



Iowa

Connections

SPRING 2021
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1

LENT 2021
LIVING KINDNESS



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From Bishop Scarfe

For five weeks during Epiphany, more than sixty to seventy members of the diocese consistently met for conversations about life as Church during the pandemic, and asking questions about how they see life as Church post-pandemic. The Epiphany Conversations are being covered elsewhere in this edition of Iowa Connections, and I have mentioned them before in recent e-news articles. Suffice to say, that the exchanges held mostly in small breakout Zoom groups of four or five people have been extremely substantial and inspiring. We have harvested many ideas over the weeks, and I hope that we can review them together later in the year. One such plan is that we use Saturday May 1st for such an opportunity since that is the vacated original date for the election of the tenth bishop of Iowa, which has been postponed to July 31st.

It is almost a year ago, on March 16th, that the people of Trinity, Waterloo and I shared in worship together in person in what was my last such visitation up to the current time. Since then, visitations have been virtual, or involved a small group of us in person streaming services from a sanctuary or chapel. Coffee hours on Zoom have been good experiences, and probably produced freer and fuller community conversations than even possible in person. But Zoom does not include everyone, nor does it allow for the chance encounters of personal visits. Certainly, it is an odd way to say goodbye on this last round of visitations as your bishop. It actually feels like leaving a party out the side door without saying thank you to the host.

Eighteen years ago, I chose three signatory verses to set out my underpinning theology for ministry. First, from the Gospel of John, chapter 15:16, where Jesus reminds us that our vocation doesn't actually stem from our choice, but from His choosing of us. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you". That is always worth remembering when we are tempted to make things all about us and our ability to cope or even control our situations. When you have followed Christ from an early age, and shaped all of your life's choices around the call to minister that is an important and constantly needed reminder. You can forget who called whom. I once had a recurring dream of God on a Vaudeville stage, with me standing in the stage wings, whispering from the side—"Remember who booked you!"

That is where the second signatory Scripture, also at my consecration, comes to the rescue. For in Philippians 2: 5-11, the apostle Paul invites the Philippians to "have the mind which is in Jesus Christ", who though being God, did not count that a status to hold onto but emptied himself and took human form, a servant human form in which he carried out the ultimate sacrifice of love and self-surrender by embracing the Cross. It is an invitation to let the mind of Christ—into whom we are poured at baptism or whenever we yield ourselves to him—shape our thought processes. It is the way

of sacrificial love that Paul is encouraging, and the bearing of one another's burdens.

The final Scripture from Isaiah 58: 1-12, which we will encounter this Ash Wednesday and is good to reflect on throughout Lent, offers that God's bottom line in terms of our religious nature is that we resist the temptation of indulging our religious appetites for elaborate worship while turning a blind eye to the real life needs of those around us. "Is this not the fast I require of you, says the Lord, to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" The Lord goes on to reference sharing bread with the hungry, bringing homeless people into your house, covering the naked, and removing the pointing of the finger and the speaking of evil.

The Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, Dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union, in her contribution to the book we have been basing our Epiphany conversations on, *We Shall Be Changed* edited by Mark Edington, needs only a two page essay to make her point along the lines of Isaiah. Regarding the pandemic, she writes:

And so, while the realities of the COVID crisis have compelled the "church" to focus on the theological appropriateness and spiritual efficacy of "at-home" eucharistic feasts or spiritual communion, we cannot be so focused on eucharistic and other rituals of the church that we forget about the meaning of our gathering in the first place.

She goes on to describe that meaning as linked with "anamnesis" or memorial sacrifice—"do this in remembrance of me" which is an invitation into the sacrifice of Jesus. It is a challenge to go into the world remembering Jesus and bringing His healing and life-giving justice to the "least of these." She references of course, the great discrepancies or inequities the pandemic has revealed with regard to its impact on people of color and those living in poverty.

It reminds me that I have a very sheltered perspective on this pandemic. There are millions of people who have had no choice but to be out and about seeking their daily bread, riding public transport, standing on check-out lines or manufacturing or food producing lines. And I don't think that they are at the front lines for the vaccines, I am sorry to say.





The Simple Way

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

Online worship from a different church each Sunday will be featured on the diocesan website and on the diocesan Facebook page.

March

- 1 Parochial Reports due
- 6 HOPE Mini-Retreat 9:00am
- 7 Worship with St. Alban's, Spirit Lake 11:00am
- 13 Board of Directors Meeting (online)
- 14 Worship with Trinity, Muscatine 10:00am
- 18 Listening at Lunch 12:00pm
- 21 Worship with St. John's, Mason City 10:00am
- 28 Palm Sunday with St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 29 Chrism Mass 11:00am

April

- 1 Maundy Thursday with St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 7:00pm
- 2 Good Friday with St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 7:00pm
- 3 Easter Vigil with St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 8:00pm
- 4 Easter Day with St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 10 Dismantling Racism: Training for Church Leaders 10:00am
- 11 Worship with St. Alban's, Davenport 10:00am
- 18 Worship with Trinity Episcopal Church, Iowa City 10:00am
- 25 Worship with St. Anne's by the Fields, Ankeny 10:00am

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

In This Issue

- 2 From the Bishop
- 4 We Shall Be Changed
- 5 From Bishop Scarfe, *continued*
- 6 Kindness Campaign, A Tribute to Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya
- 9 Bishop Search News, Bishop Search Frequently Asked Questions
- 12 A "Season of Truth and Healing" Begins
- 13 Trinity Iowa City celebrates the marriage of parishioners at the Sunday Eucharist via live stream
- 14 2020 GILEAD Grants Awarded
- 15 GILEAD Grants 2021
- 16 Stewardship Share

Iowa Connections

Spring 2021

The Rev. Meg Wagner, Editor

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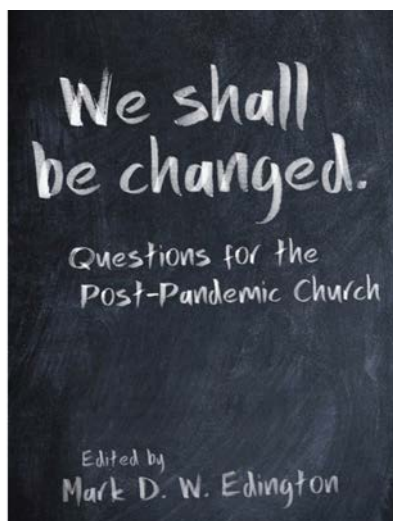
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We Shall Be Changed

by Kathleen Milligan

For five consecutive Wednesday nights in January and February, a group of Iowa Episcopalians gathered online for a discussion of the book *We Shall be Changed*, edited by the Rt. Reverend Mark Edington, bishop of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. The book is the product of conversations arising from our common experience of the changes which have been brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. These conversations are presented under five topics, each with two or three essays under the broad theme. The essays point out some of the problems and possibilities presented by these difficult times. Some sixty people made a week-by-week commitment to share in these conversations. The evenings were each structured around one of the five “Conversations” the book presents. We were sorted into small groups and, in addition to looking at the questions raised by these conversations, we were invited to engage with scripture, to develop our theological skills in the context of these challenges.



Available from Church Publishing:
churchpublishing.org/weshallbechanged

The book itself was written to acknowledge that the pandemic has changed congregational life in ways that are likely to leave permanent marks. In a real way, it is fitting that this has taken place during the season of Epiphany. Much that has been on the horizon for a while has now come to confront us. As the pandemic left us wondering when we can return to “normal,” we are being reminded that “normal” is always changing; but in this instance the pandemic was an abrupt change that allowed us to see things with new clarity.

On the first evening the first conversation asked us to consider what new possibilities have emerged for us in this time when we are seemingly so isolated from each other. The embrace of new forms of technology for our own remote gatherings has also shown us the benefits that these tools can offer for outreach and evangelism. How will we enlarge on these possibilities as we look to a new future? The pandemic opened a new window on the issues of privilege that need to be confronted. It is clear that so much of the work that keeps us going is done by people on the margins; those very people who have been most vulnerable to COVID infections. How will we continue to be engaged in addressing this inequality? And finally, our enforced isolation has raised the questions about how our sacramental understanding undergirds our ministries at all times, and how we might embody the sacramental presence of God in the world around us.

Our second conversation turned more specifically to our worship, and theological issues around the nature of sacraments. Among other

affirmations was the recognition that our service and work in the world fulfilling our baptismal identity is a true and crucial form of worship. Amid the longing for return to our normal weekly practices of worship and reception of the Eucharist, we have rediscovered forms of prayer, in the Daily Office among others, that remind us that prayer always joins us to the community of the faithful who also pray. As people have embraced the Daily Office, either in groups on Zoom or in their own worship at home, they are discovering ways of growing in faith and in discipleship. Some may be discovering for the first time the riches in our own tradition. At the same time, questions about the validity of sacraments in a virtual world feed larger questions about the nature of sacraments themselves, as well as what it means to be gathered. Can virtual communion and community be experienced online? For many the answer is clearly yes.

The third evening took us to consideration of structural issues. We are seeing signs that the congregation structures which have traditionally served us, have been under stress for a long time. The ways in which we raise money for our mission; the ways we use our buildings and deploy clergy have already been areas of concern. How do we share and cooperate in new ways to continue and to enlarge our work? How do we repurpose and reimagine the use of our holy spaces to meet community needs more effectively? What changes can we make to our parish structures that will help us to be more responsive?

The book was written shortly after the killing of George Floyd. The

We Shall Be Changed, *continued*

protests that followed, along with the new clarity about who are the most vulnerable among us, gives new urgency to our call to engage the work of racial justice and becoming beloved community. The fourth evening confronted us with these issues, as well as suggesting the related topic of sharing of resources between congregations and communities which have them in abundance, and those who do not. Our sometimes-insular view of the world from within the walls of our churches has been altered by the sudden crises we are confronting. If we have learned to be more flexible, more creative and more aware of those outside our doors, who do not look like us or share our frames of reference, we will have given ourselves the possibility of a new and healthier future going forward.

The final conversation of the series engaged the issues of leadership, and acutely, pastoral leadership. The question of who can celebrate the Eucharist becomes a little sharper when it is accompanied by the question of how it is to be celebrated. The history of the church has shown a wide adaptability over the centuries—from house churches to cathedrals, from monastic cells to neighborhood gatherings for prayer and study groups. We are discovering that the sharing of faith is not dependent on forms, liturgies, particular credentials. So how do we shape and equip ourselves in the body of Christ for the work that confronts us now in such a crucial time? How do we continue to take the gospel to the world outside the red doors? How do we equip each other to be bearers of the light of

God in the post-pandemic age? The Diocese of Iowa has been dealing with these questions for a long time. Ministry Development Teams, the Summer Ministry School and Retreat have played a large part in encouraging the development and deployment of leaders. Coming out of the Revival, the Growing Iowa Leaders and Engaging All Disciples emphases have brought resources for developing new skills to local levels all over the diocese. In so many ways we have been preparing for different ways to be church. Now the pandemic has shown us just how important these new skills are likely to be, and these evenings of conversation have helped us to think more deeply about them.

The Rev. Cn. Kathleen Milligan serves as the Rector of St. Stephen's in Newton.

From Bishop Scarfe, *continued*

During Lent, I want to draw your attention to two ways, at least, of responding to the rebuke and challenge of Isaiah's words. First, we continue to offer diocesan-wide leadership to pull us through another phase of this pandemic time. This year "a child will lead us," as we are invited to participate in a Lenten Calendar of Kindness, created by our young people under the creative leadership of Amy Mellies, our Youth Missioner. It is a bold way of going into the world "remembering Jesus."

The second invitation is to a series of conversations on Living Kindness. We'll examine the spiritual gift and practice of kindness and have conversations with each other using the model offered to us by Presiding Bishop Curry called, "From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference" to engage in one-on-one listening and sharing across the differences that separate us. As the



project's publicity says: "In a cultural moment shadowed by pandemic, fractious politics, and deep division within families, communities, and nations, we have the opportunity as people of faith to partner in simple ways to celebrate difference, listen with curiosity and promote healing. Each of us can make a difference." We are invited to ask our neighbor four questions: What do you love? What have you lost? Where does it hurt? And, what do you dream?

It is another way of remembering Jesus, for if I think about it, these are the questions I imagine the One who loved to start each conversation with "What can I do for you?" would go on to ask.

May this be a transformative and holy Lent, fitting after a year like no other in our experience.

In the peace and love of Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe
Bishop of Iowa

The Kindness Campaign

by Susan Forshey

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23

St. John’s Episcopal Church, Dubuque, received a 2021 Evangelism Grant from The Episcopal Church. The grant will fund a two-week Kindness Campaign this spring. The campaign will reach out to Dubuque through prayer; small teams doing small acts of kindness downtown and across the city (shoveling sidewalks, paying for someone’s coffee, etc.); print and online media promotion about kindness; an invitation to children and others to create art that reflects kindness; as well as equipping the people of St. John’s to participate in this campaign as evangelists of the kindness of God.

The Kindness Campaign is one of many initiatives that has come out of congregational reflection on our mission. In 2018, St. John’s spent a year in discernment about our mission for what kind of church we believe God is inviting us to become. We articulated our new vision in the following way, “St. John’s will be a renewed family of disciples, active in our neighborhood, visible in our city, and reaching beyond Dubuque, with the transforming love of God in Jesus Christ.”

For decades St. John’s has hosted a community meal on the 5th Sunday of the month. We learned through our



St. John's in Dubuque, Iowa.

visioning process that we do not know our neighbors as well as we would like. We engaged in conversation and surveys with our 5th Sunday meal participants to begin that process of friendship and partnership. These conversations and others have led us to engagement with the downtown, which is our immediate neighborhood, as an essential part of our mission and will be a major focus for our Kindness Campaign.

One of our neighborhood ministry partners, St. Mark Youth Enrichment, will participate with us in leading the grant. St. Mark is a secular youth and families organization which serves hundreds of Dubuque children and their families with afterschool and summer learning enrichment activities. They will be encouraging neighborhood children to create art about kindness during the Campaign.

In the last two years we also began to have local college students from Loras College and University of Dubuque worship with us. In response, we began to offer college study nights, a choral scholars’ program, and a ministry internship program. Many of these young adults were part of the brainstorming group for this grant project and have leadership positions in doing the work of the grant. One of these young adults, Shayla Butler, came up with the Kindness Campaign concept. She is a student at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary and currently the St. John’s GILEAD grant intern for social media and marketing.

We understand that the kindness must begin with ourselves. As part of the Campaign preparation, we will engage the entire congregation in theological reflection on kindness, evangelism and prayer. The two-week Campaign will culminate in a Sunday of Kindness, with reports from the Campaign and prayers of thanksgiving for it. The Kindness Sunday will feature an inspirational message connecting the story of Jesus Christ with our stories of kindness.

What small act of kindness can you do today?

The Rev. Susan Forshey serves as a deacon at St. John’s, Dubuque.

A Tribute to Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya (1951-2021)

by David Oakland, Mary Jane Oakland, and Stacey Gerhart

In his homily for the funeral of Bishop Ellinah, Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of the Province of Southern Africa, praised her as an exceptional mother and grandmother and then told the Diocese of Swaziland they were blessed to have her as a

mother Bishop to experience in her ministry the same tenderness, the same measures of love, the same strength, the same graciousness as her children knew every day. For the Diocese of Swaziland, as well as those in the broader Anglican Communion, and for us in

Iowa with our three-way companion diocese relationship with Swaziland and Brechin, we are still trying to understand how God has worked in our lives through this remarkable Servant of God.

Tribute, *continued*

From David and Mary Jane Oakland:

Dave first became acquainted with the clergy and people of the Diocese of Swaziland in the 1998 trip of Iowans, and from that time on has worked with enthusiasm with the One World One Church Commission. On her first trip to Swaziland in 2008, Mary Jane met Ellinah, when she was serving as Bishop Meshack Mabuza's chaplain for the 40th anniversary celebration for the Diocese of Swaziland. In 2012 Ellinah was elected to be the next Bishop of Swaziland and the first female Anglican Bishop in all of Africa. Julianne Allaway, representing Bishop Scarfe, Dr. Paula Sanchini, and the Oaklands represented Iowa at her consecration by Archbishop Makgoba. Her first few days as Bishop were a whirlwind because of the visitors from many places, and all the changes in her own diocese. The BBC, as well as other news organizations, were clamoring for an interview with this

African woman bishop. When we arrived back in Iowa we knew we wanted to go back to Swaziland to serve under Bishop Ellinah, and we were invited to do that for two months in early 2016.

Ellinah was very successful in her secular work, rising to the position of chief financial officer for the city of Manzini, but God was calling for her to walk further into ministry. This led her into more study, ordination to the priesthood and parish work and then election and consecration as Bishop. By the time she was ordained, she more than knew her way around a spreadsheet and was experienced in grant writing. Her grant applications involved funding for care of the environment as well as using the resources available to care for the people. In every case her concern was to fund projects which could be catalysts for development for the people of Swaziland (now eSwatini). We worked supporting her efforts to reorganize

social development at the diocesan and parish levels.

From her city government career in Manzini, she was one of a group of successful women in Manzini, who named themselves, "The Golden Girls." Through grant funding from UNICEF, each year they brought together junior high girls from impoverished areas of Manzini for a day of care, education and motivation. She told the girls about growing up in rural Swaziland, and how her parents scraped together the funds for tuition so that she could attend school in Manzini. "I went to school as the only child with no shoes, but decided I was going to get an education so I would have shoes and yes, there are plenty in my wardrobe. What are you willing to work hard for in your lives?" The rapt look on the faces of the girls as she spoke was a memory to tuck into my heart. She spent her life advocating for educational opportunities for girls, and for gender equality more broadly. But this was not her only passion. She is remembered as the "Green Bishop" for her advocacy and work in issues related to the environment and climate change in her diocese and internationally. As the first woman Bishop, there were many challenges to face. Ellinah was warm, personable, honest and strong. Part of her way of moving through the challenges in her own diocese was through the strong personal ties with the Bishops of Iowa and Brechin, as well as the personal friendships she forged with many from Brechin and Iowa in our work together. We often wondered how she had strength to keep going, and when we returned to Swaziland we were able to see glimpses. Every Thursday morning, a group of mostly elder women gathered in the chapel of the diocesan offices and residence, to pray for +Ellinah and her ministry among them. She leaned on



continued on page 8

Tribute, *continued*

the strength of their prayers. She was a powerful preacher, a fiery evangelist, with a life centered in faith and prayer.

And from Stacey Gerhart:

Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya, the late bishop of Swaziland was a mentor and dear friend of mine. Having twice visited Swaziland (now renamed eSwatini), I last went for a 3-month working visit in 2019 in response to +Ellinah's invitation to come for a longer stay. Eagerly I accepted the opportunity to be in the presence of this great teacher and absorb all I could learn. +Ellinah was an advocate for women and girls raising awareness of the prevalence of gender violence and oppression embedded in their culture. She taught me to expect and insist upon being treated as well as male clergy, meaning leave my shoes on when entering a home and sit in a chair rather than on a mat, the customary place for women.

She was a pillar of strength with a grounding in faith that reached the core of the earth. Prayer and bible study were foundational to her days. She was a visionary inspiring others to consider the environment as an equal partner in everything we do. With the patience of Job, she would say, "Remember, change doesn't happen overnight. It takes time." A brilliant leader, she empowered others to own the vision and to believe in themselves that all things are possible with God. +Ellinah led by example. She wasn't afraid of getting her hands dirty planting trees or mixing cement to make concrete blocks. She showed what hard work is and the benefits that are reaped from it. Before formally engaging with influential people, wisely, she did her homework learning about their goals and what motivated them so she could strategically plan how best to get her ideas across.

Using her genuine warmth and deep sincerity she could draw people in and then preach the tough prophetic

message that needed to be heard. Like Mary her response to God was yes, use me. +Ellinah was well acquainted with grief having lost a son and two brothers in the last few years. Her husband who lives in Kenya nearly died a few years ago from a mysterious ailment that paralyzed him from the waist down. In time and with many prayers Henry was healed although residual effects remain. A highlight for them after Henry's health improved was being able to take a trip together to Israel organized for Anglican bishops. +Ellinah was well respected in the Anglican Communion and, in fact, was invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury to preach at the opening Eucharist of the next Lambeth Conference. Tragically, due to the pandemic the conference was postponed.

+Ellinah had an incredibly positive impact on many people worldwide; she was a true inspiration. We stand on the shoulders of so many who have gone before us. Thank you, +Ellinah, for answering God's call.

Bishop Ellinah wanted the church (both diocese and local) to be more self-supporting, self-sustaining. She worked

on that objective by getting the young people involved in Green Anglicans and by hiring a staff member to encourage water harvesting, gardening, and other projects for improving the health of the community. She continued the Neighborhood Care Points where local people (mostly women) prepare a daily meal for young children (school age and younger). These were started in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a way to keep the next generation alive. The One World One Church Commission for the Diocese of Iowa pledges \$20,000 (US) annually—primarily from contributions—to provide food for these Care Points. In the midst of the current pandemic, the need for food assistance continues to be great. Please do consider support for this ministry of the Diocese of Swaziland in memory of Bishop Ellinah.

Mr. David Oakland and the Revs. Mary Jane Oakland and Stacey Gerhart serve on the One World One Church Commission.



Bishop Search News

from the Standing Committee

We want to update you all as to the progress made in preparation of the election of the Tenth Bishop of Iowa. Since the publication of the last “Iowa Connections,” the Search Timeline was amended on the advice of the Standing Committee, to move the election and consecration back by 3 months. We hope this will provide for the possibility of in-person opportunities to meet the finalists, and for an in-person electing convention. As a result, the new date for the Electing Convention will be Saturday, July 31, beginning at 1 p.m. It will be held at the Des Moines Marriott Downtown, in order to allow for adequate physical distancing for the attendees.

The Bishop Search and Nominating Committee is coming to the end of its work, having produced a wonderful diocesan profile that attracted a number of well-qualified candidates. After much deliberation, the Committee hosted seven people at a virtual Candidates Retreat on the last week in January, and the process of selecting the finalists is well under way. The public sharing of the list will be delayed, probably until sometime in mid-May, in order to protect candidates’ privacy until closer to the date of the election. At the point of the announcement of the finalists, there will be a two-week window

during which Petition Candidates may be added. In order to nominate by petition a person or group must submit a petition signed by no fewer than 100 Communicants in good standing representing a minimum of five congregations of the Diocese of Iowa. If you have someone in mind, you may wish to begin thinking now about how to go about that process. Any person so nominated will also be subject to the background checks and physical/psychological examinations required of all the finalists.

Right now, the Transitions Committee, headed up by the Reverend Elaine Caldbeck, is busy making plans for introducing the finalists to Iowa and Iowa to the finalists. We expect that Meet and Greets will be held in various places around the diocese during the first two weeks of July. We hope that it will be safe for people to gather to meet in person, though we acknowledge that masks and distancing are likely still to be necessary. These events will also be live-streamed so that those who do not feel yet feel comfortable in large groups will still have the opportunity to hear the candidates. The final dates and places for these events will be announced in good time for your planning.

We will look forward to the presence of our Presiding Bishop, the Most Reverend

Michael B. Curry as he presides over the Consecration of the Tenth Bishop of Iowa on Saturday, December 18th. That event is scheduled to take place at Plymouth Congregational Church in Des Moines. Plymouth can provide adequate space and parking for such an event. Details of that service will become available as the time comes closer. Please continue to keep this election process in your prayers. Pray for the Committees as they finish their work. Pray especially for those who will be final candidates, and for those who will be delegates to the electing convention. Pray as well for the diocesan staff and Bishop Scarfe and Donna during this time of transition for all of us.

Standing Committee Members: Rev. Anne Williams, Ms. Karen Brooke, Rev. Kathleen Milligan, Ms. Aileen Chang-Matus, Rev. Elizabeth Duff Popplewell, Mr. Ed Gillott



Bishop Search Frequently Asked Questions

by Ruth Ratliff

What are the duties of bishops in the Episcopal Church?

Bishops oversee the work of the church. They bring us together as a community beyond our individual congregations and maintain our connections to the early church. The word for bishop in Greek—the language of the New Testament—is *episkopos*, meaning

“overseer.” The name of our church, Episcopal, means we are a church governed by bishops, ordained in the “historic episcopate.” This means that every Episcopal bishop can trace his or her ordination back through a process that began with Peter, the first bishop, and has continued, generation after generation, with bishops ordaining

new bishops through the laying on of hands. The Episcopal Church consists of 111 dioceses worldwide (100 within the United States) and each of these dioceses is led by a bishop.

The service “The Ordination of a Bishop” (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 512) gives the questions the bishop-

continued on page 10

Bishop Search FAQs, *continued*

elect must answer and the promises that she or he makes before ordination. The bishop is to share in the leadership of the church, provide for the administration of the sacraments, ordain priests and deacons, and be “a faithful pastor and wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ.” He or she is also called to “boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people.” The bishop is expected to take a role in the wider Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

The Diocese of Iowa is now searching for a Diocesan Bishop. A diocese may also elect and consecrate a Bishop Coadjutor, an assistant bishop with the right of succession upon the retirement or resignation of the bishop. It may also appoint a Suffragan Bishop, an assistant who performs diocesan administrative duties but who does not succeed a retiring bishop. Our Diocese does not require either of these additional leaders at this time.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church spell out additional duties for a Diocesan Bishop: visit every congregation at least once every three years, write occasional pastoral letters, and make an annual report to the diocese. In addition, the bishop is pastor to the pastors—the clergy of the diocese. She or he confirms and receives new members, administers the business affairs of the diocese, takes a leadership role in the wider community, and offers vision and strategy for accomplishing diocesan goals. (Not included in the canons but often expected: the bishop blesses mission projects, attends BBQ pork dinners, hangs out with youth and young adults, meets with congregational leaders in good times and bad, and gets up early on Sunday mornings in winter to drive along icy roads to be on time for congregational visitations.)

What qualifications must a person have to be a bishop?

The person must be an Episcopal priest or bishop in good standing between the ages of 30 and 70. (The average age of a bishop at election is 55.) Beyond this, the Bishop Search Team will seek persons who have demonstrated the qualities and abilities needed to fulfill the duties of a Diocesan Bishop. A bishop must retire no more than 90 days after his or her 72nd birthday. (The average age at retirement is 66 years of age.)

Who is on the Bishop Search Team?

The Rev. Vincent Bete (St. Anne’s by the Fields, Ankeny), Ms. Sara Early (St. Alban’s, Spirit Lake), Mr. Steve Halstead (St. Stephen’s, Newton), the Very Rev. John Horn (Trinity Cathedral, Davenport), Ms. Hannah Landgraf (St. Andrew’s, Des Moines), Ms. Katy Lee (Christ Church, Cedar Rapids), Ms. Deb Leksell (Church of the Good Shepherd, Webster City), Mr. Andrew Petersen (Trinity Cathedral, Davenport), Mr. C. J. Petersen (Trinity Church, Carroll), Ms. Donna Prime (Trinity, Iowa City), Dr. Paula Sanchini (Christ Church, Cedar Rapids), The Rev. Holly Scherff (St. John’s, Shenandoah), The Rev. Jeanie Smith (St. Timothy’s, West Des Moines), The Rev. Fred Steinbach (St. Andrew’s, Chariton), The Rev. Jane Stewart (New Song, Coralville), The Rev. Kim Turner-Baker (St. John’s, Ames), The Rev. Bonnie Wilkerson (St. Luke’s, Fort Madison), Mr. Kevin Sanders, the Team’s Chairperson (St. Luke’s, Cedar Falls)

What is the selection process for the new bishop?

Nominations were closed on November 13, 2020. The Search Team has reviewed resumes and ministry profiles, listened to recordings of sermons, checked references, and conducted

Zoom interviews to learn about the candidates. At the end of January, they spent a weekend with that select group in a Candidates Retreat where they participated in various activities and exercises as a group. This allowed the Team to see how each candidate relates to others in various situations. At the Retreat, the Team also interviewed each candidate. Following the Retreat, the Team will narrow the list to a slate of three to five candidates, each of whom has passed background checks and all of whom are deemed qualified to be Bishop of Iowa. The slate must be announced at least six weeks before the July 31 Electing Convention.

For a period of 2 weeks after the slate has been announced, additional candidates may be nominated by petition. A thorough background check will be conducted of any petition candidate selected before his or her name is formally added to the final slate.

You can follow the search’s progress on the Bishop’s Search tab on the diocesan website at: iowaepiscopal.org Updates also will be provided in the diocesan e-news.

Will we know the names of people the Bishop Search Team is considering?

No, not until the final slate of three to five candidates is announced. The Bishop Search Team operates under strict confidentiality and cannot confirm or deny that anyone is, or was, under consideration. This is done as a courtesy to nominees, whose congregations and dioceses may not know that the priest is exploring a call.

When can members of the Diocese meet these candidates?

The Bishop Search Transition Committee will arrange a series of “Meet & Greets” to take place in early July. These events will be designed to enable Episcopalians throughout Iowa

Bishop Search FAQs, *continued*

to meet the candidates. The Committee will announce details and formats as they are finalized.

How will our 10th Bishop of Iowa be elected and approved?

The election will be done by delegates selected by congregations to attend the Electing Convention, scheduled for July 31, 2021. (These persons will also serve as delegates to the 2021 diocesan convention to be held next fall.) To be elected, a bishop candidate must receive a majority of both the lay and clergy Electing Convention delegate votes.

After the Electing Convention has chosen a bishop-elect and has informed the Presiding Bishop of its choice, the bishop-elect must, within 120 days, be approved by a majority of Standing Committees of the dioceses and a majority of the bishops across the Episcopal Church. This practice reminds us that a bishop, although having jurisdiction and ministry in a particular place and community we call a diocese, is a bishop for the whole Church.

How has the Coronavirus pandemic impacted the Bishop Search Process?

The original timeline for the search has been extended by three months to enable the final slate of candidates to visit the diocese in person. The visits were originally scheduled for April 2021 but now will take place in early summer. Likewise, the date for the Electing Convention has been changed from May 1 to July 31 and the date for the new bishop's consecration is now December 18.

How are we describing the Diocese of Iowa to potential candidates for bishop?

The Diocesan Profile informs prospective bishop candidates about our diocese and helps them to discern whether they might be called to lead us.

The Profile is available on the diocesan website at: www.iowaepiscopal.org under the Bishop Search tab. It is an inspiring, joyful representation of The Episcopal Church in Iowa!

How and when will the bishop-elect become Bishop of Iowa?

Once approved, the bishop-elect will be ordained as Bishop of Iowa at a service at which the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Most Reverend Michael Curry presides. The service has been scheduled for December 18, 2021 at Plymouth Church, Des Moines (to accommodate the large attendance anticipated). All Iowa Episcopalians are invited and encouraged to participate in this joyful celebration of new ministry. Bishop Alan Scarfe will retire when the next called bishop is consecrated.

Can I help our diocese with the search and transition processes?

Yes! First of all, pray for all who are conducting the search, applying for the position, and electing the new bishop, and also for Bishop Alan and Donna Scarfe as they look to the next stage of their ministry.

The Bishop Search Transition Committee also will need and welcome assistance in arranging Meet & Greets to introduce bishop candidates to Iowa Episcopalians; expressing our appreciation to Bishop Alan and Donna Scarfe for their ministry; and celebrating the ordination of our bishop. If you would like to assist with any of these, please contact the chair of the Transition Committee, the Rev. Elaine Caldbeck, ecaldbeck@gmail.com.

The Rev. Ruth Ratliff serves on the Bishop Search Transition Committee and serves as a deacon at St. Luke's in Cedar Falls.

Bishops of Iowa

THE FIRST BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Henry Washington Lee, D.D., LL.D., consecrated October 18, 1854. Died September 26, 1874

THE SECOND BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. William Stevens Perry, D.D., LL.D., D.C.L., consecrated September 10, 1876. Died May 13, 1898

THE THIRD BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Theodore Nevin Morrison, D.D., LL.D., consecrated February 22, 1899. Died December 27, 1929

THE FOURTH BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Harry Sherman Longley, D.D., consecrated October 23, 1912. Died April 5, 1944

THE FIFTH BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Eldwood Lindsay Haines, D.D., consecrated May 31, 1944. Died October 28, 1949

THE SIXTH BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Gordon V Smith, S.T.D., D.D., consecrated April 20, 1950. Retired December 31, 1971. Died August 27, 1997

THE SEVENTH BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Walter Cameron Righter, D.D., consecrated January 12, 1972. Retired December 31, 1988. Died September 11, 2011

THE EIGHTH BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting, D.D., consecrated September 27, 1988. Resigned April 15, 2001

THE NINTH BISHOP

The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe, D.D., consecrated April 5, 2003

A "Season of Truth and Healing" Begins

by Meg Wagner

At the 168th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Iowa, delegates passed Resolution 168A calling for a Season of Truth and Healing. The resolution commits the diocese to taking "tangible and enduring actions towards healing the sins of slavery, indigenous genocide and displacement, and racism through earnest and sacrificial actions."

As part of that commitment a Reparations Task Force has been named by Bishop Alan Scarfe, with guidance from the Beloved Community Initiative and approval from the Board of Directors of the Diocese of Iowa.

The members of the Reparations Task Force are: Mr. Edgardo Ordonez (St. John's, Ames), Dr. Hal Chase (diocesan historiographer), Rev. Lizzie Gillman, Ms. Katelyn O'Hare (Des Moines), Rev. Marcus Haack (Trinity, Iowa City), Rev. Wendy Abrahamson (St. Paul's, Grinnell), Ms. Vivian Roberts (St. John's, Dubuque), Mr. Jack Turner (St. Paul's, Council Bluffs), Rev. Jeanie Smith (St. Timothy's West Des Moines), Ms. Donna Scarfe (St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines), Rev. Stephen Benitz (St. John's, Mason City), Ms. Tracy Henry (St. Paul's Indian Mission, Sioux City), Rev. Tom Early (St. Alban's, Spirit Lake), Ms. Mary Greaves (St. Paul's Indian Mission, Sioux City), Ms. Katy Lee (Christ, Cedar Rapids), and Rev. Kim Turner-Baker (St. John's, Ames/COM—Chairperson).

The Task Force is charged with:

- Identifying a working definition of "reparation" to be used in this diocese
- Identifying and recommending changes that combat systemic racism

in the structures of this diocese

- Reviewing and sharing the history of Iowa's and our churches' part in benefiting from the legacies of slavery and indigenous genocide and displacement.
- Exploring the need for emotional, spiritual and psychological reparations for generations of injustice visited upon Black and Indigenous communities; and examining how in terms of financial implications, the Diocese of Iowa could designate significant funds to provide for financial reparations in the form of investments in scholarships, affordable housing, supporting business and financial institution ownership by Black and Indigenous people and/or other investments in Black and Indigenous communities

To support the work of the Task Force and congregations as they begin to explore their own histories, the Beloved Community Initiative has worked with the University of Iowa Digital Media Lab to create an interactive map of the history of race and ethnicity in Iowa. As congregations learn more about

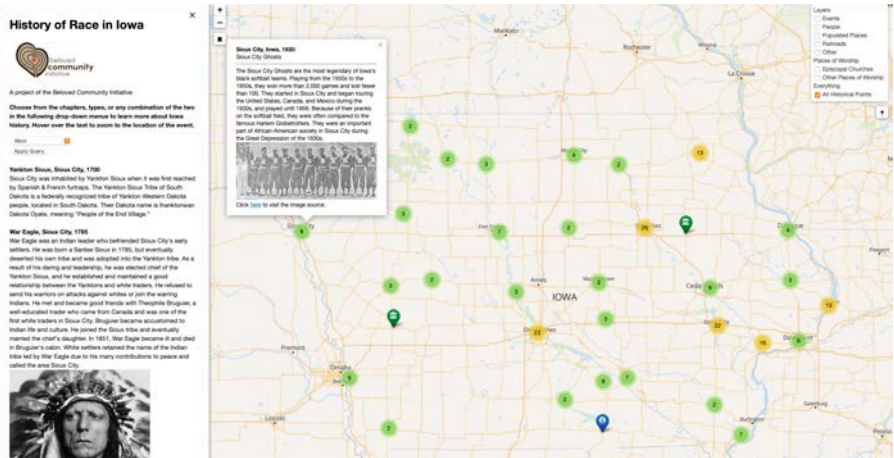
their own history or their area history, they can continue to add information to the map.

To further support congregations, BCI is creating a conversation guide and will be hosting a webinar with our diocesan historian and an archivist to help congregations locate, preserve, and organize the archives of their congregation.

Resolution 168A also asks each congregation to submit an annual report to the Diocesan Convention describing how they have engaged in racial justice conversation, study, and action designed to heal the sins of slavery and indigenous genocide and displacement.

Working in close partnership with the Advisory Committee of the Beloved Community Initiative, the Task Force will provide a quarterly progress report to the Diocesan Board of Directors and regular updates will be shared with the diocese.

The Rev. Meg Wagner serves as the Missioner for Congregational Development, Communications, and Reconciliation for the Diocese of Iowa.



Visit the map at becomingbelovedcommunity.org/raceiniowa often, as new information will continue to be added. You can use the pin icon on the right side of the map to suggest a point to add to the map.

Trinity Iowa City celebrates the marriage of parishioners at the Sunday Eucharist via live stream

by Lauren Lyon



The wedding of Zach Smith and Suzanne Glémot was celebrated during Trinity's Sunday morning livestream Eucharist on November 15, 2020.

For Trinity Iowa City parishioners Zach Smith and Suzanne Glémot, family and work commitments were a necessary consideration in planning for their wedding. When they first contacted Trinity in the fall of 2019 about their marriage plans, Suzanne was in her next to last semester of a graduate program at the University of Iowa's Center for the Book. Zach, who is a reporter for the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, anticipated a busy year starting with the February, 2020 caucuses and continuing through the November election. They envisioned a wedding late in 2020 with families traveling to Iowa City from Europe and West Africa, but, at the time, they did not feel able to begin thinking about details. As events transpired, it was just as well that they didn't spend a lot of time planning ahead. The coronavirus pandemic has upended countless carefully prepared weddings this year. In the end, Zach and Suzanne's wedding came together in a few weeks this fall and was solemnized at Trinity's Sunday morning livestream Eucharist on November 15.

Weddings have taken place this fall, frequently outdoors and with smaller than anticipated guest lists, but it appeared that Zach and Suzanne's ceremony would not be scheduled until the weather would make an outdoor wedding difficult. They expressed a strong sense of having been formed by Trinity and wanted the church to be a part of their marriage ceremony, both the building and the congregation. Their hope was to be married inside the church and that their ceremony would include the Eucharist. The Sunday livestream from Trinity satisfied all of the requirements, including the possibility that their families who are presently located in France, West Africa, Louisiana and Mississippi could be present via the Internet.

Their marriage included new liturgical resources authorized by the 2018 General Convention. Some elements of the ceremony were presented in both French and English in order to honor Suzanne's French-speaking family members. One very special aspect of their marriage was recognized in a

French language portion of the sermon. For many years Suzanne's grandparents were the proprietors of a shop that offered repair services for fountain pens. Patrons brought in pens with broken or worn 18 karat gold nibs. Many of them declined to take the broken parts when they picked up their repaired pens. Over the years Suzanne's grandmother accumulated a store of these worn or broken 18 karat gold nibs. A few years ago, not long after Suzanne and Zach began dating, she divided them between Suzanne and her brothers, thinking that they might have something made from them. Suzanne and Zach's wedding rings were made from those gold nibs.

The wedding plans of countless couples have been upended by the pandemic. Some have chosen to wait in the hope that it won't be too long before their families and friends can travel and enjoy their celebrations. Others have decided to go ahead with smaller ceremonies under very different circumstances than they might have imagined. Every couple makes the best decision for themselves and their families. What I have noticed during the four weddings at which I have officiated since September is that the impositions of the pandemic are remarkably unobtrusive. Every wedding has felt very much like a celebration, filled with joy and love pledged before God in the company of family and friends. The guest lists have been smaller than they might have been, and the congratulations, smiles are evident from eyes rather than lips and good wishes are expressed at a greater distance than they would ordinarily have been, but love and commitment are present, no matter what.

The Rev. Lauren Lyon serves as the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Iowa City.

2020 Grants Awarded

14 Grants, \$85,526

Beginning a New or Strengthening an Existing Ministry



- "Center for Social Ministry Expansion" -- *in partnership with Rev. Jeanie Smith*: \$2,428
- "Hygiene Pantry" -- Mason City, St. John's: \$2,500
- "St. Stephen's/Connections Blessing Box" (*pictured*)-- Newton, St. Stephen's: \$5,000
- "Tornado Packs Ministry" -- Storm Lake, All Saints': \$3,000

Liturgical Space Renewal



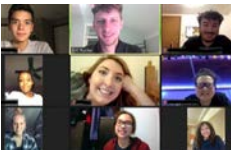
- "A Sacred Path to Transformation: Walking the Labyrinth" -- Sioux City, St. Thomas': \$10,000
- "The Way Station Space Renewal" (*pictured*) -- Spencer, The Way Station: \$10,000

Support for Recently Ordained Clergy



- "Newly Ordained Clergy Support" -- Des Moines, St. Paul's Cathedral: \$24,000

Formation for Youth or Young Adults



- "Simpson Youth Academy Scholarships" -- *in partnership with Rev. Eric Rucker*: \$5,000

Evangelism



- "Compline, Beyond Compline, Zoom Kids" -- Dubuque, St. John's: \$5,000

Expanding Tools & Technology



- "Enhance Mission Through Streaming Capabilities" (*pictured*)-- West Des Moines, St. Timothy's: \$5,000
- "Expanding Technology" -- Mason City, St. John's: \$2,500
- "Expanding Technology" -- Perry, St. Martin's: \$1,700
- "Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice (MMJ) Case Management System Project" -- *in partnership with Des Moines, St. Paul's Cathedral*: \$5,000
- "Technology Upgrade" -- Webster City, Good Shepherd: \$4,398

GILEAD Grants 2021

Applications Open May 15 - July 15, 2021

GRANT CATEGORIES

- Beginning a New Worshipping Community
- Beginning a New Ministry or Strengthening an Existing One
- Liturgical Space Renewal
- Support for Recently Ordained Clergy
- Formation for Youth or Young Adults
- Leadership Development
- Evangelism
- Expanding Tools and Technology



Photos L to R : Brad Gipple, St. Martin's, Perry; Simpson Youth Academy, Indianola; St. Thomas', Sioux City



Have an idea?

1. Set up a time to meet with the Grant Review Committee (*required*)
2. Prepare your application & supporting documents

Who can apply?

Congregations, worshipping communities, chapters, or individual members of the Diocese of Iowa may apply for GILEAD funds. Partnerships with non-Episcopal entities are welcome and encouraged, but an Episcopal entity must serve as the reporting agent and the project leader must be an Episcopalian who is a resident in the Diocese of Iowa.

For more information, visit: www.iowaepiscopal.org/gilead-grants

Questions? Contact Traci Ruhland Petty: tpetty@iowaepiscopal.org

2020 Stewardship Share *as of 1/31/2021*

City	Church	Stewardship Share	2020 Pledge	Pledge Adjustments	Adjusted Pledge	Received to Date	(Over) Under
Algona	St. Thomas	\$ 3,371	4,008		4,008	4,008	0
Ames	St. John's	52,361	36,000		36,000	36,000	0
Anamosa	St. Mark's	273	1,500		1,500	1,500	0
Ankeny	St. Anne's	9,074	6,000	(750)	5,250	4,925	325
Bettendorf	St. Peter's	16,796	15,000		15,000	15,000	0
Boone	Grace	1,993	720	(90)	630	777	(147)
Burlington	Christ	28,959	21,000		21,000	21,000	0
Carroll	Trinity	2,585	2,600		2,600	2,600	0
Cedar Falls	St. Luke's	37,855	37,855		37,855	37,855	0
Cedar Rapids	Christ	50,503	50,503	(12,000)	38,503	38,510	(7)
Cedar Rapids	Grace	8,244	8,244		8,244	8,243	1
Chariton	St. Andrew's	3,390	3,500		3,500	3,500	0
Charles City	Grace	1,305	1,305		1,305	1,306	(1)
Clermont	Saviour	2,785			0	500	(500)
Clinton	Christ	12,334	12,334		12,334	11,297	1,037
Coralville	New Song	16,820	16,820		16,820	14,019	2,801
Council Bluffs	St. Paul's	6,809	5,462	(683)	4,779	4,096	683
Davenport	St. Alban's	9,271	6,953	(869)	6,084	6,084	0
Davenport	Trinity	102,673	97,796		97,796	97,796	0
Decorah	Grace	4,016	4,016		4,016	4,016	0
Denison	Trinity	1,307	1,307		1,307	1,307	0
Des Moines	St. Andrew's	30,765	30,765		30,765	30,765	0
Des Moines	St. Luke's	30,403	15,764		15,764	15,764	0
Des Moines	St. Mark's	3,313	3,313		3,313	927	2,386
Des Moines	St. Paul's	72,729	35,000		35,000	35,327	(327)
Dubuque	St. John's	13,135	9,102		9,102	9,000	102
Durant	St. Paul's	3,570	3,570		3,570	3,570	0
Emmetsburg	Trinity	2,931	2,931		2,931	2,931	0
Fort Dodge	St. Mark's	35,648	35,648		35,648	35,648	0
Fort Madison	St. Luke's	2,442	2,460		2,460	2,460	0
Glenwood	St. John's	754	754		754	754	0
Grinnell	St. Paul's	11,895	7,000		7,000	6,998	2
Harlan	St. Paul's	1,269	350	(44)	306	952	(646)
Independence	St. James	1,898	1,898		1,898	1,898	0
Indianola	All Saints'	1,858	1,858		1,858	1,858	0
Iowa City	Trinity	83,426	83,426		83,426	83,426	0
Iowa Falls	St. Matthew's	2,149	2,149		2,149	1,791	358
Keokuk	St. John's	10,219	7,200		7,200	6,000	1,200
LeMars	St. George's	37	37		37	331	(294)
Maquoketa	St. Mark's	2,151	1,000		1,000	2,200	(1,200)
Marshalltown	St. Paul's	10,173	10,173	(1,272)	8,901	8,901	0
Mason City	St. John's	16,943	14,085	(1,761)	12,324	12,390	(65)
Mount Pleasant	St. Michael's	4,540	4,540		4,540	4,918	(378)
Muscatine	Trinity	15,792	15,792		15,792	15,792	0
Newton	St. Stephen's	16,253	8,000	(1,000)	7,000	6,073	927
Orange City	Savior	1,576	750		750	750	0
Oskaloosa	St. James'	7,466	7,466		7,466	7,466	0
Ottumwa	Trinity	7,281	5,000		5,000	5,000	0
Perry	St. Martin's	7,656	6,500	(813)	5,687	5,688	0
Shenandoah	St. John's	6,216	2,647		2,647	1,324	1,324
Sioux City	Calvary	1,655	1,656		1,656	1,656	0
Sioux City	St. Paul's	1,857	1,000	(125)	875	875	0
Sioux City	St. Thomas'	13,851	10,305	(1,288)	9,017	10,374	(1,357)
Spirit Lake	St. Alban's	12,066	12,066		12,066	12,066	0
Storm Lake	All Saints'	3,119	3,119		3,119	3,119	0
Waterloo	Trinity	7,938	9,600		9,600	9,600	0
Waverly	St. Andrew's	543	543		543	543	0
Webster City	Good Shepherd	4,400	4,400	(550)	3,850	3,850	0
West Des Moines	St. Timothy's	60,136	51,450	(6,431)	45,019	45,019	0
TOTAL		\$882,777	746,240	(27,675)	718,565	712,341	6,224

Episcopal JOURNAL

QUARTERLY EDITION SPRING 2021

Pandemic brings deeper creativity, meaning to Lent

By Michelle Hiskey
Episcopal News Service

From socially-distanced drive-throughs on Ash Wednesday to Lenten worship bags for online Zoom services, Lent 2021 is testing the creativity of Episcopal congregations.

Parishioners at St. Thomas Church in Mamaroneck N.Y., are using worship and prayer materials picked up before Ash Wednesday. Diocese of New York Bishop Andrew Dietsche requested that churches not impose ashes in any setting.

Congregants were asked to come to the church hall, masked and keeping social distance, to pick up their Lenten bags. All services have been online since March 2020.

Like many Episcopal churches, St. Mark's Church in Upland, Calif., offered an opportunity to receive ashes via drive-through. In previous years, St. Mark's has had the drive-through option, called "ash and dash," for busy people and clergy have administered ashes in the traditional way, using a thumb to apply ashes to the worshiper's forehead in the sign of the cross.

This year, parishioners were given ashes packaged in small bags for self-imposition. "We will not be imposing ashes this year due to health constraints," the church announced on its Facebook page.

Throughout Lent, St. Mark's is also



Photo/Liz Beal Kidd

Katherine Marshall hands Lenten surprise bags to a parish family at a drive-by pickup at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta.

hosting a drive-through Stations of the Cross. Each station is sponsored by a congregation in the area, about 40 miles east of Los Angeles, and worshipers are guided by an online phone app. The app tells participants where to go next and provides audio to play once a participant arrives at a station.

Lent 2021 began with changes to the traditional celebrations on Mardi Gras, Feb. 16 this year, the day before Ash Wednesday.

Mardi Gras, French for "Fat Tuesday," is a secularized Christian tradition from medieval times that marks the final day before Lent's 40 days of fasting. Another name for it is Shrove Tuesday; "shrive" means to repent or sacrifice.

Because meat and fatty foods were re-

stricted during Lent, Shrove Tuesday became the last chance to consume them before they spoiled. The English tradition of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday (using up rich ingredients such as butter and eggs) has been adopted by many Episcopal churches.

Last year, many Episcopalians in New Orleans and beyond wore carnival masks and partied. This year, across the church, Mardi Gras events were canceled, scaled back or moved online, with many parishes adopting a do-it-yourself approach.

Face masks protected against the spread of COVID-19 and socially distanced celebrations were common. For some revelers, responding to restrictions with creativity added greater determination to planning this year's events.

"Mardi Gras is usually the time right before we get ready for a serious time, but since last year, we've been in a serious time, and people are really suffering leading up to Mardi Gras," said Liz Beal Kidd, director of children, youth and family ministry at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta.

"This year it's a different message for Mardi Gras: that we aren't giving up all of our traditions even if they have to look different. You can't keep our spirit down," she said.

St. Luke's usually hires a jazz band, welcomes parishioners in costume, and

continued on page B



NEWS
Mass. church helps seniors get vaccines



ARTS
Actors' guild ministers to performers



ARTS
New series celebrates the Black church

LENT continued from page A

feeds them from pots of red beans and rice and jambalaya, ending the festivities with a “second line” dance parade to the memorial garden for the traditional benediction. This year, church members picked up a Cajun-inspired meal to eat at home.

Across town, members of St. Anne’s Episcopal Church and Day School didn’t gather to color their alleluia banner, which is buried on Mardi Gras and un-earthed Easter morning. Instead, when they picked up their pancake kits, they left index cards decorated with alleluias. Tabi Tobiasen, St. Anne’s director of children’s and youth ministry, planned to make a communal banner of the cards and put out a video of it, with a short sermon, that families could watch when they have time.

At Christ Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas, the annual outdoor Mardi Gras Jazz Mass was still scheduled, but the invitation came with a caveat: “Sorry, but this year you’ll have to make your own gumbo lunch.”

The carnival season was even low-key in New Orleans, where elements of the traditional Mardi Gras parades came to residents instead of vice versa.

Houses were decorated instead of parade floats, and no beads or trinkets were tossed. St. George’s and St. Andrew’s churches delivered “make your own throw” kits for parishioners to exchange, without physical contact, at a pegboard at St. George’s.

To honor the traditional circular king cake and raise money for Camp Able NOLA, a St. Andrew’s ministry that serves kids and adults with special needs, youths made glittery door wreaths, each with a tiny plastic baby, representing Jesus, like the ones hidden in the cakes.

“While you can’t stop Mardi Gras, churches are not having their typical fundraisers centered around the parades or parade watching parties,” Karen Mackey, the Diocese of Louisiana’s communications director, said.

Laissez les bon temps rouler ... on Zoom

On New York’s Upper East Side, the pandemic couldn’t shut down the Church of the Holy Trinity Pancake Supper and Talent Show, established over 20 years ago by actor and parishioner Dudley Stone.

This year, parishioners flipped their own pancakes at home during a virtual event. Emcee Erlinda S. Brent, the church’s administrator, kicked off the event with

her impression of Frances McDormand as God in the TV series “Good Omens.” Rector John F. Beddingfield prepared his trademark groan-inducing monologue that includes witticisms like “How do you learn to read the Scriptures? You ‘Luke’ into them!”

“It’s silly and I think we need silly,” Brent said. “With so much seriousness and sadness right now, celebrating this tradition is kind of uplifting.”

Scaled-back fundraisers

Some major fundraisers are tied to Mardi Gras and its culture. Birmingham’s annual Gumbo Gala, the largest Episcopal social event in Alabama, draws up to 3,000 people and has raised as much as \$30,000 for Episcopal Place, an independent-living housing complex for seniors and adults with disabilities. The gala, inspired by an influx of Louisianans after Hurricane Katrina, pits parish teams in a one-day gumbo cook-off, as the partiers feast on the gumbos.

The 16th Gumbo Gala will be held April 17 as an outdoor event with a gumbo truck, a band and no cooking teams. “We’re continuing to build a brand and plan to be part of the community again in full force in 2022,” said Jamie Whitehurst, director of development for Episcopal Place.

In San Francisco, the Diocese of California’s Grace Cathedral Carnivale celebration raised a record \$600,000 last year for its ministry in early childhood education, arts, music, yoga and senior care programs. In 2020, tickets started at \$500.

This year tickets were \$25 for virtual Carnivale, and guests contributed prayers and intentions that were printed on colorful ribbons and strung along the banisters leading to the cathedral’s doors. The tethering of ribbons symbolized the creation of a global community.

Shrove 2020

Mardi Gras 2020 was, at many of these parishes, the last come-one, come-all event before the pandemic. There’s wistfulness in looking back.



Photo/Tabi Tobiasen

Left, revelers at St. Anne’s Episcopal Church in Atlanta enjoy the 2020 Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, before COVID-19 restrictions took hold.

Below, Episcopal youths in New Orleans make wreaths into noncaloric versions of king cakes for Mardi Gras 2021.



Photo/Taylor Cheek

“We had families who had moved from New Orleans bring a ton of beads and a king cake,” said Tobiasen, the children and youth director at St. Anne’s in Atlanta.

“We had 60 or 70 people last year, and it’s sad to see the photos and realize that I haven’t seen many of the people in person since Mardi Gras. It’s really sad thinking of where we could have gone with that energy and where we ended up.”

For some longtime St. Anne’s parishioners, carrying on with COVID-19 restrictions affirms their commitment to long-standing traditions.

“I’m documenting with video and photographs because our children’s children are going to ask how we did Mardi Gras in 2021,” Kidd said. “We’ve been going through COVID-19 like it’s a long season of Lent — of reflection and quiet — and it was forced on us. But the pandemic has done what Lent does, which is to create a feeling of gratitude and thanksgiving. We are never, ever, ever going to take for granted anything again.” ■

Michelle Hiskey is a freelance writer based in Atlanta. She is a member of St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church. Additional material by Episcopal Journal.

Pandemic has changed, not stopped, rector search and hiring processes

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

The coronavirus pandemic has changed many things about how Episcopal churches operate, including the search and hiring procedures congregations follow when calling a rector.

Dioceses and congregations have approached pandemic-era search processes with creativity, based on changing local conditions and restrictions, the Rev. Meghan F. Froehlich, director of The Episcopal Church's Office for Transition Ministry, told ENS.

"Each situation is an individual situation. ... There's not a one-size-fits-all approach during the pandemic," she said. "I have seen God at work in these processes and with our very excellent transition ministers. They have been amazing."

Clergy are deciding whether the Holy Spirit is calling them into atypical discernment processes. If so, they are facing new challenges, such as having more of the search process conducted online and balancing the desire to explore one's sense of call against the risks of travel for a final in-person interview.

The Rev. Michelle Warriner Bolt, canon to the ordinary in the Episcopal Church of East Tennessee, said, "When normal everyday activities feel risky, folks are less likely to take actual risks," like moving one's family during a pandemic. "The increased sense of risk in relocation has changed the marketplace, for sure."

The Rev. Brian Jemmott, canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of New Jersey, added that some possible candidates have not entered search processes because they are reluctant "to leave their congregations right now in the midst of the pandemic if they are the lead person." However, that hesitation on the part of some clergy has not prevented New Jersey congregations from calling priests, he said.

A few dioceses put search and call processes on hold for a time at the beginning

of the pandemic. The Diocese of Nebraska, for instance, paused searches in March 2020.

"That was mainly as a way to just acknowledge the demands of the moment," the Rev. Liz Easton, canon to the ordinary, told ENS. The diocese thought that the pressures on parish leadership of

come to know each other really authentically so that we can really discern a match being made by the Holy Spirit," Easton said. She remains concerned about "the development of the spiritual cohesion of search committees who cannot meet in person."

While many transition officers contacted by ENS said that search committees were making the best of digital meeting platforms, they agreed it is not the same. "I personally believe that the Holy Spirit is active and present and perceivable in a different way when we're in the same room together," Easton said.

The Diocese of Northern California took a different approach. The Rev. Andrea McMillin, canon to the ordinary, said it was clear that there were pastoral issues as people realized the pandemic was not going to be a short-term event. They had to learn how to stay safe from the virus, work from home and perhaps help children with online school. Those challenges made it hard to think about the longer-term discernment required in search processes, she said.

So the diocese chose to have, what McMillin called, "an expanded interim time" during which interims or priests-in-charge might stay with their congregations longer than they would during a typical search process, until there is mass vaccination or at least "greater social stability" in common life. The result "is not a

continued on page D



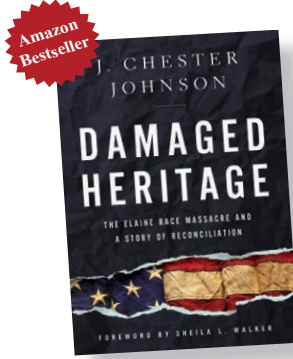
Photo/St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The parishioners of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Clinton, N.C. post a sign announcing the arrival of the Rev. Eric Grubb and Brandie Grubb.

trying to answer questions about worship and pastoral care "would impede good discernment," she said. "When we started to settle into these new rhythms, when we learned new strategies for praying and living, we picked most of those searches up where we left off, with an understanding that the process would require more flexibility and creativity than perhaps it ever had before."

Two rectors started their ministries in the diocese just as the pandemic began. After the diocese resumed searches, three other congregations called rectors.

"Our main objective in every single search is for the parish and the clergy to




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RECTOR SEARCH continued from page C

stagnant time,” she cautioned, but rather a fertile space for interim work and worship and a deepening of mission, outreach and formation.

Four congregations in the Diocese of East Carolina have called rectors during the pandemic. Another three have brought on interims, and other searches are in the works.

“The biggest hardship is not being able to see the candidates in their current parishes because you learn so much about someone in that way,” said the Rev. Mollie Roberts, East Carolina’s canon for

diocesan life and leadership, describing the typical visit by a few search committee members to finalists’ congregations. Search committees that are uncomfortable with that lack of knowledge, she added, can pause their process. “Nobody’s done that,” she added.

The Rev. Eric Grubb, who was called last September to be the rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Clinton, N.C., in the Diocese of East Carolina, said finding a safe way to meet in person was crucial for his discernment process.

He and his wife, Brandie, spent two days at the church after driving three hours from Charlotte, where he was on the staff

of St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church. He led Evening Prayer in St. Paul’s for the committee, and two people gave them a tour of the facility. The interview was conducted indoors with physical distancing. Even so, pandemic restrictions, including on such simple acts as handshaking, made it hard at times, he said.

In the end, he and the search committee “really felt the pull of the Holy Spirit throughout this whole process, even though it has been so strange,” Grubb said.

Then there’s the process of joining a new community in the midst of a pandemic. “They were very creative in welcoming us here,” Grubb said. Congregation members hung a banner in front of the church announcing the arrival of the couple. They also staged a drive-up welcome during which parishioners stopped at the curb outside the church to greet the Grubbs.

The Rev. Chase Danford completed his agreement to become the priest-in-charge of Trinity Church in Asbury Park, N.J. in early March. “It was less than 10 days later that everything started shutting down,” he recalled.

Barely a week later, he and his husband, Giuliano Argenziano, became ill with presumed cases of COVID-19.

Danford was scheduled to move from Queens to Asbury Park in May and begin at Trinity on June 1. The start date remained the same, but he spent the first two and a half months either leading worship online or commuting back and forth once limited in-person worship resumed July 12.

Trying to get to know parishioners, he invited them to sign up for “meal meet-ups” on Zoom, joining him for breakfast, lunch, teatime or dinner. It wasn’t the same as meeting in person, though. “There’s going to need to be a lot of relationship-building happening in the second year of my ministry that normally would have happened the first year,” Danford said.

Search processes will continue to change as the course of the pandemic does, especially as more people are vaccinated, East Tennessee’s Bolt predicted. For instance, she anticipates “a pretty big wave” when priests who might have put off retirement will decide to take that step.

“We’re also going to see folks who had been risk-averse be willing to take more risks,” she said. “I think there’s going to be room for extra innovation, extra creativity, to continue to pay attention and meet the needs we see right before us.” ■

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How the National Prayer Breakfast became a political event

By Deborah Whitehead

Addressing his first National Prayer Breakfast as president on Feb. 4, Joe Biden spoke of the need to “turn to faith” in a “dark, dark time.”

In the wake of the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol, he called for Americans to “confront and defeat political extremism, white supremacy and domestic terrorism,” and argued that religion can help America unite as “one nation in a common purpose: to respect one another, to care for one another, [and] to leave no one behind.”

The president’s address provided an insight into how Biden plans to navigate the complex relationship between religion and politics in the post-Trump era.

But it also underlines the importance of the traditional presidential address at the National Prayer Breakfast — an annual high-profile gathering of faith leaders and politicians held in Washington D.C. on the first Thursday in February since 1953.

That the annual breakfast draws so much attention marks the fulfillment of a dream by the event’s founder, Abraham Vereide, a Norwegian immigrant and minister born in 1886 who credited the idea to an early morning vision brought about by prayer.

As a scholar of U.S. religion and culture, I believe the story of the National Prayer Breakfast provides insight into the complex relationship between religion and politics in the last century.

The start in the 1930s

Vereide came to the U.S. in 1905 and found work as an itinerant Methodist minister. He served as a director of Goodwill Industries in Seattle and spent the first part of his career doing relief work during the Great Depression.



Vereide

But according to Christian author Norman Percy Grubb’s biography of Vereide, “Modern Viking,” he came to feel it was not the “down and out” but the “up and out” — wealthy and powerful men who were not particularly religious — who really needed his attention.



Photo/Alex Brandon/AP

President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, center, attend the 2021 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., remotely due to the pandemic.

Vereide wrote that “the manpower of the churches had dwindled badly, and politics seemed under the control of those who were not fit to take leadership.” Concerned about the decline of organized religion’s political power and the growing role of the organized labor movement, and convinced that both unions and FDR’s New Deal were “subversive” and “un-American” influences in business and politics, he turned to prayer.

One night in April 1935, Vereide’s prayers yielded what he claimed was a 1:30 a.m. vision and a plan. Later that month he gathered 19 local businessmen for the first Seattle prayer breakfast. The 7:45 a.m. meeting time was chosen so as not to interfere with family and work responsibilities.

In these initial meetings, the group was primarily concerned with how to combat the local workers’ movement, which they perceived as dangerous and corrupt, and it was restricted to business executives only.

But in the process, Vereide realized that these breakfast meetings — non-denominational, held in secular offices rather than church buildings, and focused on prayer, Bible study and building relationships — established powerful new networks among the city’s business, political, and religious leaders.

Prayer breakfasts became Vereide’s method for reaching powerful elites who could help to advance Christian interests in business and politics.

The prayer breakfast movement

quickly spread to other cities, including Washington, D.C., where the first prayer groups were established in the U.S. House and Senate in 1942 and 1943. In 1943 Vereide founded the National Committee for Christian Leadership, changing its name to International Christian Leadership the following year, to provide coordination for the growing movement.

He defined the organization’s purpose as “One world in active cooperation in commerce, science, labor and education should be one world in spiritual unity and moral convictions.”

Vereide attributed the movement’s success to the example of none other than Jesus himself, whose disciples were “men in the fishing business.”

“Jesus founded the first breakfast group,” he said.

From hesitancy to opportunity

In 1953, the first Presidential Prayer Breakfast, as it was then called, was held in the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., with 400 in attendance. President Dwight Eisenhower initially declined an invitation to attend, but relented with the persuasion of evangelist Billy Graham, and delivered an address about the importance of prayer.

Eisenhower remarked that “prayer is just simply a necessity, because by prayer I believe we mean an effort to get in touch with the Infinite.”

Since Eisenhower, every sitting U.S.

continued on page H

Church volunteers help elderly parishioners make vaccine appointments

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

With COVID-19 vaccine rollouts varying widely from state to state, some states have been criticized for their confusing and dysfunctional vaccine appointment systems. One of those states is Massachusetts, which — despite being a world-renowned leader in health care and the home of vaccine producer Moderna — has largely delegated the administration of vaccines to a fragmented patchwork of hospitals and private companies.

The problems intensified over the past week as the state began opening up vaccine appointments to residents age 75 and older — a demographic that is less familiar with computers and more likely to encounter difficulty using online appointment systems. They often have to navigate labyrinthine websites, continually refresh pages and upload photos of their insurance cards. Seniors have expressed confusion, frustration and hopelessness.

The Episcopal Parish of St. John the Evangelist in Hingham, a suburb of Boston, saw the technical difficulties as an opportunity to help. Volunteers from



Photo/Faith Niniavaggi/Reuters

Carol Saivetz, 73, receives the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine from Rachel Damstra, a nursing student, at a mass vaccination site at Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, in Boston.

the parish's COVID Response Team are helping older parishioners navigate the red tape and get signed up for vaccine appointments.

"This is what it's all about," the Rev. Tim Schenck, rector, told ENS. "I always think about Paul's line in Galatians about how we're called to bear one another's

burdens, and this seems like an absolutely critical time for us to be bearing one another's burdens, and this is just a very tangible way that we can do that right now."

Over the past year, the parish's COVID Response Team has been meeting a variety of parishioners' needs, from running errands to delivering masks to assisting those who had trouble accessing online worship.

"The COVID Response Team model is taking this organic interest and goodwill in the church and then matching it to the needs," said volunteer Jody Jones Turner. Seventy people signed up to help when it first launched, and they have since recorded about 150 "acts of kindness," she said.

"I always think about the COVID Response Team as the Match.com of ministry," Schenck said, "really matching parishioners' needs with parishioners' deep desire to help."

The vaccine appointment initiative originated when Schenck got a call from a parishioner "who had just navigated this whole process of vaccine scheduling for her parents and found it to be neither easy nor intuitive," he told ENS.

"And she was like, 'This must be something that other people are having a hard time with, especially [seniors]. ... This is such a serpentine process. There's got to be a way that we could help others.'"

"I think it's hard for anybody to do this," Schenck said, "and so you add not being particularly tech savvy on top of that, and it is a little bit of whack-a-

mole right trying to get an appointment here and there."

Schenck brought the idea to the COVID Response Team last week, and they got started the same day. "It just seemed like a really good fit," said Turner, who works as the program manager for the transplant unit at Massachusetts Gen-

eral Hospital in Boston. She brought her knowledge of the health care system and recruited other volunteers to help with this particular project.

"Now we have, like, this little SWAT team organized," Turner told ENS, "and



Photo/Jody Jones Turner

St. John the Evangelist parishioner Jody Jones Turner is a member of the church's COVID Response Team.

everyone has different levels of information." Turner, for example, knows more about the programs at hospitals in Boston, while another parishioner has familiarized herself with the distribution protocol at CVS pharmacies, and another parishioner with the mass vaccination site at Gillette Stadium.

They posted about the program on Facebook, and within an hour, they had their first request. So far, four people have requested

assistance, and three of them have already gotten their first shots. Mostly, the team sets parishioners up with phone-based appointment systems so they don't have to use computers, resulting in "a more pleasant experience," Turner said.

Schenck and Turner say they hope to build a collective knowledge of the distribution system so that they can continue to help as more people become eligible for the vaccine. In the meantime, they hope to inspire other churches to do similar work for their elderly parishioners and neighbors. Both emphasized that the networks and connections formed by the COVID Response Team allowed them to address this need quickly. Once the structure was in place, the volunteers' enthusiasm was channeled into action.

"Setting up the pieces to allow the network to mobilize — that's really powerful," Turner said.

"The intergenerational aspect of this is really beautiful to watch," said Schenck, adding that the effort is an inspiring reminder that laypeople can be called to pastoral care, not just clergy.

"I just love that sense of crowdsourced pastoral care. ... The fact that this is grassroots-led is really exciting to me, and that's what a church should be doing. And being." ■

Suburban parish partners with Detroit church to open community resource center

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Christ Church Cranbrook, an Episcopal parish in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., has partnered with First Baptist Institutional Church in Detroit to open a community resource center that will serve a variety of needs in already-struggling Detroit neighborhoods that have also been hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the two churches said in a press release.

Representatives of the two churches held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new FBIC Resource Center on Jan. 31, though program development and hiring are still in progress.

The center is housed in a renovated space on the First Baptist Institutional Church's campus in northwest Detroit in an area where 31% of residents — and about half of children — live below the federal poverty line.

The center will offer services including a food pantry; workforce training; financial assistance for residents facing eviction or utility shutoffs; and workshops for reading, math and financial literacy, with a particular focus on youth, seniors and veterans. Case managers will also work with clients to connect them with other services they might need.

FBIC has been ministering to Detroiters since 1916, and the congregation has been active in community outreach from its beginning. The church built an extensive campus just south of 8 Mile Road in 1975 to provide for both religious and community needs, and today it offers services such as youth programming and prison reentry. Christ Church Cranbrook, consecrated in 1928, has had a relationship with FBIC for about four years as part of a drive to "build bridges" with churches in Detroit, said the Rev. William Danaher, rector.

First Baptist Institutional Church "has a long history of being one of the leading Black Baptist churches in Detroit. ... It's



Photo/courtesy of Christ Church Cranbrook

The Rev. William Danaher, rector of Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., presents a check to the Rev. Robyn Moore, pastor of First Baptist Institutional Church in Detroit.

a remarkable church," Danaher told Episcopal News Service.

After the Rev. Robyn Moore became FBIC's pastor in 2018, she and Danaher began imagining further possibilities for outreach and mission work in the neighborhood, Danaher said. The arrival of COVID-19 added urgency to those efforts.

"When the pandemic hit, it was clear that people were coming to the church looking for support in one form or an-

other," Danaher said.

In 2020, Christ Church Cranbrook raised about \$241,000 for a COVID-19 relief fund, which was partially matched by the Douglas F. Allison Foundation. Part of that was used as an initial investment for the community center, along with FBIC's own funding, Danaher said. Administering the center will be a joint effort between the two churches, "utilizing congregational talents wherever possible to run workshops and provide a range of services to those most in need."

"My hope is that we'll continue to be able to partner in this project with the foundation that provided us with this initial grant," Danaher told ENS.

Danaher emphasized that the partnership is one of "mutuality and friendship" that breaks through economic and racial barriers.

"We have an understanding that we expect to be transformed by this ministry as well. My goal is to close the distance between the suburbs and the city of Detroit and to build bridges," Danaher said.

"First Baptist Institutional Church is truly an amazing church, and they have as much to offer us as we have to offer them," he added, such as "the opportunity for spiritual friendship and encouragement of yet another Christian community doing kingdom work." ■

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BREAKFAST continued from page E

president has attended the breakfast at least once during his term. The presidential address is only part of the breakfast, a multi-day event. While most presidents have used the address to speak about their personal religious beliefs, at the 2020 breakfast, Donald Trump waved “Trump Acquitted” newspaper headlines and used the opportunity to launch an attack on the religious commitments of his political opponents.

Exclusive and elitist?

The breakfast is still sponsored by the same organization Vereide founded, now known as The Family, and two members of Congress and a bipartisan committee serve as its honorary hosts.

After Vereide’s death in 1969, evangelist and businessman Doug Coe succeeded him in leadership of the organization. Under Coe, who died in 2017, the prayer breakfast continued to grow in influence — with Coe himself counting high-ranking politicians among his powerful friends.

“The Family,” a 2019 Netflix series, ex-

plored the influence of the organization on American politics. Journalist Jeff Sharlet, whose 2009 book is the basis of the series, says that “The National Prayer Breakfast is 100% The Family’s event, an event that is meant to be this very public display of power.”

Attendance at the breakfast is by invitation only, and the event has long faced criticism that it is exclusive and elitist. And secularists balk at the way that the event has become a public religious ritual at the center of U.S. government.

Since the Obama era, many non-Christian and secular groups have called on presidents to boycott the breakfast because of concerns over its connections to anti-LGBTQ and right-wing groups. This year, secular advocacy group Americans United called on Biden to “draw a sharp contrast with his predecessor” by strongly endorsing church-state separation, freedom of religion and religious pluralism.



Photo/Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images

Attendees sing “Amazing Grace” during the 2019 National Prayer Breakfast.

As the breakfast has expanded to become an interreligious, international event, now including 4,000 attendees from over 140 countries, it has also become a ready opportunity for networking and deal-making.

According to the event registration website, “the purpose of the National Prayer Breakfast is to gather people from all over the world to pray for our leaders and to walk with them on the path that Jesus sets forth for all of us.” It also claims not to be “a political gathering.” Rather, “many politicians who come are Jesus-centered leaders who talk about how they collaborate and develop friendships across the aisle.”

But a 2018 article in the New York Times — published after the indictment of Maria Butina, a Russian agent who attended the National Prayer Breakfast twice in an effort to set up back-channel meetings between Russian and American officials — had a different take, calling the event “an international influence-peddling bazaar, where foreign dignitaries, religious leaders, diplomats and lobbyists jockey for access to the highest reaches of American power.”

Biden’s address attempted to address those criticisms without breaking tradition and to cast religion as a unifying, rather than divisive, force in U.S. politics. Since Eisenhower, the breakfast has endured as a presidential tradition, he said, but what it celebrates is something fundamentally beyond partisanship, beyond politics, and beyond any one religious tradition: “A nation ... always in prayer.” ■

Deborah Whitehead is associate professor of religious studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. This article was originally published at The Conversation (www.theconversation.com).



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In this time, we stand on the Plain of Waiting

By Richard LeSueur



BENEATH THE towering umber faces of Mount Sinai lies a broad, empty valley called the Plain of Waiting. Bounded by peaks that rise sharply out of

the south Sinai, the Plain of Waiting is where tradition says the people of Israel waited and waited in a howling desolation. Dislocated from familiar things, reduced to a marginal existence, they grew more and more anxious. To their leader Moses they repeatedly cried, “Did you bring us out into this wilderness that we might die?”

To be alive in this time of global pandemic is to occupy a “plain of waiting.” We wait for a vaccine. We wait for the number of active cases to reduce. We wait for the end of a “second wave.” We wait for the easing of restrictions. We wait.

As he left them to climb the mountain, Moses had told them to wait. Weeks had passed. His absence stoked anxiety. They had come so far, leaving everything behind. They knew they would never go back. They had fled, accepting the challenging reaches of wilderness. In trust they had followed their leaders’ directions, moving into an unknown and desolate landscape, clinging to the hope of a land promised; a new and safer future.

Last April when the virus claimed precious life after life, and spread quickly across the globe, whole populations fled into isolation and accepted the diminishment of an uncertain and unknown landscape. New leaders emerged in the form of chief medical officers and immunologists to guide this flight into the desert. Their directions, and those of our politicians, were at first clear and resolute. Urban areas around the world willingly accepted the complete shut-down of commerce, schools and social enterprise in a bid to survive this insidious contagion. In this new landscape we have learned much, fashioning new ways of connecting, working and surviving together. We have adapted to a strange and fearsome reality.

The books of Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Joshua testify that when Israel came up out of the desert at the end of the Exodus, they carried a host of new realities

fashioned in the wilderness. The record maintains that the desert gave them the Tabernacle, the priesthood, the service of the Levites, the Sanhedrin (a pattern of religious-political governance), the Torah and the twelve tribes. Biblical scholars caution that some of these developments might have come later after the Exodus or might not have emerged from the desert sojourn so fully formed. However, the principle message was that the wilderness, for all its hardships, wanderings and waiting, became a birthing-room of the divine new. Rather than a stagnant and aimless period in Israel’s history it broke



Photo/Richard LeSueur

The Sinai wilderness is seen at dusk.

open to become a landscape of revelation, discovery, renewal and transformation.

The Song of Songs (3.6) asks, “Who is she who comes up out of the wilderness?” Is it too soon in our experience to ask, what is the spirituality that is arising out of this time of pandemic? What might we hear from the desert tradition by seeing our situation against this ancient background?

The Plain of Waiting is a harsh landscape of broken rock and sharp grains of granite. There is no sand on which to set your bedroll as you sleep in the open, beneath the stars. The wind blows down

the mountain passes and whistles through the camp at night. You shiver even in the summer. High above, against a sparkling galaxy, the dark silhouette of Mount Sinai carves an ominous blackness. One might ask, “Who am I, in this forlorn and empty place, this landscape of Genesis?” The answer comes, “I am nothing more than a grain of sand blowing through this valley of waiting, wrapped in a pervasive silence.”

The Hebrew word for the silence of the desert is “damam.” The Semitic root for this word is but one letter different from “dam” meaning “blood.” What we hear in the silence of the desert is the sound of our own blood and thus we are bought nearer to the essence of our being. We hear ourselves. Removed from the bustle and preoccupations of life, the soul is permitted to inhale and turn inwards.

In mid-March the pandemic drove us into our homes, drove us inside. For many this isolation brought a void of distressing loneliness. For some it also introduced an unfamiliar intimacy; parents teaching their children, families doing crafts and puzzles, a surge of outdoor activities, couples rediscovering each other. While these many months have been stressful it also seems true that this interval in the year 2020 has stirred a level of connectedness that perhaps did not previously exist.

One of the ways the Bedouin manage the scale of the wilderness is to periodically stop, settle in the shade of a large rock, light a small fire and sip strong tea. They sit talking, telling stories, connecting. The Psalmist sings, “O Lord my rock, my fortress in whom I take refuge.” As the pace of life slows, its spaciousness permits new con-

continued on page J

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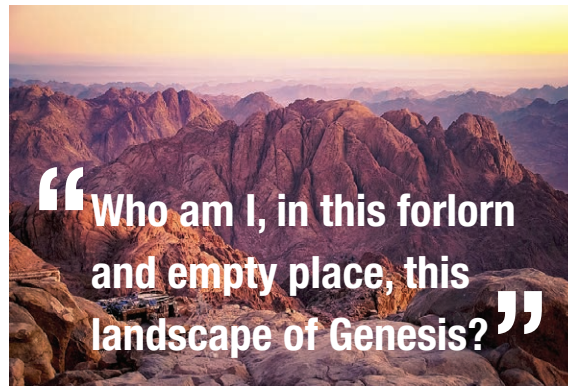
WAITING continued from page 1

versations to arise, connections to deepen and the journey of life to be viewed afresh.

As much as this period of the pandemic has slowed our lives and slowed our economy, it has also accelerated realities that, if present before, were not yet fully appreciated and developed. The application of the internet is revealing multiple benefits in new work patterns and on line learning. One can anticipate a reduction in business travel with long-distance conferencing managed remotely. Alternative work-at-home options or employee-work-clusters in suburbs or rural areas are for many introducing a reduction of stress, commuting and transit while reducing green house gasses in urban skies. The captivation with the inner city is already deflating as we see increased interest in rural real estate as urbanites seek healthier lifestyles and a rebalancing of the work-life equation. Many say they can hardly wait for things to return to what they knew; pleasure travel, commerce, etc. However, in the desert one does not go back: the movement is forward. Many things will be different in 2021, 2022 and beyond.

On the Plain of Waiting the people of Israel lost hope. They began to doubt if God was with them or even real. The same can be true of the church. The pandemic has been hard on faith. Dislocation from corporate worship has been a significant loss. For some, the months of absence

from our churches have brought a faith that seems thin and empty, at times even meaningless. In the present reality some of us find ourselves with a disturbing question. Is it only because we are not worshipping with others, not sharing Eucharist, not singing our faith, not gathering in fellowship or serving with friends, that faith



seems so strangely faint? Or is it possible that this isolation from church is revealing the margins of our spirituality? The solitude of the desert directs us inward.

Two-thirds of the way up the length of the Plain of Waiting is an oasis. It is the only way the people of Israel could have survived there. For the Bedouin an oasis is a gift of God. If a well is dug in the wilderness and water is found, then the Bedouin say that well can be claimed, defended and built upon. But the oasis, as a gift of God, exists for all life. It cannot be claimed. In the desolation of the wilderness the oasis appears as a flash of green seen far in the distance. The tips of

tall palm trees signal salvation. The heart leaps. The weary pilgrim arrives under the gentle palms to find living water, welcome, solace from the heat of the day and shade from a blistering sun.

Western Christianity must find this oasis again. For too long we have been building. We have built boundaries with our theologies, boundaries in practices, boundaries in preferences, even in towering walls. We have named those boundaries, relished the aestheticism of our creations, and magnificent they are. But it is also possible that we have become over-identified with such boundaries; reinforcing them, retaining them and relying upon them. Much of what we have come to know and love as worshipping Christians will remain, yet we also know that we ourselves shall have been changed by our desert

journey, changed in ways we have yet to discover.

When the wilderness comes in our lives, it is never a destination but a way to pass through by stages; a harsh reality to be survived. It is a way of wandering and waiting, a place of anxiety and longing. And yet, what the Scriptures show is that the desert is the place where God shapes us for the future we are being prepared to enter.

If this is so, we need to embrace this landscape, to find hope in its quiet spaces, to believe that a simple bush can light with the fire of God's presence and call. And when the time comes that we emerge from this pandemic we will feel deeply for those who perished in this desert — physically, financially or psychologically.

On many journeys in the wilderness of the Sinai, I have learnt what I believe to be the four rules of the desert. I also believe them to be true for the church of our time:

Never go alone

Take only what you can carry

Anticipate anxiety

Wait upon the Lord.

And the God of Jesus Christ will surely bless us. ■

The Rev. Richard LeSueur was formerly the director of the Desert Program at St. George's College in Jerusalem and more recently served as its Acting Dean. He has continued a ministry of teaching and pilgrimage in the biblical lands for 25 years. He resides in western Canada. This article was originally published by the Anglican Journal (www.anglicanjournal.com).

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Episcopal Actors' Guild offers aid to New York performers as pandemic devastates livelihoods

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The sharp economic downturn in the United States during the coronavirus pandemic has hit the performing arts industry particularly hard. Nationwide, more than half of all actors and dancers and more than a quarter of all musicians were out of work as of fall 2020, according to the National Endowment for the Arts.

In New York, where Broadway theaters have been closed since March and may not reopen for months, some struggling artists have received much needed support from the Episcopal Actors' Guild, a small but dedicated charity that has been serving the performing arts community for nearly a century.

The organization, based on the second floor of Manhattan's Church of the Transfiguration, is best known for its food pantry and for the annual grants it awards to actors and other performers to help them pay their bills. The pandemic has increased the demand for both services. "We've been doing our part just to get people some financial relief and to get some food on their table," Karen Lehman Foster, the Episcopal Actors' Guild executive director, told Episcopal News Service.

The number of people applying for grants increased fourfold early in the pandemic, she said, and the number receiving food has grown steadily, from about 50 a month before the pandemic to up to 150 a month recently. Much of the organization's food distribution has shifted from in-person grocery pickups to store gift cards and online orders, to minimize the need for personal contact. "Each month, we are spending more in that area because it seems to be the biggest need," Lehman Foster said.

The Episcopal Actors' Guild is an ecumenical ministry open to performing artists of all faiths — or no faith — though it is deeply rooted in the history of Church of the Transfiguration, which is known fondly as the "little church around the corner." The congregation founded the Episcopal Actors' Guild in 1923 and still supports the organization, both by pro-



Photo/Episcopal Actors' Guild via YouTube

viding office and gathering space for free and by collecting food and monetary donations from parishioners.

"We're part of one another," the Rev. John David van Dooren, Transfiguration's rector, told ENS. "We're grafted together."

Van Dooren noted that there is a plaque on one of the church's pews honoring the Oscar-winning stage and film actor Rex Harrison, who once was a lay reader at the church. Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks were early leaders of the Episcopal Actors' Guild. The legendary dancer and actor Fred Astaire, who was confirmed at Church of the Transfiguration, regularly donated to the Episcopal Actors' Guild in gratitude for supporting him as a young man, van Dooren said.

The church's stained-glass windows also spotlight the Episcopal congregation's connection to the arts community, with images of saints alternating with panes depicting actors. Today, the church keeps a collection bin in the back of the church for donations to the Episcopal Actors' Guild food pantry. "We assist them whenever we can," van Dooren said.

The guild offers \$750 grants once a



Episcopal Actors' Guild volunteers (pre-pandemic) sort food for the Actors' Pantry.

The Guild's lapel buttons and food pantry motto reflects the support the organization gives performers.

year to residents of New York, where the cost of living is among the highest in the country. Recipients are limited to those who have been performing for at least five years and have a compelling need for assistance, such as a sudden job loss. Performers with disabilities and seniors can qualify for \$1,000 grants. Those who qualify also can receive groceries from the Episcopal Actors' Guild food pantry every two weeks.

That kind of assistance is much appreciated by actors like Sandro Isaack, who first learned of the guild in 2017, when his career was temporarily sidelined by a surgery that wasn't covered by his insurance.

"The Episcopal Actors' Guild paid for a large part of my surgery," said Isaack, a 47-year-old Brazil native. He told ENS he also received food from the organization's pantry.

Before the pandemic disrupted in-person services, the Episcopal Actors' Guild hosted workshops and offered

continued on page 0

“The Black Church” includes an Episcopal presence

By Episcopal Journal

Episcopal Presiding Bishop Michael Curry is among the faith figures in “The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song,” a new four-hour, two-part documentary series by noted historian and Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

The series premiered Feb. 16 and 17 on PBS stations nationwide and is available via PBS on various streaming services.

Gates traces the 400-year-old story of the Black church in America as the source of “African American survival and grace, organizing and resilience, thriving and testifying, autonomy and freedom, solidarity and speaking truth to power.

“The documentary reveals how Black people have worshipped and, through their spiritual journeys, improvised ways to bring their faith traditions from Africa to the New World, while translating them into a form of Christianity that was not only truly their own, but a redemptive force for a nation whose original sin was found in their ancestors’ enslavement across the Middle Passage,” according to the PBS description.

Besides Curry, Gates interviews Oprah Winfrey; musician John Legend; actress Jennifer Hudson, civil rights leaders the Rev. Al Sharpton and the Rev. William Barber II and gospel legends Yolanda Adams, Pastor Shirley Caesar and BeBe Winans.

Gates and Curry discuss the powerful influence of music in the Black church and the emotional pull of traditional spirituals.

“When somebody starts singing in a certain way,” Curry said, “folk, inside, start reacting and responding. And eventually, there may be shouts and there may be silence, but something is moving inside. And that’s where the Black church is found: in those heartbeats.”

“And that heartbeat comes from Africa,” Gates said. “Straight from Africa,” Curry agreed. “No doubt about it. And it has been integrated with the Christian story and experience.”

Gates himself has Episcopal roots, although he is shown in the series attending his childhood church, Waldon United Methodist Church in Piedmont, W.Va. His mother’s family was from West Virginia.

Gates now is famously the host of “Finding Your Roots,” the PBS show that traces the family histories of celebrity guests.

However, his interest was sparked much earlier. In an article for *The New Yorker*, written in 2008 and titled “Family Matters,” Gates wrote about his paternal grandfather, Edward St. Lawrence Gates, known as Pop Gates to his family. He lived in Cumberland, Md.

“Pop Gates was buried at the Rose Hill Cemetery, where our forebears were among the very few Negroes allowed to disturb



Photo/Henry Louis Gates, Jr. via Facebook

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry appears in “The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is our Song,” interviewed by Prof. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

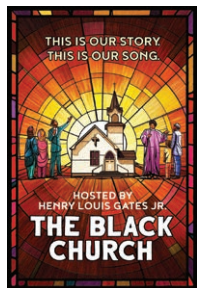
the eternal sleep of Cumberland’s elite white Episcopal citizenry.

“The town’s Episcopal churches had been segregated at least since the black St. Philips offered its first Communion, on June 19, 1910. That day, the church’s records show, Pop, his mother, Maud, his wife, Gertrude Helen Redman, and about half a dozen other Gateses took the Sacrament, which was offered by the Diocese of Maryland’s white bishop.”

His documentary on the Black church, said Gates, is “a systematic exploration of the myriad ways in which African Americans have worshipped God in their own images, and continue to do so today, from the plantation and prayer houses, to camp meetings

and store-front structures, to mosques and mega-churches.

“This is the story and song our ancestors bequeathed to us, and it comes at a time in our country when the very things they struggled and died for — faith and freedom, justice and equality, democracy and grace — all are on the line. No social institution in the Black community is more central and important than the Black church,” he said. ■



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Rejoice, revere or condemn — the Easter story by Hollywood

By Linda Brooks



DO YOU LAUGH watching a comedy, cheer a superhero adventure, hide your eyes during a violent horror film? The story structures are similar but each is a variation on familiar old themes.

In Easter-themed films, the storyline is consistent, yet our own personal beliefs affect our perceptions. Our expectations of what should be shown in films about Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are often different from the director's concept.

How do changing social norms affect our viewing? Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection have been interpreted differently on film over the past decades as social norms have changed in American society.

In the post-war conservative era of the 1950s to the early 1960s, "The Robe" (1953) and "Ben-Hur" (1959) were, and still are, considered great epic films. Their stories are not specifically about Jesus' crucifixion, but about the influence Jesus had on the main characters.

Jesus is not so much shown, as felt. The actors portraying him are rarely seen and not credited. The average moviegoer is expected to identify with the main characters. To show a well known actor's face as Jesus could be a distraction. Though they are still staples on television around Easter, they may seem a bit slow (except for the "Ben-Hur" chariot scene) to modern viewers.

"The Greatest Story Ever Told" (1965) was a four-hour star-studded epic told in two parts, the first being Jesus' birth and

part two being Jesus' death and resurrection.

Swedish actor Max von Sydow was chosen for the role of Jesus specifically because he was not known to American audiences. Sydow became the "face" of Christ for years.

When released, critics and the public were divided. The subject matter was revered, but the film was considered too long, boring and slow. It still has its admirers today, so perhaps part of the criticism reflected changing tastes in films themselves.

By 1965, America was in a period of upheaval and audiences were interested in stories that reflected those changes, rather than period Bible stories.

To reach the youthful baby-boomer generation in the 1970s, a more modern approach to the Easter story was needed. In 1973, "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Godspell," based on Broadway musicals, presented Christ and his followers as lively counter-culture young people.

"Jesus Christ Superstar" blended modern and biblical costumes and set design. The final crucifixion scene was a montage of ancient paintings. "Godspell" dressed its characters in bright colored costumes filmed against deserted grey New York City streets with Christ crucified against a chain link fence.

The pop culture approach brought the Jesus story to a young audience in much the same way "Hamilton" introduced a new generation to American history.

Pope Paul VI loved "Jesus Christ Superstar" and felt it would reach

more people with its modern interpretation. But it was criticized as anti-Semitic and conservative Christians considered it blasphemous by portraying Jesus as a young man with sexual urges for Mary Magdalene.

An older audience comfortable with Christ's depiction in earlier films was not comfortable with this new interpretation. The conflict of what people wanted to see vs what is being shown continued.

Today sex and violence is so commonplace in film that it has crossed a line into the Easter story for the sake of "realism" and with strong backlash.

Martin Scorsese's R-rated film "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988) offers an alternate reality for Jesus. Tempted by the devil disguised as an innocent young girl, he is offered a peaceful life. Only as an old man does he realize what he must do and returns to the cross to sacrifice himself for the sins of man.

The film spurred protests and boycotts, death threats to Scorsese and an attack on a cinema in Paris that injured 13 people. It is ironic that people would act out with violence the very things they found objectionable in the film. Perhaps the devil's temptation reached deeper into people's perception of what should be interpreted than what Scorsese intended.

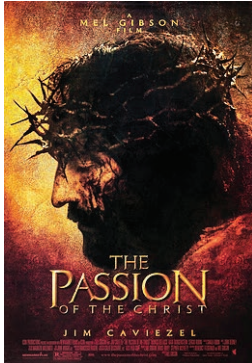
Also R-rated, Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" (2004) is not for



MOVIES continued from page N

the faint of heart. Violently depicting the last 12 hours of Jesus' life, the film's interpretation is based on Gibson's deep Catholic beliefs. Those holding similar beliefs felt that seeing the violence of Jesus' sacrifice brought them closer to their faith.

Mainstream Christians had the opposite reaction. Rotten Tomatoes website reviewed it as leaving viewers "emotionally drained rather than spiritually uplifted." Time magazine listed it as one of the most "ridiculously violent" films of all time.



The theme of Christ's crucifixion has been unchanged for centuries — Christ died

for our sins so we would have hope for salvation — yet how do we perceive that in our ever-changing world?

What is the visual storytelling arc that goes from witnessing a violent gruesome death to creating a mood of belief and hope in resurrection? The variety of how it is portrayed in film reflects the same variety of our own individual viewpoint of the event so pivotal to our Christian beliefs.

Perhaps we choose to believe that Christ should only be viewed through the prism of light from heaven and not looked at directly. We may turn away in fear — or embrace that light.

Or do we view Christ as being with us, celebrating in song. Do we joyously thank him for his sacrifice, appreciating the beauty of the world he has given us? Do we see him as being human and fearful and tempted by the offer of an easy life rather than sacrifice, as we ourselves could also be tempted? Or do we see the more probable realism of the violence and torture that occurred in ancient times?

How we interpret these films is how we individually interpret the Easter story. We are not just observers of Christ's journey, we are also participants. ■

Linda Brooks is the art director for Episcopal Journal.

ACTORS continued from page L

professional development opportunities to performing artists. After his recovery from surgery, Isaack volunteered to help lead some of those workshops, drawing on his more than 30 years of experience in theater and TV productions.

"One hand reaching out makes you want to reach out your hand to someone in need," Isaack said.

The performing arts industry is cyclical and unpredictable even in normal times, Lehman Foster, the guild's executive director, said. "It's a great industry, but it's not very stable," she said. "Shows open and shows close and TV shoots get canceled, so people are sort of left high and dry, sometimes somewhat unexpectedly."

The Episcopal Actors' Guild receives most of its financial backing from foundation grants, though it also raises money through benefit events, such as the Christmas show it organized online in December with the House of the Redeemer, another Episcopal-affiliated charity. The event, which included performances by Broadway singers, raised about \$2,500, Lehman Foster said.

Lehman Foster is trained as an actor and has a degree in social services. When she began working for the Episcopal Actors' Guild in 2006, it "seemed to be a good mix" of her two professional passions — theater and the nonprofit sector. She was promoted to executive di-



Foster

rector two years later, and though raised Roman Catholic, she and her family have grown close to the congregation at Transfiguration. She and her husband were married in the church, and they baptized their daughter there.

The Episcopal Actors' Guild doesn't proselytize through its ministry, but performance can be a spiritual practice, Lehman Foster said, even for those who aren't religious. "I think when people perform, that is a divinely inspired thing," she said. "A lot of performers talk about the spirit moving through them."

With the increased demand for the organization's services during the pandemic, Lehman Foster estimated that the guild has served food to more than 600 people in the past year and given out about 300 grants.

"When we think about it, it really is devastating what is happening in the performing arts community," she said, "but we're really glad that we're able to be here to help people." ■



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Washington cathedral, Lucado apologize after controversial preacher's appearance

By David Paulsen

Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Max Lucado has apologized in a letter to Washington National Cathedral after his invitation to preach in a cathedral worship service sparked outrage over his past statements about homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

Lucado, a popular evangelical author and pastor, said in the letter dated Feb. 11 that he still believes in “the traditional biblical understanding of marriage” but now regrets the words he used in a 2004 sermon and article.

Critics have condemned his comparison of same-sex marriage to legalized polygamy, bestiality and incest and his suggestion that homosexuality is something that can be changed by pastoral care.

“I now see that, in that sermon, I was disrespectful. I was hurtful. I wounded people in ways that were devastating,” Lucado said in his Feb. 11 letter, a copy of which was obtained by ENS. “It grieves me that my words have hurt or been used to hurt the LGBTQ community. I apologize to you and I ask forgiveness of Christ.”

Lucado’s apology comes a day after National Cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith and Washington Bishop Mariann Budde issued parallel apologies for inviting Lucado to preach by prerecorded video and then failing to heed calls to rescind the invitation after Lucado’s 2004 statements were condemned.

Hollerith and Budde also were to hold a listening session on Feb. 21 to receive additional feedback from the LGBTQ



Photos/Washington National Cathedral

Retired Bishop Gene Robinson presided at Washington National Cathedral’s livestreamed worship service. The Rev. Max Lucado, inset, preached in a prerecorded video submitted for the service.

community.

Budde and Hollerith both spoke of the pain the decision had caused many members of the LGBTQ community. Budde, in her statement, quoted with permission from a dozen of the people who wrote to her in protest. Hollerith said people had reached out to him as well, and he acknowledged he had erred in not listening to their calls to rescind the invitation to Lucado.

“In my straight privilege I failed to see and fully understand the pain he has caused,” Hollerith said. “I failed to appreciate the depth of injury his words have had on many in the LGBTQ community. I failed to see the pain I was continuing. I was wrong and I am sorry.”

The outrage continued, despite retired Bishop Gene Robinson’s prominent

defense of the cathedral. Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church when he was consecrated in 2003 in New Hampshire, agreed to a request by Hollerith to come to the cathedral on Feb. 7 and preside at the online service that featured Lucado.

Now retired and living in Washington, D.C., Robinson told ENS he wanted to show his support for the cathedral as it faced criticism for inviting Lucado.

Robinson addressed the more than 6,000 people viewing the cathedral’s livestream. “To those of us who are LGBTQ, while a lot of us are still in pain, while a lot of us have experienced some awful things in our lives — we’ve won.

“We know how this is going to end. This is going to end with the full inclusion of gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer people, nonbinary people, all kinds of people, in the church and into the society. We work every day to make that true, but we know how it ends,” Robinson said.

Like Hollerith, Budde said she should have heeded the appeals of those who were questioning the cathedral’s decision to invite Lucado as its latest guest preacher.

“In the days since, I have heard from those who were not only wounded by things Max Lucado has said and taught, but equally wounded by the decision to welcome him into the Cathedral’s pulpit,”

continued on page Q

**REAL ISSUES,
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New Lent and Easter resources are available

New and updated Lent and Easter resources for congregations, dioceses, and communities of faith are available from the Episcopal Church, including Updated Life Transformed – The Way of Love in Lent curriculum; Sermons That Work for Holy Week and Easter; a new podcast series, Prophetic Voices: Preaching and Teaching Beloved Community.

Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent: The journey through Lent into Easter is a journey with Jesus. We are baptized into his life, self-giving, and death, then we rise in hope to life transformed. This Lent, faith communities will be invited to walk with Jesus in his Way of Love and into the experience of transformed life. Access this curriculum here.



Updated and expanded Way of Love resources for Lent and Easter include: an eight-video series, an Adult Forum, a Quiet Day curriculum, a customizable publicity poster, and a daily practice calendar. For the first time, resources are now offered in French as well as English and Spanish. Way of Love resources can be used across all seasons. (Format: Digital download. Videos are in English with

English, Spanish and French captions) **Prophetic Voices: Preaching and Teaching Beloved Community:** This new podcast series is hosted by the Rev. Isaiah “Shaneequa” Brokenleg, Episcopal Church staff officer for Racial Reconciliation. Across our church and our society, we are having profound dialogues about race, truth, justice, and healing. Join Brokenleg and invited guests for this six-episode series as they share prophetic voices and explore the readings for Ash Wednesday and each day of Holy Week and Easter through the lens of social justice. Learn more about this podcast here. (In English only)

Sermons That Work/Sermones que Iluminan: Sermons for Holy Week and Easter: These sermons are offered for private devotional use or with a small group. Sermons That Work in English include offerings for every day of Holy Week plus Easter; Sermones que Iluminan in Spanish include offerings for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Day. (Format: Digital download. In English and Spanish)

Additional seasonal resources include: **Teaching and Preaching: Churches Revisioning Unity in Christ Through**

the Holidays: Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), an ecumenical multilateral dialogue among ten Protestant faith communions in the USA including The Episcopal Church, offer new, ecumenical resources for reimaging Lent with a focus on hope and racial reconciliation. These resources include reflections from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, and other leaders of CUIC member churches (In English only).

d365: Daily Devotionals: The Episcopal Church Youth Ministries Office sponsors online daily devotions with their Presbyterian USA and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship partners through d365.org. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and continuing through Lent, Holy Week, and the First Week of Easter, the website’s theme shifts to “Journey to the Cross” Artwork to support this theme is also available for download via the share tab on the landing page menu (In English only).

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) Lenten Devotion Series: Featuring reflections from a wide range of authors throughout EMM’s network of supporters and friends, the devotions are available on the EMM website and by email.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office



LUCADO continued from page P

Budde said. “I didn’t realize how deep those wounds were and how unsafe the world can feel. I should have known better. More than apology, we seek to make amends.”

ENS reached out to Lucado and his church several times late last week and early this week, seeking comment on whether his views on homosexuality have evolved. Church staff members said he was unavailable.

His letter to the cathedral does not specify how much of what he said in 2004 he still believes. “Faithful people may disagree about what the Bible says about homosexuality, but we agree that God’s holy Word must never be used as a weapon to wound others,” he wrote in his apology letter.

“LGBTQ individuals and LGBTQ families must be respected and treated with love. They are beloved children of God because, they are made in the image

and likeness of God,” Lucado’s letter says. “Over centuries, the church has harmed LGBTQ people and their families, just as the church has harmed people on issues of race, gender, divorce, addiction, and so many other things. We must do better to serve and love one another.”

Lucado is a bestselling author of self-help books and the pastor of Oak Hills Church, a megachurch in San Antonio, Texas. His 22-minute sermon for the cathedral’s Feb. 7 livestreamed service focused on easing life’s anxieties by feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit.

It did not include references to sexuality or same-sex marriage, but critics argued that the cathedral never should have

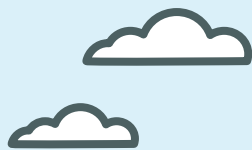
granted him the privilege of preaching, given the harm caused by his past statements on homosexuality and the lack of evidence that he had disavowed them.

“Deep pain was caused to the LGBTQ community by our invitation to Max Lucado to preach at the Cathedral last Sunday,” Kevin Eckstrom, the cathedral’s chief communications officer, told ENS by email.

“We appreciate him acknowledging the pain his past remarks have caused, and we hope that he will find a way to truly listen to those who have been hurt by his words. For us, here as the Cathedral, we are now in the mode of listening to our community so we can do better going forward.” ■



Washington National Cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith speaks during the Feb. 7 livestreamed worship service.



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2021 Lenten Kindness Calendar



Pray for yourself
Say a prayer for yourself - whatever is in your heart or weighing on your mind today, offer it to God.

Give something away
Give something away - to a friend, a sibling, or to an agency that will use it (like Goodwill).

Forgive someone
Forgive someone who has hurt you.

Bake cookies for someone
Bake cookies for someone. Need a simple recipe? Visit here for some ideas.

Worship with Trinity, Iowa City
Worship this morning with Trinity, Iowa City at 10am

Make a playlist
Make a list of songs for someone in your life and share it with them.

Be patient
Be patient with someone who it is hard to be patient with.

Pick up litter
Pick up litter in your neighborhood or town.



Do a chore
Do a chore without being asked

Listen
Listen to someone today. Really listen

TV
Let someone else pick what you watch on TV tonight.

Worship with St. Timothy's, West Des Moines
Worship this morning with St. Timothy's, West Des Moines at 10:15am

Give a compliment
Give someone a compliment in person or on social media.

Smile at someone
Smile at someone who looks sad.

Ask for help
Ask someone for help. You can ask God, a friend, a family member, or someone else you trust.

Donate to a local charity
Donate clothes, toys, books or money to a local charity.



Write a Thank You
Write a Thank You to a teacher

Leave some change
Drop some coins into someone else's meter or tape some money to a vending machine.

Worship with St. Alban's, Spirit Lake
Worship today with St. Alban's, Spirit Lake at 11am

Pennies
Leave some pennies heads up for others

Write a card
Write a card to someone you haven't seen in a while.

Check in with a neighbor
Check-in or talk to a neighbor

Say Thank You
Say thank you to a local business

Pray for someone
Pray for someone who has made you angry



Tell someone how much they mean to you
Tell someone in your life how much they mean to you.

Worship with Trinity, Muscatine
Worship with Trinity, Muscatine at 10am

Feed the birds
Feed the birds or other animals

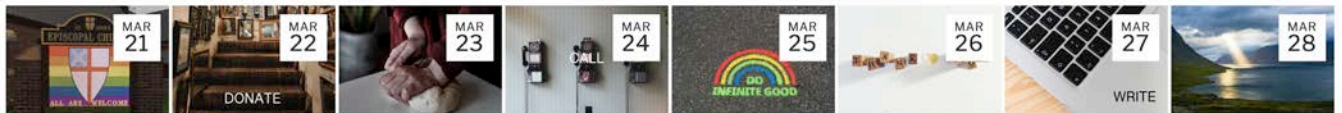
Tell
Tell a teacher/deacon/priest how much they mean to you

Leave a kindness rock or token outside

Take a book to a Little Free Library
Take a book to a Little Free Library near you

Make a homemade gift for someone
Make a homemade gift for someone - it doesn't have to be elaborate

Pray for someone hurting
Pray for someone that you know is hurting today



Worship with St. John's, Mason City
Worship at 10:00am online with St. John's in Mason City

Donate something
Donate something to your local Goodwill or to someone in need

Bake something
Bake something for someone - some bread or cookies - to warm their day

Call a family member
Call a family member - maybe someone you haven't talked to in a while

Pay it forward
Pay it forward (do something nice for someone)

Tell someone Thank You
Say Thank You to someone in your life

Write to someone at church
Write a card or letter to someone you admire at church

Worship
Worship with your home church today, or with one of the churches you worshiped with the past few weeks



Repeat
Repeat one of the activities that was hardest for you.

Repeat
Repeat one of the activities that was hardest for you.

Repeat
Repeat one of the activities that was hardest for you.

Repeat
Repeat one of the activities that was hardest for you.

Repeat
Repeat one of the activities that was hardest for you.

Repeat
Repeat one of the activities that was hardest for you.

Easter Sunday
The Lord has risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!



Bishop Search Timeline

May-June

The slate of candidates is announced and a process is opened to nominate candidates by petition

June-July

Diocesan Meet and Greets held at different locations (and livestreamed) offer opportunities to hear from each candidate

July 31

The Electing Convention will be held at the Des Moines Marriot Downtown beginning at 1:00pm (doors open at 12:30pm)

December 18

The consecration of the Tenth Bishop of Iowa