.

As I write this, I am on vacation in the United Kingdom. Donna and I have a youngest daughter on the south coast of England, and a youngest son in Dundee, Scotland. Each have recently had daughters and we are enjoying back to back baptism weekends. At the baptism of our granddaughter Emma in England, the vicar graciously addressed the gathering of family and friends by assuring us that Christianity turns on one purpose and one purpose only—to answer the question of our life's meaning with the statement that the fulfilled life is one that gives itself away, that puts others before oneself, and learns to love. And Jesus is that Way of life, and offers us his way, his life and his truth to follow.

At the seaside in England, you can buy sticks of rock candy that has running through its length the name of the place you bought it. So, as you work your way through it, you reveal the same name as you go along. That is what I hope we have been doing over the years; to have been in mission with Christ through each and all, fulfilling our faith's only purpose which is to live Christ's way, truth and life, or rather to let Christ continue to live his way, truth and life revealed through us. It is that same life that will continue under Betsey as the tenth Bishop of Iowa. It begins in earnest at this upcoming convention.

In the peace and love of Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe, Bishop of Iowa

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

September

- 1 Church audits due to the diocesan office
- 4 Bishop's visitation with Trinity Church, Emmetsburg
- 5 Bishop's visitation with St. Alban's, Spirit Lake
- 11 Bishop's visitation with Grace Church, Boone and Good Shepherd, Webster City
Board of Directors meeting
- 12 Bishop's visitation with Christ Church, Burlington
- 18 Dismantling Racism Training, 10:00am-2:00pm
L.O.V.E. Mini-Retreat
Bishop's visitation with St. Paul's, Council Bluffs
- 19 Bishop's visitation with St. James', Independence
- 26 Bishop's visitation with Church of the Savior, Orange City
Renewal of Ministry, St. John's, Mason City, 4:00pm

October

- 1-2 Commission on Ministry
- 3 Bishop's visitation with Trinity Cathedral, Davenport
- 10 Bishop's visitation with St. Paul's, Sioux City
Renewal of Ministry and Welcome of New Rector, St. Thomas', Sioux City, 3:00pm
- 16 L.O.V.E. Mini-Retreat
- 17 Bishop's visitation with St. Luke's, Des Moines
Renewal of Ministry, St. Stephen's, Newton, 4:00pm
- 23 Bishop's visitation with Trinity Church, Denison
- 24 Bishop's visitation with St. Thomas', Algona
Renewal of Ministry and Welcome of Rector, St. Mark's, Fort Dodge, 4:00pm
- 29-31 169th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, Des Moines Marriott Downtown

Visit iowaepiscopal.org for all of the latest schedule information.

In This Issue

- 2 From the Bishop
- 4 The Rev. Betsey Monnot Elected the 10th Bishop of Iowa
- 5 From the Standing Committee, Next Steps
- 6 Gifts and Symbols of the Bishop's Office
- 8 EPIC 2021
- 10 Let the Children Come
- 11 Book Review: The Soul of the Family Tree
- 12 Stewardship Share

Iowa Connections: Fall 2021

The Rev. Meg Wagner, Editor

Iowa Connections is published quarterly by

The Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

225 37th Street, Des Moines, IA 50312.

515-277-6165. www.iowaepiscopal.org

USPS 12106. Periodical Postage Paid in Des Moines, IA and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to:

Iowa Connections,

225 37th Street, Des Moines, IA 50312

The Rev. Betsey Monnot Elected the 10th Bishop of Iowa

by Meg Wagner

The Rev. Betsey Monnot was elected as the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa during a Special Convention held on July 31st in Des Moines, Iowa. She was elected on the 3rd ballot.

“I am beyond excited to be your new bishop-elect! My heart is full. Thank you so much for your confidence in me. I look forward to our ministry together as we follow God’s call into the future that God dreams of for the Episcopal Church in Iowa,” Monnot said in an address to the diocese via Zoom shortly after being notified of her election. “I am so excited to join you in ministry and to take the next steps soon! May God’s blessing be with all of us as we prepare for our future together, as we journey as disciples of Jesus on the road together, and as we continue to listen for God’s call for the Episcopal Church in Iowa. Thank you.”

Monnot is the first woman to be elected bishop of Iowa since the diocese was formed in 1853. She was chosen from a slate of all-women candidates that also included the Rev. Jennifer Andrews-Weckerly from the Diocese of Virginia and the Rev. Elizabeth Duff Popplewell from the Diocese of Iowa.

The Rev. Canon Kathleen Milligan, chair of the Standing Committee, said on behalf of the Standing Committee, “We are thrilled with the election of the Rev. Betsey Monnot as our tenth bishop; and deeply grateful to God for the culmination of a process that began at the end of October in 2019. Kevin Sanders, chair, and all of the members of the Search and Nominating Committee have worked long and hard, in a virtual process leading to this day; and they have done stellar work. The Transition Committee, headed by the Rev. Elaine Caldbeck, did great work arranging for the personal visits in mid-July and are continuing now to work toward the Bishop’s Consecration in December. We are also grateful to the Reverends Jennifer Andrews-Weckerly and Elizabeth Duff Popplewell for their willingness to offer themselves to this process and to discern with us the movement of the Holy Spirit. Our prayers go with them as they continue their own ministries. We all look forward to welcoming Bishop-elect Monnot and family to Iowa, and to the beginning of our work together.”

Monnot has been serving as the Priest-in-Charge at St. Clement’s Episcopal Church in Rancho Cordova, California and as Director and Retreat Leader of Called to Abundant Life: Leadership Consulting (<https://calledtoabundantlife.com>). Monnot previously served as Missioner for Leadership Development and Networking for the Diocese of Northern



The Rev. Betsey Monnot

California and Co-Rector with her husband Michael at All Saints Episcopal Church in Sacramento, California.

Monnot and her husband Michael have three children – William, age 16, Robert, age 13, and Thomas, age 11.

The service of ordination and consecration by which Monnot becomes a bishop and assumes responsibility for the pastoral and administrative work of the diocese, will take place on Saturday, December 18, at the Des Moines Marriott Downtown. The chief consecrator will be Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

“It is with thanksgiving and praise to God that I welcome Betsey Monnot as the Bishop-elect for the Diocese of Iowa,” said the Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe, 9th Bishop of Iowa. “Over these past eighteen years, it has been a great privilege and joy to share in the ministry of Christ with the Episcopal people of Iowa, and I am assured that this will be your wonderful experience as well over many years. We embrace with hope and expectation your leadership as our Tenth Bishop. May I share my hopes in the words expressed in the bishop’s prayer over a person reaffirming baptismal vows: ‘May the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and God’s Kingdom. Amen.’”

The Rev. Meg Wagner serves as diocesan missioner for congregational development, communications, and reconciliation.

From the Standing Committee

by Kathleen Milligan

When the Special Convention elected Betsey Monnot as the Tenth Bishop of Iowa, a whole process got underway preparing for the Ordination/Consecration scheduled for December 18th in Des Moines, and for the beginning of her new episcopate among us. Several important tasks need to be attended to. At present, the process of seeking consents to the election are underway. Each bishop diocesan in The Episcopal Church has been sent a request for consent to this election. A majority of them need to consent before the Consecration is officially scheduled. In addition a majority of all of the Standing Committees of each diocese will also need to give consent. The requests went out on August 19th, and we are hoping for an early return of consents. These consents are a reminder that, though she will be the diocesan bishop of Iowa, she is also a bishop for and representing the whole church. She will be a part of the councils of General Convention, and will be participating in committees that work on behalf of all Episcopalians.

Some initial talks have been held between Bishop-elect Monnot and Iowa's Standing Committee and Transition Committee regarding arrangements for her move to Iowa. The starting date is not yet clarified, but we expect she will start in time to give her several weeks of overlap with Bishop

Scarfe prior to the Consecration. The details for our Letter of Agreement with her will be discussed and agreed upon in the next few weeks. We do expect her to be present at the October diocesan convention, even if she is not yet officially employed. We also expect to hear from her during the Joint Chapter Meeting on August 28th, which will be on Zoom.

Please be on the lookout for a letter from the Standing Committee requesting donations toward the vestments and other signs of office that the Reverend Monnot will need. The Rev. Ruth Ratliff has given some information about those vestments in another part of this magazine. Another letter will be going out concerning the ways in which we wish to honor and show our gratitude to Bishop and Donna Scarfe. A time is being planned for a gathering to show our appreciation personally; but details are not completed yet.

Please continue to pray for Betsey, her family; Alan, his family; and for all who are working to make this transition a smooth and joyful celebration.

The Rev. Canon Kathleen Milligan serves as a member of the Standing Committee and as the priest-in-charge of St. Stephen's, Newton.

Next Steps

by Elaine Caldbeck

Now that we have a bishop-elect what happens? Well, part of the work involves raising funds to honor our beloved Bishop Alan Scarfe and to provide the vestments and other needed signs of office for our bishop-elect. The transition committee handles the details of acquiring these.

While the Standing Committee is working on the steps for churchwide consents, the Presiding Bishop's office is working on the details for the consecration which is scheduled for December 18, at the Marriott Downtown Des Moines. The Presiding Bishop's office coordinates the details of the service with the Bishop and Bishop-elect, members of the Standing Committee, the Transition Committee, and the diocesan staff.

The Transition Committee will also be planning several celebrations. There will be a special farewell for Bishop Scarfe (likely in October), a welcome to those arriving for the consecration in December and a simple reception after

it is over. We have some party planners on the committee but there will be lots of leg work to be done, so volunteers are welcome.

In addition, the transition committee will be helping the bishop-elect make the transition to her new role and new state, supporting her in any way she needs—from finding a range of potential housing to practical tips about living in Iowa. Most of all, we'll be doing whatever is needed to help her and her family join us as Iowans. (By the way, she does have family in the Quad Cities so she has been to our state on visits before.)

We, the transition committee look forward to the support of the deep creative resources of our wonderful diocese to make this all a beautiful, joyous and Iowan transition.

The Rev. Elaine Caldbeck serves as the chair of the Bishop Transition Committee and as the rector of St. Peter's, Bettendorf. transitioncommittee@iowaepiscopal.org

Gifts and Symbols of the Bishop's Office

by Ruth Ratliff and Cristine Mincheff

The Bishop's Vestments

A bishop's vestments symbolize their order, office, and role in the church. In the Episcopal Church, clergy and lay vestments have a history that sometimes goes back to the very early church and even to the early history of Israel (see Exodus 28). Many of the garments are loosely based on Roman clothing. It wasn't until Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire that clergy adopted garments distinct from those worn by most male citizens.

While these garment styles changed somewhat over the centuries, by the ninth century they had become standardized. Some bishops' vestments were decorated opulently, a fashion that would be rejected by some Protestants. The Church of England has alternated, at various time, between elaborate and more simple vestments. The Episcopal Church settled on some general vestment rules defined in the ordination rubrics. (BCP, pp. 511, 552)

The basic garment is the alb, a long white robe, traditionally given to the newly baptized. It is a reminder that we are all, in our baptisms, first children of God and co-heirs with Christ, in whom we all share in Christ's royal priesthood.

At ordination, the new bishop is presented with gifts and vestments, symbols of the office they now hold:

Stole: The stole is worn by bishops, priests and deacons when officiating at the Eucharist or other sacramental celebrations. The stole is linked to the towel used by Christ in washing the feet of his disciples and is a fitting symbol of the yoke of Christ, the yoke of service.

Chasuble: The outermost vestment in an oval or circular shape covering the other vestments worn by bishops and priests during the celebration of the Eucharist. The original Latin name of the chasuble, *casula*, or "little house," reminds us of the universality of the Eucharist as Christ's eternal wedding feast for all in the household of God.

Pectoral Cross: This cross is exclusively worn by bishops as a symbol of their office both to the Church and the world, but also as a reminder of the daily duty they now carry.

Episcopal [Bishop's] Ring: Since the Middle Ages, each new bishop has received an episcopal ring as a sign of office. Like a wedding ring, an episcopal ring is a symbol of the bishop's faithfulness to God and the Church. The ring is used as an official seal on documents that call for the bishop to affix a seal in wax. At the new bishop's ordination, before the liturgy, each visiting bishop will impress a wax seal on the bishop's ordination certificate.

Miter or Mitre: This is perhaps the most distinctive symbol of the bishop. Its shape is reminiscent of the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the Apostles gathered in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. Attached to the back of the mitre are two strips of cloth, called fanons, which are symbolic of the spirit and authority of the Old and New Testaments. The mitre is a reminder of a bishop's apostolic authority and ministry of "proclaiming Christ's resurrection and interpreting the Gospel" to the Church and to the world.

Diocesan Crozier: a staff with a curved or hooked top similar in appearance to a traditional shepherd's staff. It is an object

continued on page 7

To make an offering towards the purchase of diocesan gifts to welcome the Tenth Bishop of Iowa, the Reverend Betsey Monnot, visit:

iowaepiscopal.org/monnot



To make an offering in thanksgiving for Bishop Scarfe to benefit the Diocese of Iowa GILEAD Campaign, visit:

iowaepiscopal.org/scarfe

Gifts and Symbols, *continued*

that is not only symbolic of the bishop's role as chief shepherd or pastor, but also of the governing office of the bishop; thus it is a symbol of mercy and compassion, but also of firmness and the correction of vices. The crozier is given to the new bishop by the retiring bishop.

Other gifts: At ordination, the new bishop may be presented with additional gifts, such as a personal crozier, Bible, or:

Cope: a long mantle or cloak, open in the front and fastened with a band or clasp across the chest. From the Latin *capa*, meaning cape, it may be worn by any rank of the clergy on festival occasions.

Rochet and Chimere: The rochet is a white garment, reminding us that we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and is worn over the cassock, especially during the Eucharist. Bishops wear a distinctive style of surplice, called a rochet, whose sleeves are gathered at the wrist.

Over the rochet, the bishop may wear a sleeveless robe called a chimere, which is usually red or black. The rochet and chimere are worn by bishops as "choir dress" in non-Eucharistic liturgies such as the Daily Office or in a diocese where a cope and mitre are not preferred. "Choir dress" is traditionally worn by clergy in public prayer when they are not part of the altar party (e.g., if they are preaching but not presiding) and are seated in the choir.

Tippet: For services of the Daily Office, the bishop wears a special style of black stole called a tippet. It may be ornamented by emblems such as The Episcopal Church seal or the insignia of the wearer's seminary.

The Rev. Ruth Ratliff serves as a deacon at St. Luke's, Cedar Falls and Dr. Cristine Mincheff is a member of St. John's, Ames. Both are members of the Bishop Transition Committee.



EPIC 2021

by Amy Mellies and Alenah Rankin

EPIC (Episcopal Iowa Camp) 2021 was one for the books! Not only were we holding our first in-person diocesan event, we were also at a new location, the Christian Conference Center outside of Newton.

The week was filled with all of the usuals: worship, singing, laughing, crafts, games, outdoor activities (gaga-ball, paddle boarding, kayaking, hiking, color wars, swimming, and mini-golf, just to name a few), making new friends and learning. The week was also filled with a lot of emotion. For many of our campers and staff, this was the first event in over a year and a half that they were at with 50+ people in attendance, as well as the first time many of us had been away from home for a week. As usual, our amazing EPIC staff jumped right in, took care of each and every camper as well as each other. Our EPIC staff is truly amazing! Not only do most of them take off a week of vacation to be there, they are all willing to fill in wherever they are needed. Some of our staff start taking time out of their busy lives in February to start the planning process. As we

get closer to camp we bring more staff into the fold of planning where they decide what activities they will do with their campers and what they want to focus on based on the themes and scripture the planning team has given them. They think and pray for each of our unknown campers who they will come in contact with in a few short months/weeks. And then when the week finally arrives, our staff are so excited to see our campers! They smile, laugh at their jokes, and are truly interested in what each of them has to say and how they are feeling. We, as a diocese, are truly blessed to have all of these people give their time, energy and vacation to spend with the children and youth of our state!

Speaking of our amazing staff, we had three former campers who joined us on staff this year. I asked one of them, Alenah Rankin, to share her perspective going from a camper to a counselor and what that was like.

Hi, my name is Alenah Rankin. I'm a junior attending the University of Northern Iowa majoring in Social

Work. My recollection of this is poor but I'm pretty sure my first experience at EPIC camp was the summer after I finished seventh grade. I continued going to camp as a camper every year I could. My last experience as a camper was summer 2019 just a couple months after I graduated high school. That was also the last time camp was at Pictured Rocks and the last camp before the pandemic started. Fast forward two years, I am a new camp counselor at a new camp location (Christian Conference Center in Newton) under new circumstances (life in a pandemic).

I loved being a camper. I loved going with my sister and cousin every year. I loved being able to exercise both creative (friendship bracelet making before I even eat breakfast?!) and physical (half-day long float down a river?!) outlets. I loved the food we got to eat. As I got older I even grew to love not having my phone for a whole week, though you never would've heard me admit that at the time. I also really loved being a camp counselor for the first time this year. I'll admit I was nervous; we were at a new camp, it was my

continued on page 9



Charles Jetton, Sedona Helmke, and Celia Powell canoeing on Lake Wolf.



Bishop Scarfe preaching during the closing service.

EPIC 2021, *continued*



Afternoon activities - Color Wars



Camp Director, Kristina Kofoot, handing out popcorn before the Talent Show



Alenah Rankin and Dr. Matt Petty showing off their tie-dye skills.



Compline at the campfire



Prayer tree - every morning campers and staff write prayers for people they love, things they want to let go of, or things they want to change

first time, and a lot of things were different. I knew I'd be fine though and I found plenty of the same old loves along with new ones. I loved going with my sister. I loved the food. I loved the daily three-hour long breaks. I loved the middle-schoolers I watched over for the week. All of these little loves, new and old, remind me of what I really love about EPIC camp (no matter being a camper or counselor): the community that comes with it. The joy, the attention, the laughter, the understanding and so many more things coming from these people who I met when I was 13 years old or who I had just met that week make camp a highlight of my year.

I hope to return to camp next summer, though it is uncertain right now as I progress into my degree. This year, even with all the newness surrounding it, turned out great. I know that greatness will continue and grow as EPIC camp sees campers and counselors come and go each year. I'm excited to see what the future brings for EPIC camp!

Before I sign off, I cannot forget about the amazing staff at CCC. Much like our EPIC staff, the CCC staff was small but mighty. The camp director and facilities director were there for us for whatever we needed. They took our groups for an hour each evening so our staff

could discuss the day and any needs that may have risen. They nourished our bodies with amazing food and created a welcoming and loving environment for our campers.

Who knows what 2022 will hold for any of us, but one thing we know for sure is that EPIC 2022 will be July 5-8. It will be a short time due to the holiday being on Monday, but I pray that the impact camp has on the campers and staff will remain the same.

Ms. Amy Mellies serves as the diocesan missionary for children and youth and Ms. Alenah Rankin is a junior at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

Let the Children Come

by Lizzie Gillman and Hal Chase

On a beautiful April afternoon in Des Moines, students from Des Moines Public Schools walked out of class and made their way to the Iowa State Capitol to protest to Gov. Kim Reynolds to not sign House File 802 which specifically prohibits teaching or training the idea that “the United States of America is fundamentally and systematically racist and sexist in Iowa’s K-12 public schools, community colleges and universities.” Unfortunately, Governor Kim Reynolds signed Iowa House File 802 into law on June 8, 2021.

Historical facts reveal that “race” has been a factor in Iowa’s history from its beginning as a territory in 1838. On July 4, 1839, Iowa Territorial Supreme Court Chief Justice, Charles Mason, publicly announced the decision in “the case of Ralph, a colored man,” that slavery was illegal in the Iowa Territory because it had been a part of Michigan and Wisconsin territories which were part of the Northwest Territory created in 1787 by an Act of Congress which prohibited enslavement. Yet, the first legislation of the Iowa Territorial General Assembly, created a system of public schools for “white” students ages 4-21. But, in 1868, Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Chester Cole declared in the majority opinion of the case of *Clark v. City of Muscatine* that Muscatine had to admit Alexander Clark’s daughter, Susan, to its public schools 86 years before the 1954 unanimous decision by the U.S. Supreme Court which declared, “We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.”



Des Moines Public School students protesting at the Iowa State Capitol on April 26, 2021. Photo: Gillman

If we cannot discuss and debate ideas about “race” in our public schools, colleges and universities, our efforts to reduce racial & gender discrimination especially among our youth will be seriously weakened. We must not rebuke the kind and curious minds of our students who instinctually seek out equity in their learning environments. “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’” Matthew 19:14

As the school year begins, teachers across the state are having to modify their curricula to meet the standards of this new law. Libby Bouma, a special education teacher from the Walnut Street School in Des Moines can’t imagine a classroom where anti-racism teachings are not a part of a student’s day or teachers’ trainings. “As educators we are encouraged to seek out and provide trainings about anti-racism. This helps us provide safe, honest, relevant, and difficult

conversations with each other. It helps us empower our students to be knowledgeable, empathetic problem-solvers in their world and to stand up for what is right.”

In 2018, Black liberation theologian, James Cone, asked in his book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, “How did African Americans survive and resist the lynching terror and keep their sanity, and keep enough of it to love and marry each other, to raise their children and teach them to love and respect each other? For many Blacks, it was their faith in God and themselves.” Likewise, we must ask: How will we Americans overcome racism and sexism? Surely by listening, not limiting the stories we tell each other.

The Rev. Lizzie Gillman serves as a priest at St. Andrew’s, Des Moines and Dr. Hal Chase serves as diocesan historian. They are both members of the diocesan Task Force on Reparations.

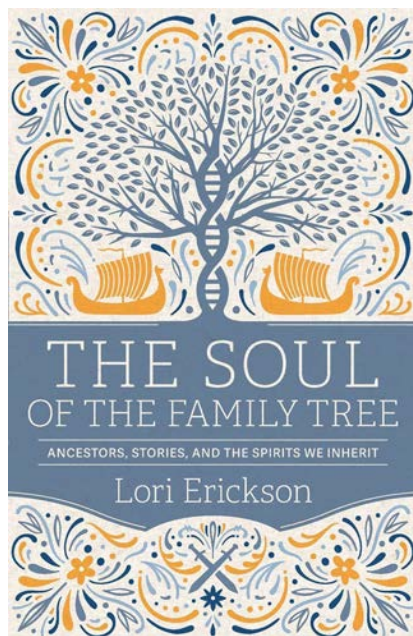
Book Review: *The Soul of the Family Tree*

by Mel Schlachter

When the bishop came to Trinity, Iowa City in April 2005 to ordain Lori Erickson a deacon, a couple of us had found a special gift for her that was a cartoon of her oft-remarked Norwegian heritage, and a better prediction of her future ministry than we knew. It was a Hagar the Horrible helmet, complete with horns and red hair coming out the back! She donned it at the reception with laughter all around. Everyone knew it was somehow appropriate.

Lori is a seasoned travel writer who with each new book focuses more and more on what makes a place holy and how those places affect the pilgrim who comes close. In her travels she candidly reveals her own reactions to the sites visited, thus providing herself as a teaching tool for the pilgrimage experience. Her latest, *The Soul of the Family Tree* (Westminster John Knox, 2021) is an inward pilgrimage. And all of a sudden we know why we gave her that helmet!

Soul combines familiar family tree research with the DNA typing of *Ancestry.com*, trips to significant Norwegian occupations in Newfoundland, Iceland, Norway, and (yes) Minnesota. She meets a number of wise guides along the way. She's in pursuit of the actual land and farms of her ancestors over there and over here. She is also after the places of cultural ancestors that she decides to adopt



imaginatively as her own. In order to feed that intuition she wants to know as much about those Vikings as she does her émigré forbearers.

The chosen ancestor. With so much emphasis on precision in the family tree business this may jolt you. But as she says, “I am interested in the stories” much more than the “begats.” So when she cannot find a trait or a theme that inhabits her within her blood forebears, Lori opts for imaginative adoption. She herself has two from the Viking age: Leif Erickson (love that last name) and Guidrid the Far Traveler. A man and a woman, both courageous, strong, full of wanderlust. Guidrid was known for wisdom, too.

Her choosing goes deeper than, say, someone superficially grabbing hold of a pop star or super athlete. If you intuit that a distant individual shares some of your “spiritual DNA” then you need to know as much as you can about them and their times. Lori has read more Norse history and mythic literature than you and I ever want to. She comes to terms with her revulsion of Leif Erickson killing people on his early raids, to appreciate his non-murderous boldness and courage later on.

It is common wisdom about pilgrimage that one starts off with a destination and a purpose, and the experience along the way brings out in your spirit a different purpose, often a bit of a surprise. Lori Erickson’s discussions on choosing bring to mind the verse from the Gospel of John (15.16): “You did not choose me. I chose you.”

If *The Soul of the Family Tree* indeed gives us another model for religious pilgrimage, then it may well be an avenue for God’s choosing you in some way. And through your family of origin at that!! Or it may deepen a call you already know because you have deepened understanding of your roots. The book is a fine guide for an inner pilgrimage.

The Rev. Mel Schlachter is a retired priest and a member of New Song, Coralville.

**DISMANTLING
RACISM**

**TRAINING FOR
CHURCH LEADERS**

FALL TRAINING DATES

September 18

November 20

online 10:00am-2:30pm

register:

becomingbelovedcommunity.org/calendar

STEWARDSHIP SHARE - 2nd Quarter 2021

As of 6/30/2021

City	Church	Stewardship	2021	Due to	Received	(Over)
		Share	Pledge	Date	to Date	Under
Algona	St. Thomas'	3,552	3,552	1,776	1,776	0
Ames	St. John's	52,629	52,629	26,315	21,929	4,386
Anamosa	St. Mark's	435	1,500	750	1,500	(750)
Ankeny	St. Anne's	10,100	5,250	2,625	3,938	(1,313)
Bettendorf	St. Peter's	15,775	15,775	7,887	7,888	(0)
Boone	Grace	1,430	1,430	715	720	(5)
Burlington	Christ	22,950	18,900	9,450	9,450	0
Carroll	Trinity	2,911	2,911	1,455	2,911	(1,455)
Cedar Falls	St. Luke's	37,590	37,590	18,795	18,795	0
Cedar Rapids	Christ	49,654	49,654	24,827	20,689	4,138
Cedar Rapids	Grace	8,861	8,861	4,431	0	4,431
Chariton	St. Andrew's	3,642	3,700	1,850	3,700	(1,850)
Charles City	Grace	1,305	1,305	653	653	0
Clinton	Christ	11,959	11,959	5,979	5,979	0
Coralville	New Song	17,600	17,600	8,800	10,267	(1,467)
Council Bluffs	St. Paul's	5,129	5,129	2,565	2,137	427
Davenport	St. Alban's	8,686	6,500	3,250	3,250	0
Davenport	Trinity	108,932 *	92,592	46,296	46,296	0
Decorah	Grace	4,199	4,199	2,100	2,100	0
Denison	Trinity	2,251	2,251	1,125	938	188
Des Moines	St. Andrew's	28,398	28,398	14,199	14,199	0
Des Moines	St. Luke's	28,730 *	13,918	6,959	5,799	1,160
Des Moines	St. Mark's	4,322	1,000	500	0	500
Des Moines	St. Paul's	76,748 *	60,000	30,000	30,202	(202)
Dubuque	St. John's	16,812	9,000	4,500	9,000	(4,500)
Durant	St. Paul's	3,049	3,049	1,524	1,525	(0)
Emmetsburg	Trinity	2,040	2,040	1,020	1,020	0
Fort Dodge	St. Mark's	37,511	37,511	18,756	15,630	3,126
Fort Madison	St. Luke's	2,672	2,100	1,050	1,050	0
Glenwood	St. John's	944	944	472	472	0
Grinnell	St. Paul's	10,608	8,000	4,000	4,000	(0)
Harlan	St. Paul's	1,287	1,287	644	429	215
Independence	St. James'	1,961	1,961	981	981	0
Indianola	All Saints	1,414	1,414	707	708	(1)
Iowa City	Trinity	79,435	79,435	39,717	39,717	0
Iowa Falls	St. Matthew's	2,264	2,264	1,132	377	755
Keokuk	St. John's	10,458 *	7,200	3,600	2,400	1,200
LeMars	St. George's	40	40	20	109	(89)
Maquoketa	St. Mark's	2,325	2,325	1,163	1,164	(2)
Marshalltown	St. Paul's	11,338	11,338	5,669	5,669	0
Mason City	St. John's	17,838 *	15,000	7,500	8,919	(1,419)
Mount Pleasant	St. Michael's	4,302	4,302	2,151	2,151	0
Muscatine	Trinity	21,398	21,398	10,699	10,699	0
Newton	St. Stephen's	12,035	8,000	4,000	3,333	667
Orange City	Savior	1,840	950	475	475	0
Oskaloosa	St. James'	7,519	7,519	3,759	3,759	0
Ottumwa	Trinity	4,574	4,574	2,287	2,287	0
Perry	St. Martin's	7,587	7,587	3,794	0	3,794
Shenandoah	St. John's	4,266	2,647	1,323	2,133	(810)
Sioux City	Calvary	1,693	1,740	870	870	0
Sioux City	St. Paul's	1,355	1,355	678	1,287	(609)
Sioux City	St. Thomas'	15,522	8,750	4,375	2,573	1,802
Spirit Lake	St. Alban's	8,764	8,764	4,382	4,382	0
Storm Lake	All Saints'	3,410	3,410	1,705	1,421	284
Waterloo	Trinity	15,786	10,750	5,375	5,375	0
Webster City	Good Shepherd	4,466	4,466	2,233	2,233	0
West Des Moines	St. Timothy's	62,099 *	50,000	25,000	25,000	0
TOTAL		886,400	777,723	388,862	376,264	12,598

* Stewardship Share Appeal

Episcopal JOURNAL

QUARTERLY EDITION FALL 2021

Migration ministries' affiliates prepare to welcome Afghan families

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) and its affiliates mobilized to respond to an expected increase of people fleeing from Afghanistan to the United States after the Afghan government fell to the Taliban in mid-August, expediting the end of the 20-year American presence in the country.

EMM is one of nine agencies with federal contracts to provide refugee resettlement services on behalf of the U.S. State Department. The agencies also have helped resettle people through the special immigrant visa program, which is intended to offer sanctuary for Afghans and their families who fear persecution because of their work in support of the U.S. government.

As the Taliban took over most of the country and the capital of Kabul, EMM officials say they have received inquiries from across the United States — from immigrant Afghan families wanting to help relatives back in their native country and from Episcopal congregations and Episcopalians asking how they can support those families.

EMM was developing an online resource in Pashto, Dari and other languag-



Photo/Courtesy IRIS

EMM affiliate Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services in New Haven, Conn., helps find housing for Afghan immigrants.

es spoken in Afghanistan to point families to available resources. Episcopalians interested in helping were encouraged to fill out a volunteer form or make a monetary donation.

“EMM is working in partnership with the government to assist our Afghan allies and provide resettlement services through our network of 12 affiliates,” Demetrio Alvero, EMM’s director of operations, told ENS. “We remain committed to providing welcoming services and necessary support to ensure Afghan arrivals receive the foundation they need to begin their lives in peace and safety in the U.S.”

Six of EMM’s 12 affiliates across the country already are working to resettle

Afghan families, and so far this year, they have helped nearly 350 special immigrant visa recipients find new homes in the United States, officials said. EMM is working with its affiliates to increase capacity to receive Afghan families amid deteriorating conditions under the Taliban.

“Thousands of Afghan nationals and their family members who gave everything to help the American military have now found themselves in grave danger,” said Russell Smith, chief executive officer of Refugee Services of Texas, an EMM affiliate based in Austin. Smith said in mid-August that his organization has been told it will settle 324 Afghans through its offices in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston.

Refugee Services of Texas and other EMM affiliates have asked supporters to contribute in various ways, including by helping to find affordable housing for the incoming families.

“We are asking our communities to help give back to these new arrivals who served us abroad,” the Diocese of Olympia’s Refugee Resettlement Office said in a Facebook post. It called for sponsor families and donations of household items.

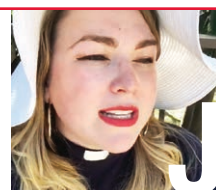
Another EMM affiliate, Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services in New

continued on page D



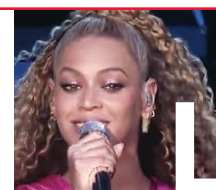
NEWS

Black leaders say church is at a crossroads



FEATURE

Clergy enter Tiktok’s virtual ‘town square’



ARTS

‘Black anthem’ proposed as national hymn

‘Tsunami of sickness’: Dioceses call for masks, vaccinations amid COVID-19 surges

By David Paulsen

Episcopal News Service

Episcopal dioceses and congregations are responding to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases across the United States, especially in Southern states with low vaccination rates, by implementing new face mask requirements at worship services and promoting vaccination campaigns.

In Louisiana, one of the states hit hardest by the COVID-19 delta variant, the New Orleans-based Diocese of Louisiana started the week of Aug. 11 requiring worshippers to wear masks partly in response to the indoor mask mandate reinstated by the governor.

In mid-August, the state averaged more than 5,500 new COVID-19 cases a day, more than at any other time during the pandemic, according to data tracked by the New York Times.

“I have heard and read where some



Photo/Diocese of Texas

St. Vincent’s House, in the Diocese of Texas, hosts a COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

individuals have raised their objections to wearing masks indoors. This is disheartening,” Louisiana Bishop Morris Thompson said in a message to the diocese. “The primary reason for wearing masks is to protect others. Choosing not to wear masks speaks to the absence of love for our neighbor.”

Florida also saw a record number of new cases, averaging 20,000 a day. As in

Louisiana, Florida’s surge overwhelmed hospitals and drove up the number of fatalities. As of Aug. 10, an average of 141 Floridians were dying from COVID-19 each day, a number that rose exponentially the week after.

“We are in a COVID apocalypse right now,” a hospital official in Fairhope, Ala., recently told Central Gulf Coast Bishop Russell Kendrick, according to Kendrick’s Aug. 10 message to the diocese, which encompasses the southern half of Alabama and the western end of the Florida Panhandle.

Amid the recent surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in his diocese, Kendrick called on Episcopalians to offer prayers, praise and thanks for health care workers on the pandemic’s front lines. “We are now nearly drowning in a tsunami of sickness,” Kendrick said.

The vaccinations that now are widely available in the United States have proven to offer effective protection against COVID-19 infection, with hospitalizations and deaths rare among vaccinated individuals. Across the United States, 50% of the population is fully vaccinated, though vaccination rates have varied widely by state and region.

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, at least 36 million people in the United States have tested positive, and more than 600,000 people have died. For the past month, new COVID-19 cases have been increasing in every state, prompting diocesan leaders from Hawaii to Rhode Island to consider new guidance for reducing the risk of transmission in churches.

Some of the worst outbreaks are in the South where vaccination rates have lagged. Alabama and Mississippi have the lowest vaccination rates in the country, each at 35% of residents, and 38% of residents in Louisiana and Arkansas are fully vaccinated. Those four states also are recording new COVID-19 cases at some of the highest rates per capita in the country.

In Texas, with 45% of residents

continued on page C

Curry encourages Americans to get vaccinated

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry released a video Aug. 10 calling on Episcopalians to spread the word about the importance of getting vaccinated.

“Vaccines can help us save lives and make life livable,” Curry said. “I got mine. We can get ours for ourselves, but if not for ourselves, for our children who do not have a vaccine yet.”

Pfizer’s vaccine is authorized for administering to children as young as 12, but no vaccine is available yet to younger children as studies continue.

Curry urged viewers to share their “I Got Mine” story by posting a photo or video with the #igotmine hashtag, tag and invite friends, and tell the world about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

A COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit is available at www.episcopalchurch.org.

“The #COVIDVaccine saves lives,” Curry said in the video. Referring to the hashtag, he said, “#igotmine to do my part to live out the Bible’s commandment to ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ And I’m inviting my friends to share their own #igotmine stories.”



Photo/ENS via Facebook

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry receives the COVID-19 vaccine.

— Episcopal Church Office of Public Affairs

COVID continued from page B

vaccinated, hospitalizations have quadrupled in the past month, and at least one health care system, in Houston, is setting up tents to accommodate the surge in patients.

“I want to strongly encourage all members of the diocese, if you have not, to get vaccinated,” Thompson, the Louisiana bishop, said in a message last month. “Studies show being vaccinated is our best defense against COVID. Our goal is to care for one another. Let us all do our part in caring for our neighbor.”

Florida’s statewide vaccination rate matches the 50% national rate, but county rates tell a different story. Miami-Dade County, for example has 63% of residents vaccinated, while some other Florida counties, especially in the Panhandle, are just now approaching 25%.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance on masking late last month to recommend that all Americans, whether vaccinated or not, wear masks in indoor public places where

transmission rates are high.

The Diocese of Southwest Florida responded by asking clergy leaders to advise parishioners to wear masks indoors. The Diocese of Southeast Florida also is emphasizing mask usage while encouraging people to get vaccinated. Central Florida Bishop Gregory Brewer ordered masks to be worn at the diocese’s offices in Orlando but stopped short of extending that requirement to the diocese’s churches.

“While not mandating masks indoors at this time, all persons are encouraged to wear masks (covering the nose and mouth) when indoors,” the diocese said in an Aug. 3 update. “The risk of exposure exists for all people, regardless of vaccination status.”

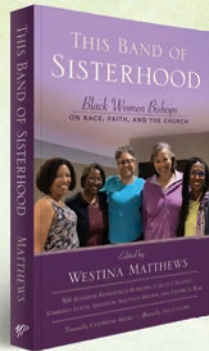
Missouri, with 42% of residents vaccinated, is another state dealing with alarming new COVID-19 outbreaks and a corresponding rise in hospitalizations. Clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of West Missouri have encouraged people in their communities to get vaccinated, and the diocese has allowed each congregation to establish local policies for ensuring



the safety of worshippers, including mask requirements, according to Gary Allman, the diocese’s communications director.

“Over the past few weeks, my observations have been that our churches have assessed local conditions, taken expert advice and prayerfully considered the best steps to take,” Allman told ENS by email. “As a result, those I’ve checked have self-imposed more rigorous guidelines than those required by their local authorities.” ■

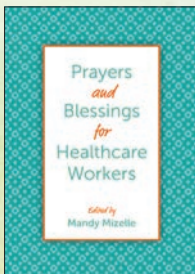
New from Church Publishing



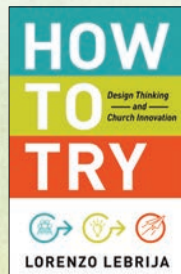
“There are so many nuggets of wisdom to be found in the conversations between these remarkable Black women bishops. . . . The reflections, experiences, and profound humanity that my sisters share in these pages are indeed priceless.”

—The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church

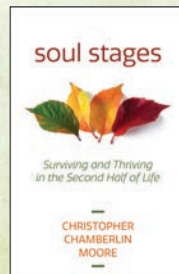
9781640653511 | \$14.95



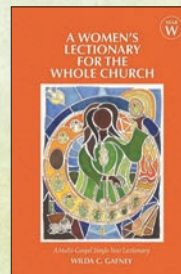
9781640654808
\$21.95 | hardcover



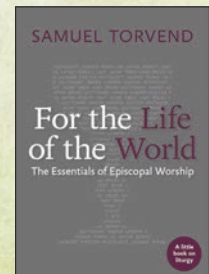
9781640653474
\$16.95



9781640654327
\$14.95



9781640654747
\$36.95



9781640654181
\$8.95



Church Publishing Incorporated products are available through Episcopal bookstores, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Cokesbury, or your preferred bookseller. Alternatively, you can visit us at www.churchpublishing.org



AFGHANISTAN continued from page A

Haven, Conn., issued a similar plea last week. “Help us find housing for Afghan families!” the organization said on Facebook. “We’re excited to welcome an influx of Afghans who’ve worked with the U.S. government — in some cases, with only a 24-hour notice.”

On July 8, President Joe Biden pledged to step up efforts to resettle Afghans connected to the American war effort — an issue that had gained urgency after his administration announced its plan to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11.

A first group of about 2,500 Afghans began arriving in the United States in July, initially to be housed at military bases during their completion of the special immigrant visa process.

An estimated 18,000 Afghans were in various stages of applying for and receiving the special immigrant visas, along with about 53,000 of their family members. Congress has authorized more than 26,000 special immigrant visas for Afghans in the past seven years. Pending legislation would allow the government to issue an additional 8,000 special immigrant visas to those awaiting approval.

The urgency was underscored Aug. 16



Photos/Wikimedia Commons

Afghan citizens crowd the entrance to Hamid Karzai Airport, seeking passage out of the country.

when large crowds stormed the airport in Kabul, desperate to gain access to one of the planes leaving the country under American guard.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry responded to the fast-moving crisis by issuing a prayer for the people of Afghanistan.

“There is a profound humanitarian crisis,” Curry said. “Countless people, mostly women and children, are now fleeing and vulnerable. The lives of many are now endangered. The hopes of many are forgone. Send your Spirit, Lord, to rally the resolve of the nations of the earth to find pathways to save human lives, protect human rights and to resolve the hardships of those seeking refuge, asylum and safety.”

EMM is best known for its refugee

resettlement work. The Episcopal Church first began assisting refugees in the 1930s and 1940s through the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief, supporting Europeans fleeing the Nazis.

Since the United States created the current refugee resettlement program in 1980, EMM has resettled about 100,000 refugees, providing a range of services for these families upon their arrival in the United States, including English language and cultural orientation classes, employment services, school enrollment, and initial assistance with housing and transportation.

Refugee resettlement was reduced to the lowest level in the federal program’s 40-year history under President Donald Trump. The president sets the ceiling, or maximum number, for refugees to be resettled in the United States each year, and Trump slashed that number to a historic low of 15,000.

Biden has said he will increase it to 125,000, and on May 3, his administration raised the cap to 62,500 for the rest of the current fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30.

The refugee cap does not affect the number of people eligible for special immigrant visas. ■

Welby addresses House of Lords on Afghanistan



Photo/Lambeth Conference

Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby addressed the House of Lords on Aug. 18 after Parliament was recalled following the fall of Afghanistan. The full text of his speech follows:

My Lords,

I look forward today especially to hearing noble and gallant Lords, diplomats, and others with local knowledge in Afghanistan. We rightly remember the courage, suffering and sacrifice over the last 20 years, and the courage being shown by our ambassador and the service people in Afghanistan at the moment, together with their colleagues and reporters. When we look back, I remember a cathedral, full for the funeral of a soldier: family and many colleagues silent in dignity, some wounded, mourning their loss.

The failure we face today is not military or diplomatic: they did all they could. It is political. Recovery and hope will come to Afghanistan with us supporting commitment to the neediest and most desperate. We have proven capacities in soft as well as hard power.

We owe an absolute, lavishly generous moral covenant to all those who are at risk because they served with us in Afghanistan or took seriously our frequently professed commitment to its future, women and girls included. An Afghan refugee, now a U.K. citizen, said to me this week, “families in such times of trouble belong together.” His words

are not politics, but humanity. This is about morals, not numbers. Will the government confirm that their policy will reflect moral obligation and not be controlled by numbers?

In Pakistan, a country facing huge pressure including from refugees, we must undertake dialogue and support, learning afresh the religious and cultural literacy which is essential to effective work. We must not put any groups there, or in Afghanistan, into a corner where they may be driven to greater extremes. The aid we offer must support dialogue, inspire hope and prepare reconciliation. And that aid must be genuinely additional, not a transfer from other places of need. Is that going to be the case, I ask the government?

We must renew commitment to freedom of religion and belief everywhere, a point not much mentioned so far. That will count in Pakistan and Afghanistan for Christians and religious communities such as Shia, Hindus, Jains, Ahmadis and Sikhs.

A WhatsApp [message], from a Christian in Afghanistan, asked for support there and in Pakistan. Memorably, it said, “I am willing to die for Jesus, but I do not want to die forgotten.”

My Lords, this is a very bad time, especially for so many in Afghanistan, and for those who served there. It is a time for prayerful humility — and for us to display generosity, virtue, and courage. Rebuilding our reputation in such ways will give many others hope as well.

— Church of England

Episcopal Church voices support for Cubans in anti-government protests

By Lynette Wilson
Episcopal News Service

In mid-July, Cubans took to the streets in rare anti-government demonstrations, denouncing the government for its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, food and medicine shortages, long lines, price hikes and an ever-worsening economy.

Episcopal leaders, including the Episcopal bishop of Cuba, Griselda Delgado del Carpio, supported the protesters.

“Expressing concern and frustration is the right of every citizen and every people. The right to freedom of expression in peaceful public demonstrations is a human right,” Delgado, who has served as bishop of Cuba since 2010, said in a letter.

The church, Delgado said, is concerned with the lack of space for people to voice their civic concerns. “As long as people manifest themselves in a peaceful and respectful framework, they should be allowed to do so,” she said.

The protesters shouted, “Libertad,” in a call to freedom, and “Patria y Vida,” a play on the Communist government’s slogan, “Patria o Muerte,” “Fatherland or Death,” according to news reports.

The long-deteriorating economic situation and food and medicine shortages preceded the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made the situation worse. Cuba is reporting more than 5,300 daily infections, the highest since the start of the pandemic. New government-enacted economic policies implemented earlier this year also have exacerbated the situation.

“Uncertainty, frustration, burden, and despair have been generated by the constant lack of basic food products and medicines — among other misfortunes. All of us are experiencing increased emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual deterioration. The average wage has been dramatically devalued, while the most important products are offered only in new stores for foreign currencies. Power plants have been put out of operation due to various mechanical failures resulting in power outages,” Delgado said, as she called for dialogue to address people’s urgent needs.

“The church urges that reason, san-

ity, and responsibility prevail. That path must be chosen by all Cubans. There will always be divergences, diverse opinions, different thoughts — that is the richness and integrality of being a people. The value of dialogue must be raised in order to seek understanding and ways to resolve this situation,” she said.

Anti-government protests are uncommon in Cuba, where its authoritarian regime retains tight control over society and the media. International news outlets worldwide, including the New York Times, characterized the protests as “a remarkable eruption of discontent not seen in nearly 30 years.”

“The church in Cuba has stood with the people and continues to stand with the people,” the Rev. Glenda McQueen, the Episcopal Church’s partnership officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, told ENS. To know that the church stands with the people and that Episcopalians from around the world are praying for the Cuban people, “gives them a sense of hope, hope that is needed in this difficult time.”

In a letter to his diocese, Western North Carolina Bishop José McLoughlin, whose mother fled Cuba in 1961, addressed the situation.

“At present, Cuba is experiencing its most significant protests since the early 1990s. Aggravated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a recent spike in COVID-19 cases, many protest-

ers, frustrated by the country’s struggle to combat the coronavirus and resulting poor conditions for many residents, are calling for the resignation of current President Miguel Diaz-Canel. Facing a lack of access to food and other necessary supplies, lack of communication and deadly violence plaguing the streets, most people fear for their wellbeing,” McLoughlin wrote.

“My family and so many Cubans have



Photo/Lynette Wilson/ENS

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preaches and Luz Dinorah Padro, the church’s manager for language services, interprets March 6, 2020, during a Eucharist in Havana celebrating the Diocese of Cuba’s readmission into the Episcopal Church.

suffered deeply as a part of this six-decade-old regime, a situation only complicated by the pandemic and the economic collapse brought on by the government’s changing of the nation’s monetary system,” said the bishop, who still has family in Cuba and whose diocese has a companion relationship with the Diocese of Cuba. ■

MOVING?

- Clergy Discount
- Guaranteed Dates
- 3 Estimates with only 1 survey
- All Major Van Lines



800-733-0930

www.clergyrelocation.com • info@clergyrelocation.com

Ask for a clergy moving specialist and discover why thousands of churches, clergy and seminarians have relied on us for over two decades.

At Black Episcopalians' conference, leaders call for revolution over reform

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church is at a crossroads, church leaders said during the annual Union of Black Episcopalians conference and revival; if it is to flourish and maintain integrity, it must embrace a revolution in values both within and beyond its walls.

"Reform has its time and place, but reform is not enough," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in his sermon during the opening worship service. "Mere tinkering at the edges — that's not enough. We need a revolution."

The virtual event, which runs July 27-30, includes worship services, memorials to the victims of COVID-19, panel discussions and musical performances. It also includes a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the original "Lift Every Voice and Sing" hymnal that collected African American spirituals including the title song, which the Episcopal Church Executive Council has endorsed designating as a national hymn, supporting a proposed bill in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" is also the theme of the event, with a verse from the song setting the tone for each of the three full days, which focused on the past, present and future of Black Episcopalians.

In his sermon on July 27, Curry touched on all three, preaching on Jesus' "revolutionary" statements on the necessity of being born again in John 3. American society needs such a rebirth, he said, pointing to recent events — and it is the church's mission to lead the way.

"Need I mention George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and so many others? We need a revolution," Curry proclaimed. "Need I mention Charlottesville, of just a few years ago, with Nazis marching through the streets of Charlottesville shrieking, 'Jews will not replace us?' ... Shall I mention January 6, when the Capitol of the United States was breached in an attempted insurrection to overthrow an election? ... Shall I mention the ways in which Christianity itself has been compromised by anybody's

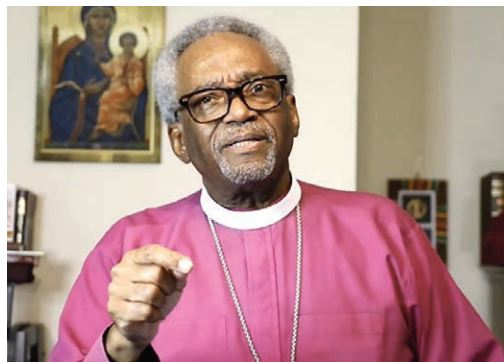
supremacy over anybody else?"

"Oh, we need a revolution."

Curry recalled meeting writer Ibram X. Kendi and discussing his description of racism as a cancer that can destroy a society unless it is diagnosed and treated.

"I said to him, 'I speak to you as a cancer survivor myself, both of colon cancer and prostate cancer, and I know exactly what you're talking about,'" Curry recalled. "But with early diagnosis, early treatment and proper medical care and good prayer, you can make it. I'm a witness."

Racism — and the selfishness in which



Photo/via Zoom

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preaches during the opening worship service of the Union of Black Episcopalians conference and revival.

it is rooted — "is the most destructive power in the world," he said. "It will tear a nation apart. It will render governments ineffective. It will make democracy itself impossible. It could undo human life, even, on the planet. We don't need just reform. We need a revolution."

Curry's call for radical change was echoed when he participated in a plenary panel discussion on the history of Black Episcopalians — and how history is reflected in their present experience — with Byron Rushing, vice president of the House of Deputies and a former Massachusetts state representative, and Ora Houston, a former Austin, Texas, City Council member.

Rushing stressed the importance of understanding and honoring Black Episcopalians' origins, as personified by the Rev. Absalom Jones, the first Black Episcopal priest.

"When we picked our first Black priest to be our hero, we picked a typical Black person to be our history because that was

a person who was born in slavery, and we cannot separate our history from slavery," Rushing said. "That is important not because it's exceptional; it's important because it is the history of all of us."

Rushing pointed out that African Americans lived under slavery much longer than they have as free people, and decisions being made today must be informed by that context.

"We will not be free in the United States until 2111 as long as we had been enslaved before 1865," Rushing said.

Rushing and Houston added that the effects of post-emancipation forms of oppression, such as Jim Crow laws, redlining and other racist urban planning strategies aimed at segregation, are still embedded in neighborhoods and school districts. Houston attended segregated public schools in Austin and lives on the city's east side because that was where the city moved Black citizens as part of a master plan to segregate them from the rest of the city.

Episcopalians, Houston said, need to "understand how those interactions happen and why some Black people live in one part of town, and you live in another part of town — that disconnect you don't pay attention to.

"There was a system that made some of that happen," she told the panel. "And Episcopalians who are somewhat entitled and privileged — I admit that I am — we have to do a different way of reaching out and reaching over to the brothers and sisters that are left behind."

Houston also expressed frustration that the church's work of racial justice and reconciliation often falls to Black people. White Episcopalians must take up that burden, she said.

"We are the minority in this church, yet we're doing the majority of the work. So when do we shift some of that work over to the dominant culture?" she asked. "Perhaps we need to encourage the dominant people in the Episcopal Church to have a revival."

Rushing described Black Episcopalians as having two major mission fields: reaching out to the Black people in their neighborhoods and challenging white Episcopalians to adopt a new culture that

continued on page 1

DIALOGUES

— ON —
RACE

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS HELPFUL RESOURCES

Designed to engage adults in difficult conversations, *Dialogues On: Race* explores key topics such as the legacy of racism within the American church, race and the Bible, Black vs White Christianity, the Native American experience, and the problem with racial reconciliation. Inside, well-researched information is brought to life with the lived experience of people at the center of each topic.

“ I BELIEVE THE ONLY HOPE FOR MAINLINE CHRISTIANITY IS TO DISMANTLE WHITE SUPREMACY—FIRST IN OUR PEWS AND THEN IN OUR COMMUNITIES. THIS IS THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP. ”

LENNY DUNCAN,
“A New Heaven and a New Earth”
Dialogues On: Race Learner Book

LEARN MORE THIS SMALL GROUP STUDY AT WEARESPARKHOUSE.ORG

Diocese of Vermont faces ‘financial cliff,’ launches study of collaborative diocesan models

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The bishop’s message landed in Vermont Episcopalians’ email inboxes last July with a hopeful subject: “Building a Bridge to the Future.”

But the bottom line was dire: the Diocese of Vermont is heading toward a “financial cliff,” an expert had concluded, and budget cuts alone won’t prevent the fall.

“Cost-cutting is only a short-term survival strategy that will help us build a bridge to our new future,” Bishop Shannon MacVean-Brown said in her message. She also announced a new task force that will consider long-term strategies for sustaining the diocese’s congregations and ministries, and she raised the prospect of greater collaboration and resource sharing with the dioceses of New Hampshire and Maine.

“While I know this news may come as a surprise to some of you, the challenges to the financial sustainability of our ministry were decades in the making, and we will not solve them overnight,” she wrote.

MacVean-Brown later said in a phone interview with ENS that there had been no talk of merger with any other diocese, but she felt compelled by the assessment of her diocese’s finances to speak frankly about the urgent need for a different path forward. The challenges facing her diocese are similar across the Episcopal Church, she said, and she remains hopeful.

“This is about the mission of Jesus. What would Jesus have us do in this time, and how can we use all of our resources to be about that work?” MacVean-Brown told ENS. “I don’t know the outcome ... I just know that we are going to talk about the realities and do something new, and that we’re going to trust God to be with us in it.”

Vermont’s newly formed Taskforce for Hope, Revitalization, Innovation, Vitality and Efficiency, or THRIVE, will study the organizational models being tested by other Episcopal dioceses.

In particular, MacVean-Brown pointed to the ongoing partnership between the dioceses of Northwestern Pennsylvania and Western New York.

Bishop Sean Rowe, who oversees those two dioceses, spoke to the Diocese of

Vermont’s new task force during its first meeting on July 26. MacVean-Brown has begun discussing options with the bishops in New Hampshire and Maine.

MacVean-Brown has led the Burlington-based diocese since September 2019. Her predecessor, Bishop Thomas Ely, was in that role for 18 years, following what



“What would Jesus have us do in this time, and how can we use all of our resources to be about that work?”

— Bishop Shannon MacVean-Brown

the diocese described as a “bishop in partnership” model that sought to empower local leaders.

The Vermont diocese is one of the smallest, with about 5,700 baptized members in 2019, according to the most recently released church data. It has 10 full-time clergy members and 45 congregations. Diocesan records indicate most congregations operate without full-time clergy, and all but three report average Sunday attendance of less than 100 worshippers.

The state, mostly rural, has 624,000 residents. Only Wyoming has a smaller population. Ninety-four percent of Vermonters are white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Residents ages 65 and older make up 20% of Vermont’s population, and MacVean-Brown, the diocese’s first Black bishop, noted to ENS that many of the church’s members are older adults.

Vermont’s membership trend mirrors those regionally and in the wider Episcopal Church, which recorded an 8% membership decline from 2014 to 2019. Vermont is part of the church’s Province I, which encompasses the seven New England dioceses, and those dioceses averaged a 12% decline in members over the last five years. Connecticut, Maine, Vermont and Western Massachusetts saw plate and pledge income drop 3% to 7% in those five years, while Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island logged five-

year increases of 4% to 8%.

Financial struggles are still an uncomfortable subject in the church, MacVean-Brown said, and the church’s polity isn’t a reliable guide. “It doesn’t say anything about what happens when a diocese can’t support itself financially, so there’s this expectation that it’s not going to happen,” she

said. “And I think that because we haven’t talked about that, it’s undiscussable.”

The Diocese of Vermont’s membership declined by about 13% in the five years ending 2019. While its budget has hovered around \$1 million in recent years, its plate and pledge income has gradually declined by more than 3% since 2014, creating an unsustainable long-term budget deficit, according to the financial consultant the diocese hired this year.

For now, the diocese says it is holding its finances steady with help from federal pandemic relief through the Paycheck Protection Program, but the financial consultant concluded that by the first quarter of 2023, “diocesan expenses will far exceed revenues.”

MacVean-Brown anticipated the verdict. When she applied for this role in 2018, the diocese said in its bishop search profile it planned to maintain its existing leadership model but also hinted at financial struggles and suggested that much would be expected of Vermont’s new bishop. “We are on the unavoidable cusp of some important and daunting leaps of faith that will call for careful tending, creative ideas and the willingness to hold onto each other in love,” the diocese said in its search profile.

In the profile, diocesan leaders said they had considered other leadership options

continued on page 1

VERMONT continued from page H

tions, such as a part-time or provisional bishop or sharing a bishop with another diocese, but they ultimately chose to recruit another full-time bishop.

“We recognize that our next bishop needs to have an innovative spirit, out-of-the-box energy and, as one person so aptly termed it, a sense of holy scrappiness,” the diocese said. “We don’t know what the finances will continue to look like down the road and what other creative structure of episcopacy might reveal itself in the future.”

In her interview with ENS, MacVean-Brown said such cautionary language had caught her attention, and while she embraced the opportunity to lead the diocese, she thought it was important to face the tough financial realities with honesty and openness.

“I’m not some money whiz,” she said, but about a year ago she took a closer look at diocesan finances and saw a crisis point looming. Up to that point, she said, the dire financial outlook had been obscured by layers of diocesan bureaucracy, including numerous finance-related committees. To get an expert’s opinion, she signed a contract in early 2021 with Stephen Burnett, a former partner at the professional services company Deloitte who had chaired the Diocese of Atlanta’s finance committee for 27 years.

Burnett’s assessment confirmed “trouble ahead” for the diocese. Following his recommendations, the bishop and other diocesan leaders moved to restrict spending as a preliminary measure, including declining to fill a vacant staff position.

In the past, the diocese had made cuts to balance the budget, only to continue facing the need for more cuts, MacVean-Brown told ENS. She had to look for new ways of supporting clergy, developing lay leadership and growing Episcopal ministries, while rethinking the organizational and financial strategies of the past. Simply “managing decline” won’t work, she said. “It decreases our ability to be present in our communities in meaningful ways.”

The partnership between the dioceses of Northwestern Pennsylvania and Western New York is one model for innovation. Since 2018, they have shared a bishop, combined administrative functions and pursued joint ministries.

The dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan established a similar partnership in 2019, and in Wisconsin, the dio-

ceses of Eau Claire and Fond du Lac are in the early stages of expanding their collaborative efforts while sharing a bishop. Another example is the Diocese of Western Kansas, where Bishop Mark Cowell has served since December 2018, while also retaining some of his parish priest duties.

MacVean-Brown has begun talking regularly with New Hampshire Bishop Robert Hirschfeld and Maine Bishop Thomas Brown about ways their dioceses can work together more closely. Options she cited include sharing staff and collaborating on ministries across the region, while allowing each diocese to retain its own identity.

Although New Hampshire and Maine resemble Vermont demographically, each state has twice as many residents as Vermont and twice as many Episcopalians — about 11,000 in each of the two dioceses.

At the same, the Diocese of Vermont is proud of its recent achievements, the bishop said. Early in the pandemic, a few dozen Episcopalians who had been meeting regularly to pray on Zoom established a new online congregation they call the Green Mountain Online Abbey.

Separately, about 40 people signed up for a lay preaching course offered by the diocese this year. The diocese recently received a grant from the Episcopal Church to support a ministry in Killington that works with a local Indigenous community. ■

ENS Writer Egan Millard contributed to this story.

UBE continued from page F

respects and uplifts Black Episcopalians.

“White people need to be converted,” Rushing said. “For a variety of reasons we have found ourselves in the Episcopal Church surrounded by them — the majority of the members of the Episcopal Church are them. And we have a responsibility as Christians to convert them. Because if we are not about that, why bother with them?”

If the culture in the church surrounding race is not going to change, Rushing said, Black Episcopalians must make it clear that they will not be taken for granted.

He reminded participants that while Absalom Jones led his fellow African Americans out of a segregated Episcopal parish and created a new one, his contemporary Richard Allen chose a different route, creating a new denomination now known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

“We can still decide that,” Rushing said. “I think we need to say that to white people: We can still decide that we don’t have to be here. We don’t have to be here in this ecclesiology that is always working against us.”

The UBE conference and revival continued with more discussions, worship services and a gospel/spiritual singalong in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the “Lift Every Voice and Sing” hymnal.

Worship services were being livestreamed on the UBE Facebook page while other events were held on Zoom and limited to registrants. ■



Make the World a Better Place!

Use this free, flexible curriculum to empower Changemakers for Christ in your church.

6 Topics



Animal Welfare



Literacy



Older Adults



Disabilities and Chronic Disease



Unhoused and Food Insecurity



Girl Issues

Plus “Pick Your Own Topic”

Informational Webinar
 Saturday, September 18, 9am (PDT)
 Register at www.diocesanconvention.com/gifts-for-ministry

GFS has been working to make social change since 1875.
 Learn more: Email GFSbranchdev@gmail.com or visit www.gfsus.org




Episcopal clergy enter the virtual ‘town square’ of TikTok

By Egan Millard

Episcopal News Service

TikTok, the video editing and streaming app on which mostly millennials and Generation Z share funny dance challenges, viral moments and memes, might be the last place you'd expect to find a 45-year-old priest evangelizing.

But the Rev. David Peters isn't your average priest, and his style of evangelism is less about preaching and more about laughter.

"It's just another way of relating. It's also the town square," said Peters, a church planter in Pflugerville, Texas, near Austin. Peters became perhaps the first priest to go viral on the app when his videos — including "Outfits I'm Afraid to Wear" and "Anglican Priest Problems" — unexpectedly took off in the summer of 2019, garnering international media coverage.

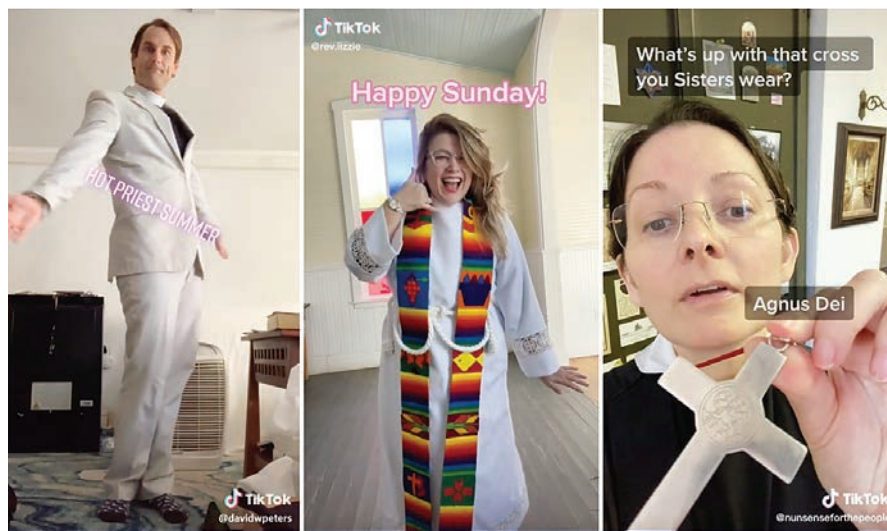
He and other Episcopal clergy have made a ministry out of providing an affirming alternative to harmful variants of Christianity and explaining what they love about their faith, often through the offbeat language of memes.

Peters, who leads a congregation that meets at a wine bar as well as online, wanted to reach more people in his community, especially young people. And since the pandemic, they increasingly gather in virtual spaces like TikTok. A November 2020 survey found that 69% of American teenagers use TikTok at least once a month; a 2021 study found that 48% of 18- to 29-year-olds use it.

"One of the reasons I went on TikTok was I felt a real burden for the teenagers of Pflugerville," Peters told Episcopal News Service. "Teenagers really do live in a separate universe, and there's probably good reasons for that. But as a church planter, I'm thinking of every group in my community, how is this church connecting with them?"

Peters had been making videos on other platforms and downloaded TikTok mainly for its ability to easily edit short video clips, "and the minute I did that, I was like, this is brilliant. I discovered that it was a very young community, and really funny, really positive. Joyful things really do well on there."

Peters is especially concerned with



Photo/ENS

The Rev. David Peters, the Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail and Sister Monica Clare are among the members of Episcopal clergy and religious orders who maintain a presence on TikTok.

young people's mental health, and he tackles serious subjects, including his own divorce and mental health struggles, alongside slapstick stunts and pop culture parodies — sometimes in the same video. He points out that he was not the first clergyperson to embrace TikTok as a way to meet young people where they are, but his success has inspired other clergy to take up TikTok ministry.

"I had seen some of his videos and thought, 'Wow, that's really charming and such a cool evangelism tool,'" said the Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail.

She is the curate at the Church of the Cross, a new church currently meeting online and at a ranch in Bee Cave, Texas, near Peters in the Austin suburbs. Since downloading the app "in the pandemic doldrums" of April 2020, she has developed a following of her own — nearly 36,000 strong — with her mix of affirmations, prayers, Q&As, social justice and cat antics.

"There was a very clear understanding in my mind that this was something I wanted to do as a deacon and then a priest, and as an extension of ministry," McManus-Dail, who is in her late 20s, told ENS.

Others, like Sister Monica Clare of the Episcopal Community of St. John Baptist in Mendham, N. J., stumbled into TikTok ministry unintentionally. The

55-year-old had never heard of TikTok until a friend encouraged her to get on it.

Her account, @nunsenseforthepeople, started with observations of an ornery turkey that stalked the convent grounds.

Originally intended just for four close friends, her videos — through the mysterious workings of the TikTok algorithm, or perhaps the Holy Spirit — were suddenly reaching hundreds of thousands of people.

Many seemed to be endlessly curious about her life, asking everything from her reasons for joining the convent to her skin care routine.

She responds with the deadpan humor she has developed over the course of a particularly varied life. She studied acting at New York University and moved to Los Angeles, where she "failed spectacularly" at acting but enjoyed doing improv and stand-up comedy.

After a 20-year career designing movie posters and promotional materials, she entered the convent at age 46, but she never lost that sense of humor. For her, life as a nun is full of joy and she wants to share it with the world.

"People really responded to the humor," she told ENS. "Some of my videos are still, of course, serious. I answer serious questions about the Episcopal Church. But I think people are put at

continued on page K

TIKTOK continued from page J

ease when somebody is funny because it makes them more human, and I think the church's public image has been really devoid of humor."

McManus-Dail was also drawn to TikTok's upbeat atmosphere "because I think the church is often perceived as really serious and focused on suffering and feeling bad about ourselves, and that's not how I encounter God. And 2020 was really hard, and I knew that I needed lighthearted things to get me through the day. And I thought that was something that we could offer."

Many progressive Episcopalians with ministry on TikTok, including Peters, Sister Monica Clare and McManus-Dail, focus especially on reaching out to LGBTQ+ people and people who have had bad church experiences.

"I wanted to be very clear from the beginning that I'm a queer-affirming clergyperson and that the Episcopal Church welcomes all people," McManus-Dail said. "To say, 'Not only are you welcome here, we want you here and you belong here; we're done with the debate.' I'm so humbled to hear people's stories of church harm and moved by their bravery to reach out and say, 'I still care about Scripture. I still care about God. The church has hurt me, but I'm not done with it.'"

Answering viewers' questions, especially about sexuality, is also a significant part of their ministry.

"People started asking me, 'Do you think the LGBTQ community is going to hell?' and they were absolutely shocked when I said The Episcopal Church is fully inclusive of the LGBTQ community," Sister Monica Clare said. "They just couldn't believe it. That's a message that really needs to get out there."

Other questions range from some of the oldest theological quandaries to more prosaic ones, Sister Monica Clare said,

like "How do you do your hair like that?" and "Can Episcopal nuns get married?"

"I have a list of like 30 questions right now," she said. "Somebody just asked what our cross represents. I'm also trying to throw in a bit of history because a lot of people have no clue what The Episcopal Church is and what we believe."

"I get a lot of questions

we keep it a secret," he said. But viewers want to see simple, sincere depictions of people just doing what they love, or what they're good at.

"How-to videos on YouTube are, like, the most watched thing," he said. "People are repairing their sinks with them, and Christianity needs to do that: to show people how we're doing our faith and not really talk about why they should."

However, TikTok ministries have brought people into Episcopal churches — at least virtually. Peters' church now has an active member from Scotland who encountered his TikTok videos and

has been attending virtual services since the pandemic started, as well as others who sometimes come to events. In McManus-Dail's virtual Bible study, about 75% of the participants found her through TikTok or Instagram. Her church also has "a fairly consistent stream" of visitors to virtual and in-person services who found her that way, including about five regular in-person worshippers.

Peters stressed that his goal is not necessarily to get people to come to his services, and he reminds viewers that there is probably an affirming church near them.

He recalled when a campus missionary at Texas A&M University told him about a woman who had come out to her evangelical church and had been rejected, but after learning that the Episcopal Church is LGBTQ+-affirming through Peters' videos, she joined the Episcopal campus community.

Though Peters, McManus-Dail and Sister Monica Clare say TikTok ministry isn't for everyone, they want others to know that it's not as difficult as it might seem.

"Be approachable," Sister Monica Clare advises. "TikTok viewers seem to love a person just talking sincerely into the camera. You don't have to get too elaborate."

"I think it's real simple," Peters added. "Social media is just stuff that you're interested in. And if you're not interested in church and you're a clergyperson, maybe your church isn't exciting enough to share! And I'm not saying your church should be exciting, but the Gospel should be." ■



about pain," McManus-Dail said, "about 'Why does God let me suffer? Why did God let people in the church hurt me?'"

"The one that I think is most common," Peters said, "is like, 'My grandfather died' or 'I'm going through a breakup' — not necessarily questions but prayer requests, and to me, that is what the Christian church is really supposed to be doing: being there for people."

All three agree that TikTok ministry is a form of evangelism — though their goal isn't necessarily to convert their viewers. It doesn't have to be preachy, Peters said.

"Progressive Christians today, especially Episcopalians, are so terrified of evangelizing our friends and neighbors and family or whoever we encounter, that

How ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing’ became an Episcopal hymn and a cultural anthem

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

As the song known as the “Black national anthem” achieves wider recognition in the United States, its significance is also being celebrated in the Episcopal Church.

“Lift Every Voice and Sing,” sung by generations of African Americans as a tribute to their struggles and triumphs, was introduced to white American Christians by Episcopalians and Lutherans 40 years ago, and a congressional bill endorsed by the Episcopal Church now proposes designating it as the U.S. national hymn.

Despite being a beloved African American anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was little known outside Black communities until the 1980s, when Black Lutheran and Episcopalian musicians pressed for its inclusion in their denominations’ hymnals.

The song was included in the original version of the eponymous Episcopal hymnal compiling African American spirituals, which was originally released in 1981 as a supplement to the 1940 hymnal. It was then included in the standard 1982 hymnal, which helped introduce the song to a wider audience.

At its most recent meeting in June, the Episcopal Church Executive Council passed a resolution supporting a bill introduced earlier this year by U.S. Rep. James Clyburn that would make “Lift Every Voice and Sing” the official national hymn.

“I see this resolution, and this attempt in Congress, as a way to accept — on the part of this whole country — an offering of an important poem and song to all the American people, just like Black Episcopalians offered this song to the Episcopal Church,” said Byron Rushing, the vice president of the House of Deputies who sponsored the resolution, at the meeting.

Though the resolution passed, it prompted some debate about whether it was appropriate for a secular nation to have a national hymn — especially in light of the church’s efforts to counter rising Christian nationalism.

“A hymn is inherently Christian, by definition by the Encyclopedia Britannica. And it’s a song of praise to God,” the

Rev. Mally Lloyd pointed out during the discussion on the resolution.

“I love to stand up and shout it. I love to declare it. But putting as a national hymn is where I am having trouble in terms of trying to encourage inclusivity and honoring of all of our nation.”

The song’s lyrics are not overtly Christian, but they do mention God and heaven several times. Despite its description as a hymn in Clyburn’s bill and its inclusion in hymnals, its origins are secular.

The lyrics were written by James Weldon Johnson — a Black man from Jacksonville, Fla., who became a leader in the Harlem Renaissance. Among other vocations, Johnson was a lawyer, a teacher, a poet, a diplomat and a civil rights organizer.

He was the leader of the NAACP for 10 years, the first Black professor hired by New York University, and the U.S. consul to Venezuela and later Nicaragua. He and his brother, composer J. Rosamond Johnson, also together wrote about 200 songs for Broadway musicals.

In 1900, while serving as a school principal in Jacksonville, Johnson was asked to speak at a celebration of Abraham Lincoln’s birthday. Instead of a speech, he wrote a poem, which his brother then set to music. It was sung by 500 schoolchildren at the event, but the Johnson brothers didn’t think it would ever spread beyond that. They were wrong.

“The school children of Jacksonville kept singing it, they went off to other schools and sang it, they became teachers and taught it to other children,” Johnson recalled in 1935. Booker T. Washington helped popularize it, its lyrics were printed in Black newspapers and it was selected as the official song of the NAACP.



Photo/Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
James Weldon Johnson, left, and J. Rosamond Johnson are seen at the piano.

“Within twenty years, it was being sung over the South and in some other parts of the country. Today the song, popularly known as the Negro National Hymn, is quite generally used. The lines of this song repay me in elation, almost of exquisite anguish, whenever I hear them sung by Negro children,” Johnson wrote.

It is not clear whether Johnson ever considered himself an Episcopalian, but he did help organize the 1917 Silent Parade in New York, in which about 10,000 African Americans marched down Fifth Avenue in protest against lynchings and racist violence, along with leaders from St. Philip’s Church, the oldest Black Episcopal parish in New York. Today, Johnson is included on the Episcopal Church’s Holy Women, Holy Men calendar, commemorated on June 25.

Though “Lift Every Voice and Sing” enjoyed a resurgence in the late 20th century due to its inclusion in church hymnals, it was sung in earlier decades at Black secular events as well as churches, Rushing told Episcopal News Service.

“Black churches always sang it, but when I was growing up, you couldn’t go to a large meeting of Black people where they didn’t sing it, either at the beginning or the end,” Rushing said. “It was always seen as a secular song.”

“The other custom that Black people

continued on page N

St. John's church in Washington gets full Lego treatment

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

In Matthew Taylor's imagination, the historic church in Washington, D.C., that sits across Lafayette Square from the White House is 144 "studs" long (about 45 inches). It is 15 inches wide, rises about 2 feet from its base and is made from as many as 5,000 bricks, many of them purchased online from after-market sellers around the country and the world.

The parishioners who worship in this version of St. John's Episcopal Church are made of plastic and, whether sitting or standing, are only the size of a thumb. Even so, this yearlong project was an outsized achievement for Taylor.

"This is the biggest Lego model I've ever built," Taylor, 31, said in an interview. With the model mostly complete, Taylor displayed it in mid-August at the annual BrickFair expo in Arlington, Va., alongside his Lego model of Christ Church in Alexandria, where he

now lives. The Lego St. John's caught the eye of CNN's Jake Tapper, who posted a photo of it to Twitter during a family visit to BrickFair.

The first brick, or cornerstone, of the real-life, full-size version was set in 1815. St. John's now is best known as "the church of the presidents," since many U.S. presidents have worshipped there.

Last year, it was the backdrop to Black Lives Matter protests that occupied Lafayette Square. During those protests, the church sustained minor damage from vandalism, and the site became a focal point as then-President Donald Trump posed for a photo outside St. John's after police had forcibly cleared protesters from the square.

Taylor's model of St. John's includes Lego versions of the police officers and police vehicles that now regularly patrol outside the church, but he said he didn't set out to make a political statement. A more central goal in his design was detailed authenticity, and in that, Taylor's biggest hurdle was getting the color right.

It's hard to find Lego bricks in St.



Photo/Courtesy of Matthew Taylor

Matthew Taylor, a parishioner at St. John's Episcopal Church, spent about a year designing and assembling his model of the church with about 5,000 Lego bricks.

John's unique shade of yellow.

"I think it's probably one of the few churches or few buildings that are that sort of pale yellow. It's super distinctive in D.C.," Taylor said. The color is also rare in the Lego world. The Denmark-based toy company has produced 6,233 different brick shapes in its standard yellow, Taylor said, but only 363 in the "cool yellow" he needed for his St. John's model.

That still may sound like a lot of shapes, but for a Lego builder, an accurate architectural rendering can depend on finding the perfect brick. Taylor, for example, was having trouble with some of the church's arches and angles until Lego released a Fiat 500 car kit that included some of the yellow shapes he was looking for. Most other bricks were mined from Lego's "Friends" series, with its heavy reliance on pastels.

The model captures other key features of St. John's, from its six street-facing white columns to subtle details of the interior, such as the pulpit, pipe organs and chandelier. Taylor started the build last August, while the pandemic was prevent-

ing the congregation from gathering for worship inside the church, so he conducted much of his research on interior details using online resources, such as the Historic American Buildings Survey.

"Now that we're back in the church, I've been able to take pictures of things," Taylor said. He began noticing details that previously had escaped his attention, like a big brass cross positioned in the balcony. The model took about a year to build and revise, and he's still adding some finishing touches. Only half of the pews are installed.

"Building sort of happens in fits and spurts because of shipping delays," he said. "It's been really rewarding to see it all come together."

Taylor began attending worship services at St. John's nearly a decade ago while earning his law degree from Georgetown University. The church "was a real place to find solace and peace," away from the grind of law school, Taylor said, and he continues to be a

member of the congregation.

He has only the haziest memory of assembling his first Lego set, but he was about 3, and he thinks it was a space police theme. As he grew older, he was drawn to Lego Star Wars kits and once won "best in show" at an arts and crafts expo for teenagers at the state fair in Tennessee, where he grew up.

After moving to Washington in 2012 to begin his law studies, he began attending services at St. John's and was confirmed as an Episcopalian. He graduated from law school in 2015 and began working for the federal government, now spe-

continued on page N

CLASSIFIEDS

PIPE ORGANS FOR SALE by Pfeffer, Hilgreen-Lane, Debierre, Koehnken, Grimm, and Redman. Contact Redman Pipe Organs, Fort Worth, Texas **817 996 3085**

ADVERTISING INFO and/or to submit classified ads to Episcopal Journal Advertising Department contact patrick@kevinshanley.com

SING continued from page L

had was they always stood” while they sung it, Rushing added, “and there would be events where people sang both the national anthem and this.”

During discussion of the resolution at Executive Council in June, member Diane Pollard also recalled hearing it in both religious and non-religious contexts, and that it was revered in a way similar to the national anthem.

“I was taught that when this song is sung, you stand up,” Pollard remembered. “And my grandmother was not telling me to stand up because it was a song from the church. Far be it; many churches were the last to get on the bandwagon with equality for nonwhite people. She was telling me to stand up out of respect.”

The song has enjoyed new popularity in recent years from secular sources again, largely due to the Black Lives Matter movement. Beyoncé performed it at the Coachella music festival in 2018. The NFL will play it before all games this season, after doing so during a week last year. And in January, the legislation to make it America’s national hymn was introduced in the House of Representatives.

Making it the national hymn “would be an act of bringing the country together,” Clyburn said when introducing the legislation. “The gesture itself would be an act of healing. Everybody can identify with that song.” Episcopalians can learn more about how to support the legislation at the Episcopal Public Policy Network.

Rushing said he was approached by



Photo/YouTube

Beyoncé sings “Lift Every Voice and Sing” during the 2018 Coachella music festival in Indio, Calif.

Carl MaultsBy, the director of music at St. Richard’s Episcopal Church in Winter Park, Fla., encouraging the church to adopt a resolution supporting the bill. Rushing added that while he understands the concerns about adopting a “national hymn,” he said the word “hymn” in this case is only used because no song except “The Star-Spangled Banner” can be called a national anthem in the U.S.

“I understand the difficulty with the word ‘hymn,’” he said during the Executive Council meeting. “I think that if you ask most Black people what they would call this, they would have said an anthem. But that, of course, creates a slight problem in this legislation if we use that term. ... We’re recognizing an important song in American culture.”

The Rev. Charles Graves IV, another Executive Council member, also argued in support of the resolution, saying that there are already other national symbols that invoke God, but the purpose of Clyburn’s legislation is not religious but cultural and educational.

“We’re in the middle of this conversation about critical race theory and what will be taught in schools in terms of the history of race and the current realities of race in this country,” Graves said. “And so adding this hymn to our national canon helps to ensure that in the same way that schoolchildren are taught about the bald eagle and taught about the Constitution ... they will also be taught about James Weldon Johnson and about the struggle out of which he wrote this hymn.” ■

LEGOS continued from page M



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS

Volunteer Matthew Taylor, a lawyer who attends St. John’s Episcopal Church Lafayette Square across from the White House, in 2019 views the inside of the Lego model of Washington National Cathedral’s Bethlehem Chapel.

specializing in veterans’ law.

Two years ago, his faith and his hobby intersected at Washington National Cathedral. As part of the cathedral’s ongoing fundraiser, he volunteered to help paying visitors build segments of a growing Lego model of the Gothic structure, which he now calls the “big Lego cousin” to his St. John’s model.

When finished, the National Cathedral model will incorporate an estimated 500,000 Lego bricks. About 100,000 have been assembled so far. The project “has been in a bit of suspended animation” during the pandemic, spokesman Kevin Eckstrom told ENS, but the cathedral hopes to reopen to visitors in the fall and let Lego builders resume their work.

Taylor’s Lego projects don’t come close to the scale of the cathedral’s build, and his first stab at a Lego St. John’s was even smaller. A few years ago, he created a tiny rendition of the church as a gift for a fellow student in his Education for Ministry class who was moving to Minnesota.

Although the Lego St. John’s took Taylor about a year to build, it wasn’t constant labor. With a design, bricks and instructions in hand, he figures he now would be able to rebuild the same model during a long weekend of clicking bricks together.

He has shared photos of the model in progress with the clergy at the church, as well as on Facebook, and he recently posted a gallery from the BrickFair to his personal blog. The model has not yet made an appearance inside the church it is modeled after, but Taylor hopes someday to display it at St. John’s. ■

**REAL ISSUES,
RELIABLE COVERAGE**

EPISCOPALNEWSSERVICE.ORG

ENS
EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE



LOVE IGNITES!

**THE 169th ANNUAL CONVENTION
OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA**

October 29-31, 2021

Des Moines Marriott Downtown

visit: iowaepiscopal.org/diocesan-convention

HIGHLIGHTS

- +Friday pre-convention Eucharist 7pm St. Paul's Cathedral (Bishop-elect Monnot presiding, Bishop Scarfe preaching)—also live-streamed
- +Sunday Eucharist 11am (Bishop Scarfe presiding, Bishop-elect Monnot preaching)—also live-streamed
- +Special Saturday evening events to be announced