



Iowa **Connections**

WINTER 2020

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 4

A Season of Truth and Healing

Bishop Scarfe's Convention Sermon

In the current climate I found myself wondering how Jesus would fare in a Presidential Debate? He certainly had his critics, and he handled them well. We think of Jesus as a person of few words, and yet able to speak directly to every issue raised. As a questioner, you walked away like the Pharisees—not really wanting to ask another question, or you were completely silenced like the Sadducees.

The young lawyer to whom Jesus gave the same answer as in this case went away confused. He prompted Jesus to tell the story of the Good Samaritan. And a little bit like Moses—he was almost in the Kingdom. Jesus saw through his opponents. He recognized their motives, and so in a way He saw them coming. He also lived by the two commandments which he called “the greatest.”

He loved God with all his heart, soul and mind. He loved His neighbor as Himself.

And these were the two pillars on which He rested all his arguments. He knew Himself within the framework of loving God and loving His neighbor. It is a far cry from the situation in which we set up our own leaders, where each has to best the other while we all watch on. And I would think that if Jesus' answer to the tricky question posed to Him about God and taxes, as in last week's Gospel reading, is anything to go by, He might have found many of our questions equal non-starters with that one. He could distinguish between “apples and oranges.” Yes, the tax question has to be answered, because Caesar is demanding it be so; but there's no equivalency here between God and Caesar. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's; and then to God what is God's, and on the way notice how that includes everything that is claimed by Caesar!

Jesus often placed Himself in “both/and” positions; and yet for Him there was still one essential “Yes/No” or binary question

that everyone had to answer. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind; and (out of that place) love your neighbor as yourself.” It wasn't a novel idea, but centuries old. But generally one not well assumed by the human race.

The right way to live, as expressed by the law and the prophets, rests on these two realities. It is the reality that Jesus lived by. It is the reality that led Him to the cross. Because it is a reality that reveals, even to this day, the self-interest of religious leaders and political leaders alike.

Where on earth would we be if we had built a community based on these two principles of belovedness? What economy would grow from there? How would we view our beautiful diversity as a human race? It has been a Promised Land of every generation.

It's what Moses wished for as God took him up Mt. Pisgah to look over the Jordan.

Now I have always felt sorry for Moses. He went through a lot to get to that place. It began in earnest, of course, when he came across a burning bush! He probably considered himself peacefully retired by then, when God came calling. He faced his inner demons of fear in standing up to Pharaoh, the ruler he had once run away from. Ultimately, he dared to believe in the power of God to release his people from slavery. He had obeyed and stuck out his staff to see the Red Sea divide; and he'd endured the last forty years of his life leading a rather ungrateful and critical group of murmuring people, to put it mildly.

Finally, he had arrived with them to the edge of the Promised land. By scriptural tradition, however, he couldn't enter because on one occasion—just one occasion—he had hesitated with a divine command. God said “Speak to the Rock” to have water flow out of it; and Moses struck the Rock with his trusty staff. And I think he struck it twice!

It all seems a bit picky on God's part. And not in line with the intimate conversations God and Moses had, especially when Israel began to revolt. It is also clear that God loved Moses, and had offered to start all over with a people from Moses' descendancy during the Golden Calf episode. And it was



Bishop Scarfe celebrating at the Convention Eucharist

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The Simple Way

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

Online worship for the diocese will continue to be offered each week on Sunday at 10:00am. The service will be found on the diocesan Facebook page, the diocesan YouTube channel, and will be available on the diocesan website.

Call-in option for members who only have access to phones (participants on the phone will NOT be able to be heard but will be able to hear the service): 312 626 6799 and enter the Meeting ID as prompted: 365 765 527#

December

- 6 Diocesan worship offered by St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 12 Dismantling Racism: Training for Church Leaders (online) 10:00-2:30pm
- 13 Diocesan worship offered by St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 17 Listening at Lunch 12:00pm
- 20 Diocesan worship offered by St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 24 Diocesan worship for Christmas Eve offered by St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 7:00pm
- 25 Diocesan worship for Christmas Day offered by St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Des Moines 10:00am
- 27 Diocesan Christmas Lessons and Carols 10:00am

January

- 3 Diocesan worship offered by Christ Church, Cedar Rapids 10:00am
- 10 Diocesan worship offered by Christ Church, Cedar Rapids 10:00am
- 17 Diocesan worship offered youth across the diocese 10:00am
- 24 Diocesan worship offered by TBA 10:00am

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

In This Issue

- 2 From the Bishop
- 4 Bishop's Convention Address
- 10 Reflections on a Virtual Convention
- 11 Bishop Search Team
- 12 Bishop Search Transition Committee
- 13 Trinity Iowa City supports learning in more ways than one during the pandemic
- 14 An Armchair Pilgrimage: Iowa's Episcopal "Dollhouse" Churches
- 17 A Gathering on Liturgical Formation
- 18 Let's Have Coffee
- 19 Just when you thought Christmas was over—it's Epiphany!
- 20 Stewardship Share

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Bishop Scarfe's Convention Address

given at the virtual meeting of the 168th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Iowa

It is always good to remind ourselves that “since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.” And that “we do not proclaim ourselves, we proclaim Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as servants. For it is God who said “Let light shine out of the darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus.” Further, “we have this treasure (of divine light) in earthen vessels so that it may be made clear that the extraordinary power (of our shining this light) belongs to God and does not come from us.” And if we are “afflicted in every way, we are not crushed; if we are perplexed, we are not driven to despair; if persecuted, not forsaken; if struck down, we are not destroyed.”

These are of course not my words but those of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4:1-9). They seem incredibly relevant for our times. And were in fact part of a bible study on resilience, offered to ecumenical judicatory leaders earlier this month. It’s all about being in this year of COVID-19, in which the question we ask one another is “How are you? Where are you? What do you hear God saying to you? Along, of course, with ‘Keep safe.’”

Incredible things happen in times like these; amazing possibilities of the Spirit manifest themselves; and God likes to use such moments to show up and call out our names like never before.

Consider Isaiah and Ezekiel—both counted back to trying times as the occasion of God’s call to them to become God’s prophetic voices. Isaiah was in the temple fulfilling his family’s priestly duty when he saw the Lord High and Lifted up. Ezekiel sat with his people in the

devastated lands of exile. For him and his people, the hopes of the promised land and the sense of divine purpose had disappeared. For Isaiah, a great King had died and the anticipation of good things with him.

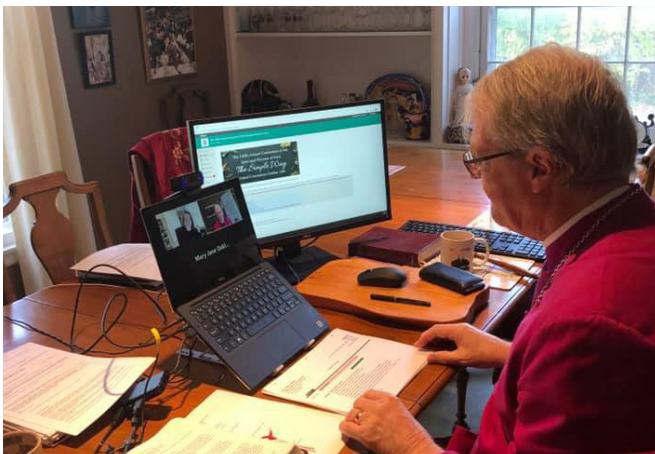
In the midst of their sorrow, despair, and confusion, God appears surrounded by the angelic host. Isaiah and Ezekiel see the same vision in different settings. And at the heart of the vision was a fire of burning coals—symbolizing God’s ability to make clean, forgive, and start life all over again. “Who will go for us?” God asks. “Here I am, Lord,” says Isaiah, “Send me!”—a promise which thousands of years later would become a rallying song calling us to mission and commitment.

So, against this backdrop, let me ask again: “In the year of COVID-19, how are we and where are we?”

As a diocese, we have been finding “the simple way.” We set off along that path this time last year. We were launching a new process of discovering God’s mission for us in our neighborhoods called Faithful Innovations; we were setting off in search for a new bishop, and this old one was getting ready for a farewell tour, and began making retirement plans. Like Isaiah and Ezekiel, we had every intention to continue faithfully in our duties before God. Some of us were going deeper into our craft of evangelism, or liturgical renewal, or public advocacy through our Engaging All Disciples cohorts. We were busy planting new missions like The Way Station in Spencer, or establishing the Beloved Community Initiative at Old Brick in Iowa City; others were boldly imagining the creation of a new congregation like the Trinity Cush Episcopal Church, nested in St Andrew’s, Des Moines. Yet a few were struggling to keep the doors open, as members naturally moved away. And personally, different ones of us were arranging weddings, planning to retire, getting ordained, tending to our elderly parents; trying to plan services of commemoration of beloved family and friends.

At the Board and Staff retreats in November 2019, we set out a course for the year based around our Convention theme of finding “the Simple Way” inspired by our keynote speaker, Shane Claiborne.

Something else, however, was incubating in the far distance; and by the turn of the year, or more precisely, as we approached Lent, we were entering “the year of the pandemic,” of COVID-19. In the locked-down silence of the streets and the consequential restful breathing of nature around us, in the confinement of our homes and



Bishop Scarfe at the Virtual Diocesan Convention, held using Whova on October 24, 2020

Address, *continued*

the enforced closeness of our families, in the tightening of our economies and the restricting of our social lives, I wonder—have we seen the Lord high and lifted up? Are we hearing God describe our state of being as God’s people and as nations? Is there a call of “who will go for us?” Do we still find ourselves following “the Simple Way” and are we responding: “Here I am. Send me”?

I think our response has been remarkable. We are living up to our calling as Paul described in his letter to the Corinthians. We took the appropriate actions asked of us—first by government with their basic requirements for keeping each other safe. As a diocese we formed a Task Force on Re-gathering that created guidelines to adapt safety measures to the specific needs of continuing as faithful witnesses of the Light we see in the face of Jesus. Vestries have taken to the task of creating localized plans; the diocesan office is set up remotely with each of us working from home, and we have been doubling our efforts to stay in touch and coordinate diocesan work, even as clergy and congregational leaders have taken to Zoom and the phone lines to keep in touch with their congregants. We have devised creative ways of experimenting and asking how we move the Church’s mission and devotion to God online. Virtual Church has emerged; and the discussion about virtual Eucharist with it.

So where is God finding us? Going remote; surfing the net; enriching our spiritual lives from a wide, even global resource; learning to worship virtually. And what is God revealing about our common life? The year of the pandemic has opened up the economic fissures among us, and the inequities of health care, and the brute reality of racial injustice, inequality and hatred. It has revealed the inadequacy of the economic approach of a competitive world over against a cooperative one, and it has shown how short a distance we have travelled in the fifty years since Martin Luther King Jr. warned that a people and world that refuses to co-exist, is in danger of co-annihilation. And even in nature’s brief and almost immediate manifestation of cleaner air and water, we saw how far we yet have to go in stewarding God’s earth, the gift of this planet. We are also seeing that we cannot get out of our own way in the deep divisions that afflict our body politic.

God calls out—who will go for us? And again I ask, “where does God’s call find us?” Still on “the Simple Way?” If so, we couldn’t be on a more appropriate path.

Now that our Diocesan profile for the Search for the Tenth Bishop of Iowa has been published and put

online, we have in fact recorded a partial answer to that challenge. Two key issues are set out on the introductory page, both of which will require immediate response from any new leadership: first, the consequential impact of COVID-19 and the challenge of learning from our virtual experience and recalibrating what we need to maintain and what we need to let go of; asking what shape will the Church take as we emerge from the pandemic; and second, our resolve to engage in the racial reckoning that is being demanded of us around the globe, sparked after the killing of George Floyd.

There is also a third aspect of our common life as a diocese that we read between the lines of the introductory invitation to our bishop prospects, and that is that we raise these two priorities of the moment because we are a people formed as followers of Jesus. We are a people seeking out God in our own spiritual experience, fostered by healing missions, revivals, and years dedicated to formation and seeking the ways to apply our formation practically in the love of our neighbor. This is primarily who we are, as those who proclaim not ourselves but proclaim Jesus as Lord, which, when the apostle Paul said it, were “fighting words” with an Emperor who believed that he had the sole right to that title. Lordship for Paul was not about patriarchy, but empire. And the personal cost of following Jesus in the civic and political realm were all too clear to him, and for all those who adopted Jesus’ “simple Way” of love.

Now you have probably heard of the lighter side of this passing year. How “the dumbest thing I ever purchased this year was a 2020 planner”; or that “I never thought the comment ‘I wouldn’t touch them with a six foot pole’ would become national policy!” Or how “the buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other.”

We need a sense of humor. Yet as we approach 225,000 dead and 8.4 million infected, this is tragic and serious business. It also challenges us fundamentally as people of faith. And we are responding. And that response is inspired by those we traditionally remember today in Convention and tomorrow in our Eucharist who have died among us since we last met. Among clergy, we give thanks to God for Bryan England, Ron Osborne, George Wharton, Jack Kilby, Don Payer and Steve Hall; and among diocesan leaders, Chuck Coulter. We will take time to receive resolutions for each of these beloved servants later in the proceedings.

continued on page 6

Address, *continued*



Bishop Scarfe, the Rev. Kim Turner Baker, and the Rev. Nicola Bowler at a protest in Des Moines.

Iowan Episcopalians joined in the street protests this summer and identified with Black Lives Matter. Some of us continue with this mission as it has sought to keep vigilant while engaging, searching and encouraging legislative or policy responses. The concept of there being a racial reckoning, goes beyond movement. It calls for repentance, repair and healing. And it is what has given rise to the significant resolution on Racial Truth and Healing, which we will consider later today. We are being asked to take the time to educate ourselves on this matter by listening to the experiences of persons of color, and to face the places of our own complicity and to embrace a resolve to seek ways of healing.

We have also begun addressing the more general question of how we shall be as Church during the pandemic and beyond. This time has brought us to a crossroad, to a space to assess where we are. It is clear to me that we are not simply going back to where we were. As we reassess: we affirm that we are a Eucharistic community, even as we have rediscovered the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer that have nourished the souls of so many of our tradition for centuries before. We have been discussing spiritual communion and virtual communion, and its corollary conversation on orders and mission within the Church. We have been finding simpler ways of being Church.

The Board of Directors discovered that we can hold regular Board meetings online, and save us from long hours of travel. The Commission on Ministry learned the same, though noting that there needs to be some direct interaction with aspirants to holy orders as some point in the process. The Clergy gathered for their annual Retreat online. Yes, it was more a conference than a

retreat, but how else could we have included clergy from our companion dioceses in a two day event led by Bishop Ellinah of Swaziland, and including Bishop Andrew of Brechin on the global topic of becoming a Green Church? A number of us have shared in evensong from St Paul's Cathedral in Dundee, including an evening of prayer in solidarity with us in the US as we were protesting racial injustice. Donna and I were invited to share in our witness at that service. More recently we participated in the annual Evensong dedicated to Bishop Forbes, the founder of St Paul's Cathedral. As companion bishops, Bishop Andrew, Bishop Ellinah and I have enjoyed supportive zoom meetings. Our companionships are noticed. One generous supporter of our joint projects with Nzara and Swaziland is the United Thank Offering. Recently the UTO offered grants directly to companion dioceses and not through the Episcopal companion in the States. And so the diocese of Nzara received a grant to develop a COVID-19 response team for the county. In her acknowledgement of the grant, Heather Melton, Executive Director of UTO wrote: "of all the folks that asked about Companion Grants, Iowa was the only one that took the suggestion of helping their companion apply on their own. It speaks volumes about the relationship, love and commitment you all have for one another, and of Ray's dedication and fidelity."

Further, as a diocese we all have had new opportunities to share in prayer and worship through diocesan online worship hosted by congregations around Iowa, and across the world. I spent Easter morning with the Archbishop of Canterbury celebrating the Eucharist from his kitchen. Many of us continue to connect on Sunday mornings with the National Cathedral.

I realize that these are secondary options to being together in person, and yet at the same time we glimpse the rich creativity of a world-wide Church as we discover our digital person. The Presiding Bishop has been gathering bishops on Mondays to provide resources as we have travelled through health and political landscapes, and I have sought to pass that experience on to our diocesan clergy, and lay congregational leaders, in a similar Zoom gathering on Tuesdays. I believe that we may have found a simpler way to coming together and to help us maintain our sense of being the Episcopal presence in the state of Iowa.

The list of our creative ways of being faithful in worship to God, and loyal in our care for one another is praiseworthy. We may not all be in agreement on the way forward, but we are all seeking to hear God's call.

Address, *continued*

And so, we have sought to upgrade our technology; informally creating positions of “digital or technological missionary” in some congregations: only 5-16 year olds should apply. Vestries and others have taken on pastoral phone calling circles to keep in touch with the congregation, especially the elderly and vulnerable to this disease; Eucharists have been shared on patios; groceries have been delivered on porches; food pantries have been extended; learning pods created for children to use church wifi where their own access was limited; bible studies and teaching webinars have been offered online along with worship services, and more than church members have joined in; outdoor worship—at the side of the church, in the parking lot, under “the spreading chestnut tree,” in a park, at the drive-in, in the parking lot turned into a drive-through Eucharist. Those services have included ordinations, confirmations (with the practice of invoking a hovering Holy Spirit), as well as Morning and Evening Prayers, Compline and Eucharists. We have recovered the Prayer for Jesus to “come into my heart” in terms of Spiritual Communion; and yet realized afresh that there’s something specifically special about how Jesus makes Himself known in the breaking of the bread. We are realizing that our faith has to always be embodied by our loving actions of compassion, kindness, hospitality; that God intends that there be “flesh on our faith” as much as possible.

Of course, it is not the end of the world when there is not the opportunity to worship together in person, as in fact throughout history, much of the Christian Church around the world has witnessed at different times. And we are doing it all with masks, or shields or both, seeing in our efforts of mutual protection a further expression of the Way of Love.

It is important at this point to express on your behalf our gratitude to Meg Wagner for the amazing ministry of communication and technology she has provided. Meg is also a founding and actively leading member, along with Deacon Susanne Watson Epting, of the Beloved Community Initiative. The BCI is helping us keep our eyes of the prize of racial justice. Susanne has

been a leader within this diocese for decades, promoting baptismal ministry, and the fullness and distinctiveness of the diaconal order. She was an original visionary on what the diocese could do with a place strategically placed like Old Brick, and is now seeing the fruit of that vision as the Beloved Community Initiative develops in that very place. God’s Spirit has been at work through Her servant in a profoundly prophetic and timely way. Susanne says she is now officially retired. No one believes that. You will never stop serving in God’s Name. And so we thank God for you Susanne at this time. As a parting gift she wrote the prayers of the people that the young people will lead in the Eucharist tomorrow.

While I am acknowledging people, I want us to offer thanks for Ellen Bruckner. Ellen too has decided to retire from her official diocesan role as Ministry Developer. She will continue pursuing her passion for small churches through to next summer when we hope to host the small church summit. As I said to the Board, we can say that we will miss Ellen, but we will never really know what we will miss, because one of her gifts is to keep abreast of contemporary thinking on systems and processes, and to find how they connect with forward-looking mission strategy. And so we could never know what she would bring to us or what we will be missing without her inquisitive mind and heart.

In my opening remarks, I asked how have we seen God turn up in this time. The Beloved Community Initiative is one witness of divine presence, as we face the issues related to our racial reckoning. Another is what we have already enjoyed this morning—the admission of a new congregation in the middle of a pandemic, Trinity Cush Episcopal Church. I think too of the boldness of some of our newly ordained—like Zeb Treloar and Lizzie Gillman who have partnered with those fighting for racial justice, or Eric Rucker and his spouse Hannah Landgraf, who while working in developing youth leaders and with the homeless respectively, are choosing to address this time in the Church and society in launching their own podcast. Lizzie and Eric are joined by Miriam Smith, Kevin Powell, Jenn Latham, Steph

continued on page 8



ST. LUKE'S, CEDAR FALLS PANTRY



ST. JOHN'S, MASON CITY



ST. ALBAN'S, SPIRIT LAKE

Address, *continued*

Ann Jones and Katie Mears, who were ordained since Convention 2019.

I also referred earlier to COVID-19 blocking our launch of Faithful Innovations, as a continuation of the fruits and impetus from the Revival, Growing Iowa Leaders and Engaging All Disciples. Well, the diocesan Faithful Innovation team of Traci Petty, Elizabeth Popplewell and Stephen Benitz, decided to “faithfully innovate” and have begun Listening over Lunch—currently a monthly lunch hour zoom gathering through which we can experience the practices taught in the Faithful Innovation process.

Other God sightings include the Way Station in Spencer refusing to be daunted by the loss of their rented space, or the limits of the pandemic, and the Diocesan Board who have come alongside them in buying a new center for the continuation of their young ministry. Beth Preston has been open to the direction of the ministry there, realizing how much of a need it fills for middle school aged young people in her area. We had planned the Summit for small churches for summer 2020, and yet once more we “pivoted” (glad to get that 2020 cliché in there) and, as I have said, we pushed it back to next summer. In the meantime, we will hold regional virtual gatherings for the small churches to keep their fellowship together, starting with an Advent retreat on first weekend of December online, open to allcomers. In fact, I think that one way of re-gathering in person, and building up our sense of fellowship is to think of the adaptive and flexible benefits of “small church or cell church” as we begin to meet in person. Small church values can apply to our larger congregations as we make plans to move through this winter.

Finally, later today, we will celebrate the distribution of the first GILEAD ministry grants. Thank you to everyone who has made it possible by your generosity for the Board to set aside \$100,000 for grants this first time around. It is my hope that we will be able to have a second round of appeals for the GILEAD Campaign next Eastertide. It is a gift that I am delighted and proud to hand over to my successor. The GILEAD grants tell us that “the One who is with us is greater than the one who is in the world” as the apostle John once wrote. The Church has not stopped in its tracks while contagion rages through. The Spirit continues to undertake the groundwork to keep the Kingdom of God coming on through.

All of that is linked, of course, with the questions we can't know the answer to at this time: What will we find



**GILEAD Grants:
2020 Awardees**

- "A Sacred Path to Transformation: Walking the Labyrinth" -- Sioux City, St. Thomas: \$10,000
- "Center for Social Ministry Expansion" -- in partnership with Rev. Jeanie Smith: \$2,428
- "Compline, Beyond Compline, Zoom Kids" -- Dubuque, St. John's: \$5,000
- "Enhance Mission Through Streaming Capabilities" -- 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
- "Hygiene Pantry" -- Mason City, St. John's: \$2,500
- "Iowa MMJ Case Management System Project" -- in partnership with Des Moines, St. Paul's Cathedral: \$5,000
- "Newly Ordained Clergy Support" -- Des Moines, St. Paul's Cathedral: \$24,000
- "Simpson Youth Academy Scholarships" -- in partnership with Rev. Eric Rucker: \$5,000
- "St. Stephen's/Connections Blessing Box" -- Newton, St. Stephen's: \$5,000
- "Technology Upgrade" -- Webster City, Good Shepherd: \$4,398
- "The Way Station Space Renewal" -- Spencer, The Way Station: \$10,000
- "Tornado Packs Ministry" -- Storm Lake, All Saints: \$3,000

on our return to fuller life within our buildings, and collectively in person? What will we decide to pick back up, and what might we find we can let go of? How will we discern the Simple Way more clearly because of this experience? What are the values and priorities that such a new start brings to the surface and to the front?

A healthy regathering must involve these questions. And as we work our way through these next few months, I hope we can walk more in step through the liturgical seasons coming upon us. My dream would be for a diocesan pattern of formation, developed by our best formation minds among us, that helps us walk as one through Advent, Epiphany, Lent and into Eastertide. We are close to such a creation for Advent through Christmas time; and I look to what can be designed for Epiphany onwards. The pandemic has led us to a singular platform. We have discovered the wisdom of the communication gift from 2019, thanks to our initial GILEAD benefactor. Now it is time to use it, even as we come together. Some of you are blessed with leadership locally to have already set up your own programs. But for the rest of us, I see this as a point of communal focus that, as we concentrate on learning together, will help us through this winter, bring us to the spring, and refresh us and equip us for the receiving of and ministering with a new bishop in the fall.

I have mentioned Meg and Ellen from staff. I want also to offer thanks for the whole staff. Beth and John have kept this Convention preparation moving forward; Anne

Address, *continued*

and Tina have overseen our finances and property in a hard and uncertain time; Traci and Amy have adjusted their ministries to online services, even as the essence of their work is so people oriented. It also helps us all that they can maneuver the digital world. In Amy, with her own children's education and well being to navigate, the parents of our youth and children know that they have someone who "gets" their new reality. Finally, I thank Julianne. While not being a firsthand witness, as working remotely, I can imagine the incredible task it has been for her to support, advise, encourage, and resource all of my participation as bishop in what I have just described. I have had several waves of staff over these past 18 years, and I would say that each was called together for a moment. That is so true of this team. And I hope that like never before you have been able to catch an appreciation for who they are. They see the Lord high and lifted up, and they feel God's cry about the world's needs, and they have responded to God's summons—"here am I, Lord. Send me."

Across the diocese there are many levels of people who give their time and expertise to God's work, from the serving members of the Standing Committee, the Bishop Search and Nominations Committee, the Board, the Commission on Ministry, One World One Church, the Youth Ministry Development Team, and the Episcopal Transitions Committee. I think too of the chairs and members of the Committees that make up this Convention, especially this year the Tech Team that has been answering your chat inquiries throughout this session. Then there is the Chancellor, the Treasurer, the Historiographer, the Altar Guild Director, the Registrar, all the people whom you elect, or I appoint and you confirm. And being somewhat of a fractal organism, as the Body of Christ Universal and local, I know that we all have similar officers, missionaries, committees and mission groups in our local communities of faith. It's all mirrored in that vision of John in Revelation—of the crowd that no one can number, yet with a single focus of adoration of the Lamb of God.

God willing, we will meet again in person in the Spring to elect a new bishop. I believe that I will have another opportunity after that to address you and offer my deepest gratitude for the gift of your call so many years ago. I have not found COVID-19 an easy time. The loss of a parent during that time was not easy. As others facing losses, it's hard to be resilient when your resources are depleted. Yes, I had books; and time (but not as much as you think in the Zoom calendar age); but the lack of direct personal connection has proved a stronger negative than a declared introvert would expect. I was invited by the Rector of St John's Dubuque to a forum online as part of my virtual visitation at the start of this month. The forum topic—what is a bishop? I did some history, ancient and modern, and finished with a more personal insight. Later that afternoon, I showed up at St John's for their one in person afternoon eucharist. A crazy idea, I suppose. And somewhat typical. I realized as I drove away, that THAT was what a bishop is. You show up, try and hold the threads (often very contrary threads) together, keep your own and the people's eyes on that light in the face of Jesus, and seek to articulate each moment history throws at us in relation to the faith and its traditional parts, Scripture and all! We see the Lord together, high and lifted up. He leads us from the temple, and He meets us in the wilderness of exile. God is meeting us in COVID, and God continues to meet us in the unstoppable mission of the Kingdom.

It is the Way of Love, after all. And remember "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

Again, not my words but Paul's. Something tells me that we are going to need them close to our hearts in the days to come.

God Bless you; God Keep you safe; and I give God thanks for you.



Reflections on a Virtual Convention

by Alice Boerner

My experience at Convention this year was very powerful. I was a delegate for my church, Trinity Episcopal Church in Iowa City. There was something very special about being a part of the conversation, and helping make decisions often reserved for adults. It helped me feel more involved, and now I want to continue to be informed and connected. It was really interesting to see how Convention was run, and the way in which issues are discussed. This year was especially unique because obviously everything took place online, and I was impressed by how well everything functioned. It was really cool to see such a large community of people, all part of one larger group, and committed to the decision making. I got to listen to people's stories, and people willing

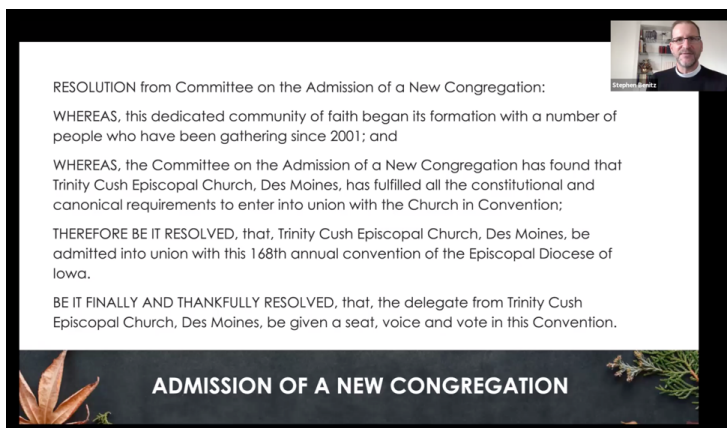
to speak up for what they believe in. Myself and some of my fellow younger delegates joined in and spoke up for certain resolutions, and I think it was very important for us to do so. Whether or not high school kids usually have points to make, I think we got some more people paying attention. We had a bit of a different perspective, and I felt like we actually brought something to the table. It was really cool to be a part of it. Some of the resolutions included important equality issues, and ideas that if implemented could definitely change our diocese for the better. These were the ones that my friends and I felt compelled to support. I'm really glad we did, and I'm very happy to have been part of Convention as a whole.

Ms. Alice Boerner is a junior in high school and a member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Iowa City.

"It was a great convention. Thanks to all who put it together. Honestly, it was terrific to be efficient and focused the way we were. Missed seeing folks, but there could be other opportunities for fellowship if we kept doing convention this way." - The Rev. Wendy Abrahamson, St. Paul's, Grinnell

"Today was proof that the Diocese of Iowa is a beloved community of faithful innovators. Thanks to all for showing us what's possible if we dare to try." - The Rev. Stephen Benitz, St. John's, Mason City

"I enjoy the time we can get together whether online or in person. Convention is a time that I connect with people I don't get to see on a regular basis. This was a very different experience, and I would like to say well done! Especially to the tech people and our youngest delegates who truly stepped up and made themselves heard!" - The Rev. Kelly Shields, St. Luke's, Fort Madison



Trinity Cush in Des Moines was admitted as a new congregation in the Diocese of Iowa.

Resolutions passed at the 168th Annual Convention

168A - Season of Truth and Healing: from Epiphany 2021-Easter 2022 during which the diocese will take tangible and enduring actions towards racial healing. Establishes a Reparations Task Force and asks each congregation to report yearly on how they have engaged with racial justice, study and action.

168B - Safe Harbor: urges the state legislature to vote for the Immunity of a Minor who has been the victim of human trafficking.

168C - Human Trafficking and Slavery: encourages the state legislature to vote for a pilot program to combat human trafficking.

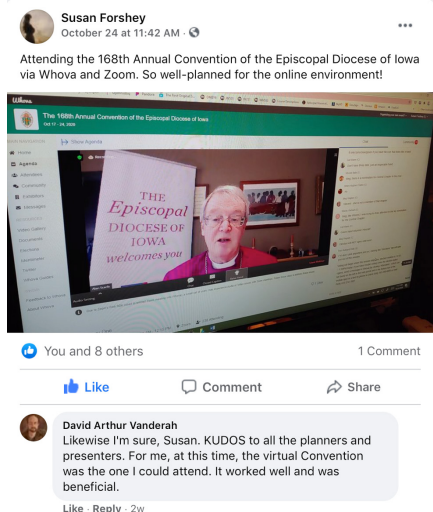
168D - ERA: supporting the certification of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

168E - Equality Act: urges a re-introduction of S.788 the Equality Act to the U.S. Senate.

168F - Amendment to Canon 2 of the Canons of the Diocese of Iowa: referred to Convention when reconvened.

168G - Amendment to Rule 18 of the Rules of Order

To read more visit iowaepiscopal.org/diocesan-convention



Bishop Search Team

by Kevin Sanders

In August and September, our Bishop Search Team grew larger. In a meeting including both the Standing Committee and the Bishop Search and Nominating Committee (BSNC), it was agreed that we should expand our membership in order to include a wider range of voices, experiences and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Since we were in the final stages of editing the Diocesan Profile, we knew it would be an awkward time to add members, but all agreed that the benefits outweighed the risks. The Standing Committee deserves much credit for having the courage to adapt our plans in order to achieve more diverse participation in the search. The Standing Committee recruited Kim Turner Baker of St. John's, Ames, Donna Prime of Trinity, Iowa City, and Katy Kramer Lee of Christ Church, Cedar Rapids to join our work. Due to some canonical constraints, we could not simply add three more people to the BSNC. So we formed an Advisory Council to the BSNC and moved some members around. The BSNC and the Advisory Council will be working together as a group that we are calling the Bishop Search Team. When you read that term, it refers to all eighteen of us.

We expect all members of the Bishop Search Team to contribute to our search activities going forward, except for where the canons make an activity the responsibility solely of the BSNC. The new members bring wonderful gifts and new perspectives to our work. In order to bring them into an effort that had been going since March, we structured a couple of extended meetings as a "mini-retreat" for group formation and renewal. A significant portion of the mini-retreat was used to review what we had heard when we conducted listening sessions and surveys back in

Bishop Search Timeline

October-December, 2020: Candidate screening

December, 2020: Selection and notification of applicants for Candidates Retreat

January 28-31, 2021: The Bishop Search Team conducts interviews with semifinalists at a 3 day retreat.

February, 2021: Slate of candidates announced. A process is opened to nominate candidates by petition.

April, 2021: Diocesan meet and greet events

May 1, 2021: Electing Convention

Updates on the search process will be available at:

iowaepiscopal.org/bishop-search

March, April and May. We thought it important that we all begin from an understanding of what had been heard from respondents throughout the diocese. We also reviewed our work on the profile with the new members, and they offered comments and insights that improved the document before it was published.

Our Diocesan Profile was published on the internet October 12. At that time we began receiving nominations and self-nominations. We remained open for nominations for about a month—up to the application deadline of November 13. We received nominations of impressive candidates from all over the United States (and beyond) and feel confident that we will be able to present a strong slate of candidates to the diocese.

Between now and next year, the team will be very busy reviewing resumes and ministry profiles, listening to recordings of sermons, checking references, conducting Zoom interviews and other activities to learn about these candidates. By Christmas, we will have narrowed the list to a select group of maybe eight to ten promising candidates. At the end of January, we will spend a weekend

with that select group in a Candidates Retreat, where we will observe the candidates participating in various activities and exercises as a group. This will allow us to see how each candidate relates to others in various situations. At the retreat we will also interview each candidate again individually. We will use what we learn at the Candidates Retreat to further narrow the list to a final slate of three to five candidates. Before any candidate is placed on the slate, they will have passed background checks and various other sensitive inquiries. Our work of screening and selection must be done confidentially. If you have nominated someone, thank you. Nominations and your efforts to spread the word about our search have provided us with an abundant pool of good candidates. Please be aware that we cannot communicate the names or status of any nominee until we announce the final slate. We on the Bishop Search Team know that we and our work are being held in prayer by the entire diocese, and we are grateful for that support.

Mr. Kevin Sanders is the Chair of the Bishop Search Team and is a member of St. Luke's in Cedar Falls.

Bishop Search Transition Committee

by Ruth Ratliff

The role of the Bishop Search Transition Committee is to help Iowa Episcopalians prepare ourselves to select and welcome our next bishop, arrange opportunities for us to meet bishop candidates identified by the search committee, honor and celebrate the ministry of Bishop Alan and Donna Scarfe, celebrate the consecration of our new bishop and welcome her or him to Iowa.

In the coming months, the Transition Committee will provide information on the role and duties of a bishop, the steps of the search process, the election of a bishop, and confirmation of the elected bishop by the Episcopal Church. As we move closer to the consecration of our next bishop, we will give you a preview of that event: what will happen in the consecration service, who will be there, and even what special vestments they will wear.

Our committee also will be planning events, meetings, services, and also a few parties to take place during the coming months. After the Search Committee announces the slate of candidates for bishop, the diocese will have opportunities to meet each

candidate at several "Meet and Greet" events. In the past, these would have taken place at several churches located across Iowa but, because of the pandemic, they may have to be online. We will need to prepare both options. For these events, we will be calling for assistance from Episcopalians throughout Iowa.

We also will assist the diocese in planning and holding the May 1, 2021 electing convention and the September 18, 2021 consecration of our new bishop. We will be organizing ways for the people of our diocese to celebrate the ministry of Bishop Alan Scarfe and to express our thanks for countless ways he and Donna and their family have encouraged and inspired us during his episcopacy. And, we will help welcome our new bishop to Iowa and become better acquainted with our diocese and state.

The Transition Committee is chaired by the Rev. Elaine Caldbeck, St. Peter's, Bettendorf. Members of the Committee are:

Ms. Deb Brewer-Cotlar, St. Andrew's, Des Moines

The Rev. Mary Cole-Duvall, St. Timothy's, W. Des Moines

The Rev. Kevin Emge, Trinity, Ottumwa

The Rev. Stacey Gerhart, All Saints, Storm Lake; Calvary, Sioux City

Mr. Jacob Deng Aleer, Trinity Cush Episcopal Church, Des Moines

The Rev. Raisin Horn, Christ Church, Clinton

The Rev. Bob Kem, retired, Ankeny

Ms. Eve Mahr, St. Andrew's, Des Moines

Mr. Parker Meinecke, Christ Church, Cedar Rapids

Dr. Cristine Mincheff, St. John's, Ames

The Rev. Ruth Ratliff, St. Luke's, Cedar Falls

We look forward to the work of supporting the bishop search and transition process. And, we encourage the involvement of all Iowa Episcopalians in this important stage in our life as a diocese.

The Rev. Ruth Ratliff is a member of St. Luke's, Cedar Falls.

Live-streamed Cathedral Arts Events for Advent

available on the St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral Facebook page @CathedralStPaul and on their YouTube channel

Sunday, December 13 at 4:00pm

Virtual Advent Choral Evensong

Thursdays, December 10 and 17 at Noon

Advent Organ Recitals

Sunday, December 20 at 4:00pm

Carillon Christmas Carol Concert

Trinity Iowa City supports learning in more ways than one during the pandemic

by Lauren Lyon

If you asked the question whether Trinity Church in Iowa City is “open” the answer would not be straightforward. There are signs on the doors indicating that the building is closed, and the doors have been locked since March except when worship in-person was taking place. But members of Trinity and the larger Iowa City community are at work throughout the building—some very quietly, others loudly enough to be heard from one end of the building to the other. After detailed review of a plan by members of the diocesan reopening task force, Trinity has opened its doors for learning.

In September as public schools resumed classes after the summer break, a group of eight middle and high school students whose parents had chosen 100% online learning for them came together in Trinity’s undercroft to form a learning pod. Trinity’s undercroft has a large open room where each learning pod participant occupies a work space with desk, power strip and individual school supplies. Windows remain open for ventilation through the school day. All students wear masks throughout the day and work spaces are appropriately separated.

In addition to the large central room, Trinity’s undercroft has individual classrooms. One of these has been transformed into a chapel. Students prepare and lead noon prayers each day before the group takes a break for an outdoor lunch. The learning pod offers social interaction and community to students who might otherwise be studying at home alone all day. Parents of participants take turns



Learning pod students at Trinity

supervising the group on a rotating schedule. Trinity Sr. Warden, Deb Wilbur says, “The learning pod has been extraordinarily beneficial for our family. My husband and I work outside of the home in health care, and because of the pod, our teenager Ted is not forced to be alone in the house all day. He enjoys regularly spending time at church with teens his own age. He loves that he has a place to study that is different from the house where he has been largely confined for most of the year. I personally am thrilled that he has discovered that he enjoys the daily office of noonday prayer, which the students have been regularly practicing.”

Other classrooms in the undercroft serve as studios for learning pod students who are members of their schools’ bands and orchestras. They access online instruction and practice individually in spaces that are separated by walls and doors from other students. The church building’s robust wireless internet signal easily supports access to online instruction by multiple students at a time. Trinity’s parish hall has served occasionally as a dance studio when young dancers’ internet ballet classes competed for bandwidth with parents working at home or their brothers’ and sisters’ online activities.



University of Iowa music student Emma Grace attends a private lesson with Professor Elise DesChamps in Trinity’s parish hall.

Parents are not the only ones who appreciate this alternate study space. Deb Wilbur noted, “For the month of November, the diocesan missionary for children and youth mailed to our household a ‘gratitude chain’ of 30 links of construction paper. Our son Ted is to write daily on each link one thing for which he is grateful. One of the first things he wrote down was ‘my learning pod.’”

Trinity’s undercroft is a self-contained area that is well separated from other parts of the building. It has its own HVAC system and rest rooms and an exterior entrance to the building is reserved for learning pod participants. From other parts of the church building you would never know that there are students quietly at work on the lower level. But during the week the main floor of the building is anything but quiet. Trinity has also opened its doors (in response to a ring of the doorbell) to students in the University of Iowa’s School of Music for private voice lessons.

The requirement of a distance of twenty feet between voice student and faculty instructor to mitigate the risk of coronavirus transmission posed a challenge for the School

continued on page 14

Trinity Iowa City, *continued*

of Music. Lessons for solo singers and wind players suddenly required spaces much larger than most of the teaching studios in the university's music buildings. The School of Music had rented space at Trinity in past years when music facilities were destroyed by the flood of 2008. Once again, this year, the university turned to Trinity with a request for oversized instructional spaces. With a reconfigured worship schedule and suspended in-person activities in the building, Trinity's parish hall, nave and choir room were available and met the requirements of the School of Music.

Except during a few hours that are reserved as practice times for Trinity's organists, three professors

of the School of Music teach at Trinity during business hours Monday through Friday. Each is assigned one of the three largest spaces in the building. Students arrive at the main entrance, ring the bell and are admitted for their 30 minute private lessons. After each in-person lesson there is a 30 minute interval to clear the air in the space. During these intervals, instructors offer lessons via video conference. The halls of the building are filled with the sound of music from opera and oratorio to musical comedy and art songs. The doorbell chimes throughout the day and Trinity staff members stay active opening the door for students and teachers.

Although the pandemic has limited what church members do in the building, the unusual circumstances of 2020 have offered Trinity an opportunity to reach out to its neighbors and help meet their needs in ways that would have been hard to imagine before this year. Learning pod enrollment for the second trimester is underway and School of Music is preparing lesson schedules for the spring, 2021 term.

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

An Armchair Pilgrimage: Iowa's Episcopal "Dollhouse" Churches

by John Zickefoose

Most years my partner Elvin McDonald and I take a number of day trips, sometimes with a purpose in mind, sometimes out of simple curiosity, and when we travel I always bring along *Buildings of Iowa*—a comprehensive catalogue of our state's abundant architectural structures, which includes many Episcopal churches. Thumbing through this volume recently, the authors' observation about Episcopal churches in our state caught my eye: "*From its introduction [in 1853] into the state, the Episcopal church held tightly to the image of the small-town or rural English Gothic church, responding to the edicts of the Ecclesiological movement. With the fewest of exceptions, these Episcopal churches were small, almost dollhouse like in overall size and fenestration; at the same time their designs were sophisticated, and the buildings were richly detailed with elaborate woodwork, carved stone, and stained glass windows.*"

The attribution "dollhouse" is not dismissive. Geometry, rhythm, repetition, workmanship, and quality of materials are significant whether the scale is life-sized cubits (for Noah and his ark, scale 1:1) or half-inch to the foot (for an entry made for competition at the State Fair, scale 1:24).

The architectural variety of the six churches included here is not surprising. The common belief that as one travels west one finds a lag in architectural fashion is simply not the case. When built, these houses of worship were exactly what was being built at that moment in towns and rural areas by our eastern neighbors. (This up-to-date quality continues up to the present moment.)

We are not travelling this year. Undeterred, and with this trusty tome in hand, we offer an "armchair pilgrimage" to six of these scaled-down houses of worship, and we welcome you

along. Not surprisingly, three of the six have an English connection because their architects were English émigrés or the congregation was formed as a mission for English émigrés living in northwest Iowa.

Readers' Note: To limit the range of our travels, some parameters were established: all of these churches are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (as is St. Paul's, Des Moines), and much information has been gleaned from the paperwork they submitted to the National Park Service. Moreover this list is highly selective; if we have omitted one of your favorite "dollhouse" churches we apologize.

Details on the source book

Buildings of Iowa by David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim; Oxford University Press, 1993. Wide-ranging, well-illustrated, and highly recommended. ("Don't leave home without it.")

Armchair Pilgrimage, *continued*

Copy in Italics are quotations from this source.

Trinity Episcopal Church, Muscatine



Travelling east to the Mississippi, our first stop is the city of Muscatine. Trinity Church is reputedly the oldest congregation in the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, and this colorful sandstone early Gothic Revival building was designed by Frank Wills. It was built in two phases between 1851 and 1853, the additional work creating a cruciform design. (Other additions were made during the 20th century.) The present church replaced an earlier frame structure that had been consecrated in 1841 on the same lot, and tradition holds that when Iowa Episcopal priests gathered at Muscatine in 1853 to organize the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, it took place at the new Trinity Church.

How Wills was selected is not known, but his selection is noteworthy. Although largely forgotten today, at the time he was a nationally recognized architect in the early Gothic Revival style, and before his untimely death at the age of thirty-five (in 1857), Wills was responsible for the design of at least fifty churches in the United States and Canada.

As with most [Iowa] Episcopal churches, the building is not only small in size, but all of its features are miniaturized. The design is dominated by irregular profile of the slate-covered roof which descends dramatically close to the ground, and the simple bellcote at the top. The narrow lancet windows with their pointed arches emphasize the upward sweep of the façade and the roofline. In 1853 we had been a state for just seven years. Elevated and still surrounded by vast prairies, Trinity's towering façade proclaimed to our forebears "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing." Today—although somewhat crowded by nearby parish and commercial structures—its message remains undiminished.

Church of the Saviour (also known as Memorial Episcopal Church), Clermont



We travel now to northeast Iowa and the town of Clermont. Possibly the smallest church on our Pilgrimage, with a seating capacity of 100, this picturesque stone church is an established and familiar local landmark. Built of locally quarried stone, and designed by an unknown architect, the date "1867" is inscribed over the door. It is one of three Episcopal churches that were built as a memorial to the two children of Frances

Dyer Vinton of Providence, Rhode Island. (The other two churches were built in Providence, and in San Gabriel, California. According to local tradition, her decision to endow a church in northeastern Iowa was influenced by the Biblical passage, "Thy praise shall ring from shore to shore," Clermont being more or less equidistant between Rhode Island and California. All three churches were named "Church of the Saviour.")

Architecturally it reflects two mid-nineteenth century styles—the stone walls and three-story tower are Romanesque while the bracketed roof and full round-arched windows are Italianate. As constructed, the 48-foot tower had a crenelated roof (shown in the photo below, which has been removed. Otherwise the exterior is little altered. The interior has been refurbished, but it retains much of its original character with its barrel-vaulted ceiling, plaster work and early twentieth-century hanging light fixtures, which were converted to electricity in 1910. In 2009 (142 years after construction) central heat and indoor plumbing were installed.



Church of the Saviour, Clermont, Iowa

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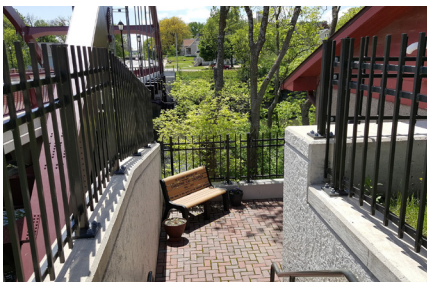
Armchair Pilgrimage, *continued*

Saint Matthew's-by-the-Bridge Episcopal Church, Iowa Falls



Journeying to the south and west we come to Iowa Falls, where we discover this delightfully tiny (60 by 24 feet) single story building perched on the palisade overlooking the Iowa River.

Because of its rather precarious location, parishioners often refer to the church as “St. Matthew’s on the Brink.” Although the parish was established in 1886, this building was constructed in 1913, and designed by Robert Layton, an industrial arts teacher in Iowa Falls. Born in England, Layton made a return visit there in 1912 making sketches of several village churches, and from these sketches the plans for St. Matthew’s were made. Tudor Revival in design, the exterior of the wood frame structure is covered with stucco and the gable ends give a simple simulated half-timbered effect. The intimacy of scale and proportion, and warmth of materials—both outside and inside—create an inviting space, and the interior remains basically unchanged since it was first built.

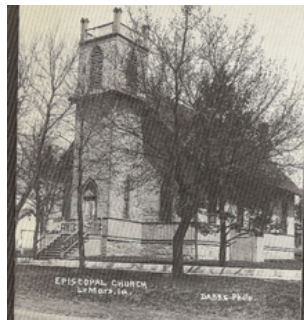


St. Matthew’s is next to and above the Iowa River at the top of a steep slope to the River’s edge—the church’s motto is “By The Water, With The Word.”

St. George’s Episcopal Church, Le Mars



We set our sights north and west, to Le Mars. This clapboard structure is located in a residential neighborhood, and was built in 1881. The architect is not known. The historic photo below shows that originally the church had a small steeple extending above the roof, however, it was removed in the 1940s and the gable roof was extended over the tower.



St. George’s, Le Mars

St. George’s remains one of the few remaining links in Le Mars with the town’s early English heritage. The English era began about 1879, when Fred and William Close of England opened a land sales office in Le Mars with the idea of creating an English colony on the prairie, and encouraging emigration through marketing and materials published in England. While some came over to engage in long-term farming operations, many of the new arrivals were the sons of established upper-class Englishmen who intended

to return to England after learning farm management techniques. Financed by contributions from England, which supported the building’s construction as a foreign mission church, nearly 1000 English colonists used this building as a worship and social center. The English influence was strong in Le Mars (albeit brief, only about ten years). Cricket and polo were popular, as were three local taverns known as “The House of Lords,” “The House of Commons,” and “Windsor Palace.”

Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church, Harlan



Turning a few pages we go southeast to the town of Harlan. This is one of the gems among Iowa’s churches. Designed by the Des Moines architectural firm Proudfoot and Bird, it was constructed in 1900. In Des Moines, this firm is perhaps best known for the Polk County Courthouse and Roosevelt High School; here the architects brought together a wide range of styles prevalent at the turn of the last century; although the late Queen Anne-Shingle style dominates, there are also Gothic Revival details as well as touches of the Arts and Crafts movement. Exterior changes have been minimal. Of particular interest is the division of the exterior into three horizontal zones of various materials (brick, clapboard, and shingling). The busy roofscape, with its high-pitched gable and small triangular dormer windows, is capped with pinnacles and a finial on the large central tower.

continued on page 20

A Gathering on Liturgical Formation

by Raisin Horn

What is liturgy for? Is it only for us, or can it be for those who are not yet here?

These initial questions were posed to 200+ participants in a recent virtual gathering. Its purpose was to share current initiatives of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and Task Force for Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision. Speakers responded to concerns, invited conversations across a wide range of backgrounds, and shared resources for planning liturgy. Guest speakers included active and retired bishops, and members of the SCLM.

Retired Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves (El Camino Real) and Bishop Deon Johnson (Missouri) described liturgy as service to a world in need of hope, an “adrenalin boost” to go out and do the work of mission for those outside our walls. Ongoing faith formation helps connect our liturgy to our actions. The language we use matters, and needs to be understood. We heard about lifelong Episcopalians who love our hymnals, but often don’t know what the words mean.

Bishop Deon observed that we need to take the long view and ask what the Church looks like post-pandemic. While he finds the level of innovation during the pandemic astounding, he cautioned us to balance innovation with familiarity. How do we engage those who aren’t like us—those who don’t read, or have no access to podcasts and webinars? How do we reach those who don’t look like us? We come from “all kinds of diverse communities” and our prayers should reflect this.

Members of the SCLM shared the work of “Resources for Common Prayer.” The website, <http://episcopalcommonprayer.org>, describes the energy, enthusiasm and wisdom brought to the work of liturgical revision. Check out the

website to see its rich offering of liturgical resources.

The plenary on the Church Calendar led to a lively discussion of saints: their biographies, heroic witness, and holiness of life. The Very Rev. James Turrell (V.P. and Dean, The School of Theology at Sewanee) and Professor Liza Anderson (College of St. Scholastica) talked of current debates about who “counts” as a saint. Are non-Anglican saints acceptable? What about saints not mentioned in the Bible? The heart of these debates centers on our Anglican identity. How do we express who we are? We were reminded that in the Church Triumphant, religious denominations have no standing one over another.

The session on prayer book revision was led by Bishop J. Neil Alexander (Atlanta, retired) and The Rev. Cameron Partridge (St. Aidan’s, San Francisco). They described liturgy as “growing from the ground up” and meeting particular needs. Bishop Neil used the examples of adding an opening acclamation for incarnation (while retaining the existing three) and offering inclusive language within the Rite I text.

The SCLM emphasizes that the Book of Common Prayer will remain the centerpiece of our ongoing liturgical life. Liturgies need to have enduring value. “We’re not working on subtraction; we’re widening the field, allowing other things to emerge,” Bishop Neil said. Proposed revisions to Eucharistic Prayer C will include two forms, with matriarchs added alongside patriarchs.

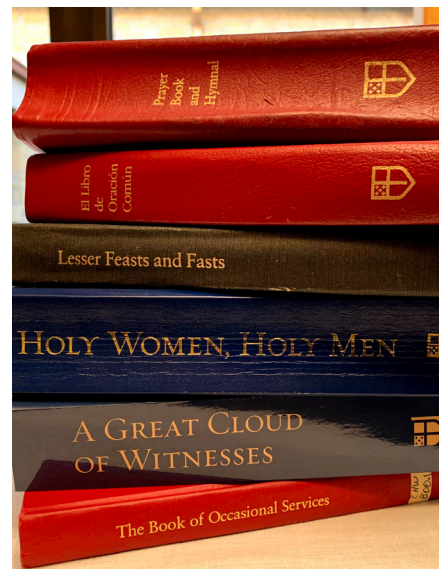
Rev. Partridge added that new material would include expansive language for creation care, naming rites, and celebration of marriage. All new work should reflect the increasing diversity of the Church. Liturgies to help dismantle racism and focus on racial justice will

be timely. The format of these revisions likely will be digital, as the use of actual prayer books has declined in favor of full-text worship leaflets.

The Rev. Juan Oliver (Custodian of the BCP) and The Rev. Jemonde Taylor (St. Ambrose, Raleigh) led the final plenary on The Book of Common Prayer. The question of meaning is foundational to prayer book revision; translations should be dynamic rather than word-for-word. Panelists noted that the BCP in English suffers from “cultural blindness,” assuming that white males are the norm to describe God’s people. Dr. Oliver noted, “How wordy English is!” Clergy who design liturgies are urged to get input from those they serve.

Linda Stewart Kroon (New Song, Coralville) and I were pleased to attend this conference to represent the Diocese of Iowa.

The Rev. Raisin Horn serves as the rector of Christ Church in Clinton.



Let's have coffee!

by the People of St. Luke's, Cedar Falls

Like many churches, Coffee Hour after Sunday worship is a cherished event at St. Luke's. Some even joke that it is the 8th Sacrament. Congregants eagerly take turns bringing treats—both homemade and store-bought—each week. More often than not, the spread looks a lot like a grand wedding feast with homemade hummus, freshly baked breads and muffins, veggie and fruit trays, finger sandwiches, delectable desserts, and, of course, coffee and conversation. Lots and lots of conversation!

So when COVID-19 forced us out of the building and into the land of Zoom Rooms and virtual spaces, the question became, how can we still meet in order to maintain and nourish these important connections and to provide a place of welcome to new people? The answer seemed simple, move right from worship and announcements into discussion. On Zoom, anything is possible, right?

That first week we had an extraordinarily big crowd and as worship was ending, there was a bit of a panic in wondering, "How are we going to make time for everyone to speak? And, how will we hear everyone if we're all talking at once?"

Fortunately, the Spirit intercedes and helps us in our weakness: Mute everyone! Invite people to share by mutual invitation. Encourage people to call on someone they don't normally visit with and let conversation unfold. And thanks be to God, it did in ways we could not have imagined.

"Our coffee hour has been a life saver for me these last several months. I've been able to listen to my church family's hopes and dreams, as well as challenges as we all struggle to make sense of these chaotic times together. While I would gladly give up this pandemic, it would be hard to replace the sense of deep intimacy I have gained with my beloved community through our coffee hour talks."

During the first few weeks of the pandemic the conversation focused primarily on checking-in with one another. How were people handling the isolation? Did someone need help with picking up groceries? What were the best picks on Netflix?

A few weeks later, when it became obvious that we would be gathering virtually for the foreseeable future, we began to focus the conversation on a single question. Sometimes the questions were light-hearted and fun—*What was your*

favorite Halloween costume? Which Saint would you like to have coffee with? Tell us the story of how you were named. What is your super power? Others were a bit more thought provoking—what are we learning about ourselves as Church? How are you willing to be God's love in the world? What does discipleship mean to you? What questions are emerging?



We have discovered that our Zoom coffee hour allows more voices to be heard, and thus more ideas shared. As one participant shared, "Before the pandemic, I would go into our fellowship hall and try to decide which table to join. Now with Zoom coffee hour, it's like we're all sitting at the same table. Although it may be 40 or 50 people participating, it seems like we're sitting at a small table of friends." For many, it

has become a safe space in which to share honest feelings, and both introverts and extroverts know they are given uninterrupted time in which to express their thoughts. We're gaining insight, considering new perspectives, and deepening our faith in God and in one another.

"St. Luke's online coffee hour makes me feel like I am at a gigantic table with my church where all can be seen. Every week is like Thanksgiving, listening to other voices, learning from friends, and being able to express my joy, concerns and sorrow."

For newer members, Coffee Hour has provided an opportunity to deepen community connections in a very meaningful way. It has also enabled people who live across the country to join the conversation. There is no judgment in not joining the discussion, and there is no obligation to stay for the entire coffee hour, but the invitation is always there.

Zoom coffee hour has also provided an opportunity for Christian Formation. "The questions that Elizabeth+ provides for us force us to consider matters that we normally wouldn't ever think about, if not asked. It often sends us out into world with a responsibility to face in the coming week."

In this time of great upheaval and suspensions, we have managed to develop a well-functioning communication system that helps us feel connected, encourages us in our community and spiritual life, and gives us ideas weekly to apply to our lives. God's Spirit is working through each of us to show mutual love and caring for each other and for those both in and beyond our community. We miss not seeing everyone in person, passing the peace and hugging. Yet we feel closer to all through this unique sharing experience. With God, all things are possible, right? We'd love to get to know you, let's have coffee.

Just when you thought Christmas was over—it's Epiphany!

by Lauren Lyon

Epiphany is a hands-on holiday in the Church's celebration of it: costumed wise men in the opening procession, the blessing of chalk and marking of entrance doors and best of all, Epiphany cake at coffee hour. It seems likely that Epiphany this year will be celebrated via live stream in most places, not a very hands-on medium. So why not organize your Epiphany celebration at home? Matthew 2:1-12 is the gospel text appointed for Epiphany, but read all of chapter 2.

The web site *fullhomelydivinity.org* offers suggestions for observing Epiphany in ways that are a good fit for a family's celebration. In some families, the crèche is set up with all of the characters except the wise men who are placed at some distance from the rest of the figures. Each day between Christmas and Epiphany the wise men are moved a little bit closer to the crèche until finally they are placed inside the scene on the Epiphany. If your family includes young children, let them dress up as the Wise men. Plan a route through your yard or home and process to the crèche or enact the Epiphany tableau described on the web site.

The gospel is sketchy on the details of the Wise men, but church tradition has identified each of them by name and identified their lands of origin: Melchior hailed from Persia, Gaspar (also called "Caspar" or "Jaspar") from India, and Balthazar from Arabia. Their names are central to one of the most beautiful Epiphany traditions, the blessing of chalk and marking the door of a family's home. Full Homely Divinity, the web site mentioned earlier in the article offers prayers of blessing. The door is inscribed in chalk, often inside a front entrance or on the entrance to a room where the family gathers frequently, with the number of the new year and the initials of the three wise men: 20+C+M+B+21

Epiphany cakes are a tradition unto themselves with recipes from all over the world. In one version an uncooked bean and pea are mixed into the batter and baked in the cake. According to one tradition, the recipients of those tokens in their slices of cake are royalty for a day in the household and given special honors. In another version the recipient of the bean is the king or queen for the day. The recipient of the pea has to pay for the cake. French versions of the cake recipe feature almond paste baked in puff pastry. The Spanish version is made with yeast dough and candied fruit.

The feast of the Epiphany recognizes the manifestation of God in the world of time and space. The coronavirus has kept us at home more than many of us are accustomed to being. Why not

consider a hike or an outdoor walking meditation to experience the presence of God in the natural world?

Light is central to the observance of Epiphany. In the gospel the wise men follow a star to the stable where Jesus is born. January 6 arrives on the calendar just as the longest and darkest days of winter have ended. We may not feel the absence of the light to the extent that our pre-electric ancestors did, but as we approach the one-year mark of the impact of the coronavirus, light may make more of a difference. Bring candles into your home or into your outdoor gathering space. If the night is clear, enjoy some stargazing.

Traditionally Epiphany is the day when Christmas decorations are taken down and put away for another year. As a matter of convenience that probably happens in some households on the weekend after Christmas. More time spent at home and the need for things to do may be a good motivator for waiting until Epiphany to retire the decorations ceremonially. For grown ups contemplating the 12 days of Christmas in a complicated world, *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio* by W.H. Auden may be the perfect conclusion for a day spent putting away ornaments and artificial trees. Light a fire in the fireplace if you have one and read it, followed by T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi."

Hope may be hard to come by right now, but it is at the heart of the church's observance of this wintry feast. It is light that beckons and draws us far into the unfamiliar and unknown, justice and kindness offered in the face of existential threat, a place of captivity that becomes a refuge in time of trouble.

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



Journey of the Magi by James Tissot, c.1894, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Armchair Pilgrimage, *continued*

Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, Newton



Our last stop is in Newton. Designed by David Stover (a local contractor) and Joseph Stevens (a local carpenter), construction began in 1871 and was completed in 1874. An excellent example of “Carpenter Gothic” style which uses wood instead of stone while retaining the traditional Gothic pointed arches, steep gables, buttresses, and towers. Alterations and additions were made in 1961 with the addition of an education wing which conforms stylistically with the original structure. Additionally, the second level of the tower and the spire were added, completing the original design (both were part of the original plan for the church but were not built because of a lack of funds).

Mr. John Zickafoose is the Parish Administrator at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Des Moines. This article originally appeared in St. Paul's newsletter.

Stewardship Share through September 2020

City	Church	Stewardship Share	2020 Pledge	Jubilee Reductons	Adjusted Pledge	Due to Date	Received to Date	(Over) Under
Algona	St. Thomas	\$ 3,371	4,008		4,008	3,006	3,006	0
Ames	St. John's	52,361	36,000		36,000	27,000	21,000	6,000
Anamosa	St. Mark's	273	1,500		1,500	1,125	1,500	(375)
Ankeny	St Anne's	9,074	6,000		6,000	4,500	1,500	3,000
Bettendorf	St Peter's	16,796	15,000		15,000	11,250	11,250	0
Boone	Grace	1,993	720	(90)	630	473	568	(95)
Burlington	Christ	28,959	21,000		21,000	15,750	15,750	0
Carroll	Trinity	2,585	2,600		2,600	1,950	2,600	(650)
Cedar Falls	St. Luke's	37,855	37,855		37,855	28,391	28,391	0
Cedar Rapids	Christ	50,503	50,503		50,503	37,877	31,270	6,607
Cedar Rapids	Grace	8,244	8,244		8,244	6,183	4,808	1,375
Chariton	St Andrew's	3,390	3,500		3,500	2,625	3,500	(875)
Charles City	Grace	1,305	1,305		1,305	979	980	(1)
Clermont	Saviour	2,785			0	0	500	(500)
Clinton	Christ	12,334	12,334		12,334	9,251	9,241	10
Coralville	New Song	16,820	16,820		16,820	12,615	12,611	4
Council Bluffs	St Paul's	6,809	5,462	(683)	4,779	3,584	4,096	(512)
Davenport	St Alban's	9,271	6,953	(869)	6,084	4,563	3,766	797
Davenport	Trinity	102,673	97,796		97,796	73,347	73,347	0
Decorah	Grace	4,016	4,016		4,016	3,012	3,347	(335)
Denison	Trinity	1,307	1,307		1,307	980	871	109
Des Moines	St. Andrew's	30,765	30,765		30,765	23,074	23,074	0
Des Moines	St Luke's	30,403	15,764		15,764	11,823	11,823	0
Des Moines	St. Mark's	3,313	3,313		3,313	2,485	927	1,558
Des Moines	St. Paul's	72,729	35,000		35,000	26,250	20,933	5,317
Dubuque	St John's	13,135	9,102		9,102	6,827	9,000	(2,173)
Durant	St Paul's	3,570	3,570		3,570	2,678	2,678	1
Emmetsburg	Trinity	2,931	2,931		2,931	2,198	2,443	(245)
Fort Dodge	St. Mark's	35,648	35,648		35,648	26,736	23,765	2,971
Fort Madison	St Luke's	2,442	2,460		2,460	1,845	1,845	0
Glenwood	St John's	754	754		754	566	565	1
Grinnell	St. Paul's	11,895	6,200		6,200	4,650	5,249	(599)
Harlan	St Paul's	1,269	350	(44)	306	230	529	(299)
Independence	St James'	1,898	1,898		1,898	1,424	1,424	0
Indianola	All Saints'	1,858	1,858		1,858	1,394	1,396	(2)
Iowa City	Trinity	83,426	83,426		83,426	62,570	62,570	0
Iowa Falls	St. Matthew's	2,149	2,149		2,149	1,612	1,074	538
Keokuk	St. John's	10,219	7,200		7,200	5,400	5,400	0
LeMars	St George's	37	37		37	28	262	(234)
Maquoketa	St Mark's	2,151	1,000		1,000	750	908	(158)
Marshalltown	St Paul's	10,173	10,173	(1,272)	8,901	6,676	6,358	318
Mason City	St John's	16,943	14,085	(1,761)	12,324	9,243	10,010	(767)
Mount Pleasant	St Michael's	4,540	4,540		4,540	3,405	3,405	0
Muscatine	Trinity	15,792	15,792		15,792	11,844	9,590	2,254
Newton	St Stephen's	16,253	8,000		8,000	6,000	4,544	1,456
Orange City	Savior	1,576	750		750	563	750	(187)
Oskaloosa	St James'	7,466	7,466		7,466	5,600	5,600	0
Ottumwa	Trinity	7,281	5,000		5,000	3,750	3,762	(12)
Perry	St. Martin's	7,656	6,500	(813)	5,687	4,266	5,688	(1,422)
Shenandoah	St John's	6,216	2,647		2,647	1,985	1,324	662
Sioux City	Calvary	1,655	1,656		1,656	1,242	1,380	(138)
Sioux City	St Paul's	1,857	1,000	(125)	875	656	875	(219)
Sioux City	St Thomas'	13,851	10,305	(1,288)	9,017	6,763	6,539	224
Spirit Lake	St Alban's	12,066	12,066		12,066	9,050	9,050	1
Storm Lake	All Saints'	3,119	3,119		3,119	2,339	2,079	260
Waterloo	Trinity	7,938	9,600		9,600	7,200	7,200	0
Waverly	St Andrew's	543	543		543	407	543	(136)
Webster City	Good Shepherd	4,400	4,400	(550)	3,850	2,887	2,757	130
West Des Moines	St Timothy's	60,136	51,450	(6,431)	45,019	33,764	38,588	(4,824)
TOTAL		\$882,777	745,440	(13,925)	731,515	548,641	529,807	18,835

Episcopal JOURNAL

QUARTERLY EDITION

WINTER 2020

UTO grants help feeding ministries expand

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A Caring Place didn't start as a feeding ministry. When the upstart nonprofit in Lexington, Ky., was founded last year by members of two closely aligned Episcopal and Lutheran congregations, its primary mission was to alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness among senior citizens in the area. One initial plan was to gather seniors for conversation over doughnuts once a week.

A Caring Place only hosted one such gathering, in March 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic forced widespread cancellation of in-person activities to slow the virus's spread, but organizers' emphasis on providing food to participants only grew.

"Food sources were drying up for a lot of people," said Roxanne Cheney, a member of St. Martha's Episcopal Church who chairs A Caring Place's board. At the onset of the pandemic, Meals on Wheels and other local feeding ministries suspended or reduced their services, so "these people who were in our program had no way to feed themselves."

To fill that gap, A Caring Place implemented its own full-fledged feeding ministry, which now delivers hot lunches to about 20 recipients, five days a week. In October, the ministry was among the recipients of grants from the Episcopal Church's United Thank Offering, or UTO, which focused this round of grants



Photo/Martha Goodwill

Volunteers harvest fresh produce at Benison Farm in St. Petersburg, Fla.

on ministries that are responding to the pandemic in their communities.

The grants, which are approved by Executive Council and funded by UTO thank offerings, totaled \$450,000 to support 21 ministries within the Episcopal Church and an additional five around the Anglican Communion. They offer a range of responses to the pandemic, and A Caring Place is one of several recipients focused on feeding ministries.

"This UTO grant that came along is just a godsend," Cheney told Episcopal News Service. A Caring Place, which started as a joint ministry of St. Martha's and Word of Hope Lutheran Church, will use the \$20,800 to purchase enough ingredi-

ents to continue providing hot lunches to low-income and homebound residents for up to a year. Commercial kitchen space was donated, and volunteers came forward to prepare and distribute the meals.

"We're feeding the soul and the body," Cheney said.

The pandemic has brought renewed attention to many chronic community needs, though the needs served by feeding ministries are "at the base of the pyramid of survival," said Sherri Dietrich, president of the UTO board.

"Nine of the 26 grants UTO funded this fall will ensure that thousands of people around the United States and the world will have food to help them survive this pandemic," Dietrich said in an email. "And I know that these ministries will also offer other support and embody the love of Christ to those they serve."

In Jasper, Ala., St. Mary's Episcopal Church received a \$10,000 UTO grant to buy a walk-in cooler and freezer for its food bank, which will allow church volunteers to provide milk, cheese and fresh produce to local residents struggling during the pandemic.

Another \$10,000 grant was awarded to the Church of the Guardian Angel in the Diocese of Maryland. The church's food pantry provides bags of groceries and household supplies to more than 70 households in Baltimore, and during the pandemic, the grant will allow the pantry to hire a part-time director to help respond to increased demand.

continued on page D



FEATURE

Pilgrims left complicated religious legacy



OPINION

Charlie Brown seeks timeless Christmas lessons



ARTS

Young artist looks to work of 'Old Masters'

The religious legacy of the Pilgrims: it's complicated

By Peter C. Mancall

The 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' voyage to Plymouth is being celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic with a "remembrance ceremony" with state and local officials and a museum exhibit in Plymouth, England.

Yet as a scholar of early 17th-century New England, I've always been puzzled by the glory heaped on the Pilgrims and their settlement in Plymouth.

Native Americans had met Europeans in scores of places before 1620, so yet another encounter was hardly unique. Relative to other settlements, the colony attracted few migrants. And it lasted only 70 years.

So why does it have such a prominent place in the story of America? And why, until recently, did the more troubling aspects to Plymouth and its founding document, the Mayflower Compact, go ignored?

Prophets and profits

The Mayflower arrived on Nov. 11, 1620, but the establishment of Plymouth did not occur in a vacuum.

The Pilgrims' decision to go to North



Photo/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA

Plymouth Plantation, in Plymouth, Mass., is a living museum that's a replica of the original settlement, which existed for 70 years.

America — and their deep attachment to their faith — was an outcome of the intense religious conflict roiling Europe after the Protestant Reformation.

Shortly before the travelers' arrival, the Wampanoag residents of Patuxet — the area in and around modern-day Plymouth — had suffered a devastating, three-year epidemic, possibly caused by leptospirosis, a bacterial disease that can lead to meningitis, respiratory distress and liver failure.

It was during these two crises that the histories of western Europe and indigenous North America collided on the shores of Massachusetts Bay.

Despite a number of advantages, in-

cluding less competition for local resources because of the epidemic, Plymouth attracted far fewer English migrants than Virginia, which was settled in 1607, and Massachusetts, which was established in 1630.

The Pilgrims, as they told their story traveled so they could practice their religion free from persecution. But other English joined them, including some migrants seeking profits instead of

heeding prophets. Unfortunately for those hoping to earn a quick buck, the colony never became an economic dynamo.

A shaky compact

Plymouth nonetheless went on to attain a prominent place in the history of America, primarily due to two phenomena: It was the alleged site of the first Thanksgiving, and its founders drafted the Mayflower Compact, a 200-word document written and signed by 41 men on the ship.

Generations of American students have learned that the Compact was a stepping stone towards self-government, the defining feature of American constitutional democracy.

But did Plymouth really inspire democracy? After all, self-governing communities existed across indigenous New England long before European migrants arrived. And a year earlier, in 1619, English colonists in Virginia had created the House of Burgesses to advance self-rule in North America for subjects of King James I.

So American self-government, however one defines it, was not born in Plymouth.

The Mayflower Compact nonetheless contained lofty ideals. The plan signed by many of the Mayflower's male passengers demanded that colonists "Covenant & Combine ourselves into a Civil body politic, for our better ordering, & preservation." They promised to work together to write "laws, ordinances, Acts, constitutions." The signers pledged to work for the "advancement of the Christian faith."

continued on page C

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PILGRIMS continued from page B

Yet as the years after 1620 bore out, the migrants did not adhere to such principles when dealing with their Wampanoag and other Algonquian-speaking neighbors. Gov. William Bradford, who began writing his history of Plymouth in 1630, wrote about the Pilgrims arriving in “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men” even though Patuxet looked more like a settled European farmland.

The Pilgrims exiled an English lawyer named Thomas Morton, in part because he believed that indigenous and colonists could peacefully coexist. And in 1637, Plymouth’s authorities joined a bloody campaign against the Pequots, which led to the massacre of indigenous people on the banks of the Mystic River, followed by the sale of prisoners into slavery.

The Compact was even used by loyalists to the British crown to argue against independence. Thomas Hutchinson, the last royal governor of Massachusetts, pointed to the Pilgrims as proof that colonists should not rebel, highlighting the passage that defined the signers as “loyal subjects” of the English king.

History told by the victors

After the American Revolution, politicians and historians, especially those descended from Pilgrims and Puritans, were keen to trace the origins of the United States back to Plymouth.

In the process, they glossed over the Pilgrims’ complicated legacy.

In 1802, future president John Quincy Adams spoke at Plymouth about the unique genius of the colony’s founders and their governing contract. He announced that the Pilgrims would arrive at the biblical day of judgment “in the whiteness of innocence” for having shown “kindness and equity toward the savages.”

In the mid-19th century, the historian George Bancroft claimed that it was in “the cabin of the Mayflower” where “humanity recovered its rights, and instituted

government on the basis of ‘equal laws’ for the general good.”

Nineteenth-century anniversary celebrations focused on the colonists, their written Compact, and their contribution to what became the United States. In 1870, on the 250th anniversary, cele-



Photo/Library of Congress

The signatories of the Mayflower Compact aboard the Mayflower as seen in Jean Leon Gerome Ferris’ “The Mayflower Compact, 1620.”

brants struck a commemorative coin: one side featured an open Bible, the other a group of Pilgrims praying on the shoreline.

Missing, not surprisingly, were the Wampanoags.

The front of the coin, which features praying Pilgrims reads, “Pilgrim Jubilee Memorial,” while the back reads, “Whose faith follow” above the Bible.

A more nuanced view

By 1970, the cultural tide had turned. Representatives of the Wampanoag nation walked out of Plymouth’s public celebration of Thanksgiving that year to announce that the fourth Thursday in November should instead be known as the National Day of Mourning. To these protesters, 1620 represented violent conquest and dispossession, the twinned legacies of exclusion.

The organizers of an international group called “Plymouth 400” have stressed that they want to tell a “historically accurate and culturally inclusive history.” They’ve promoted both the General Society of Mayflower Descendants and an exhibit featuring 400 years of Wampanoag History. Unlike earlier generations of celebrants, the organizers have acknowledged the continued presence of Native residents.

Prior celebrations of Plymouth’s founding focused on the Pilgrims’ role in the creation of the United States. By doing so, these commemorations sustained an exclusionary narrative for over two centuries.

Perhaps this year a different story will take hold, replacing ancestor worship with a more clear-eyed view of the past. ■

Peter C. Mancall is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. This article was first published at The Conversation (www.theconversation.com).

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UTO continued from page A

UTO also is helping to sustain Charlie's Place, a feeding ministry in the Diocese of Washington. With its \$25,000 grant, it can continue serving meals five days a week to neighbors struggling with food insecurity, some of whom also come to Charlie's Place for a range of other services, such as haircuts, fitness classes, medical checkups and clothing.

And in St. Petersburg, Fla., UTO is building on its previous support for Benison Farm, which makes use of formerly vacant land at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church. The historically Black congregation, through a partnership with the mostly white congregation of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, got the gardening ministry up and running after receiving an initial UTO grant in 2018. Volunteers had begun distributing Benison Farm's fresh produce to food pantries and at a church farmers market when the pandemic disrupted both harvesting and distribution.

"When things first shut down, we just lost almost all of our volunteers," said the Rev. Martha Goodwill, a deacon at St. Thomas who has helped coordinate the food ministry. Schools stopped sending students to work in the churches' gardens, Goodwill told ENS, and the threat of COVID-19 decreased



Photo/courtesy of Roxanne Cheney

Volunteers with A Caring Place prepare hot meals every weekday and distribute them to 20 senior citizens in Lexington, Ky.

tries. The monthly church farmers market will resume in December.

Benison Farm's mission always has focused on providing fresh, healthy food in St. Augustine's neighborhood, which has been identified as a "food desert," an area with limited access to healthy, affordable food sources. "There are people who can afford fresh produce ... but they don't have access to it," Goodwill said.

The need is especially great in St. Augustine's neighborhood, which has a large Black community. The pandemic has hit people of color particularly hard. Black, Latino and Native Americans are about five times as likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19 as white Americans, and African Americans are twice as likely to die from it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC notes that a variety of underlying causes are to blame, including disparities in access to health care and greater occupational risks.

In Lexington, A Caring Place expanded its Comfort Care Phone Program during the pandemic, with 46 residents now receiving regular check-in phone calls from program volunteers. "It's like a pen pal, but it's a phone pal," Cheney said. Some of those participants also have enjoyed joining others in conversations on various topics during A Caring Place's hour-long Virtual Welcome Center sessions, held at least twice a week on Zoom.

The feeding ministry, meanwhile, is limited to participants whose finances fall below 130% of the federal poverty line. The UTO grant will feed 16 participants for a year, and A Caring Place has now extended its outreach to 20 meal recipients.

Volunteer Sharon Asbury plans the meals and purchases the ingredients, and with help from family members, she gets up early each weekday to prepare the meals so they are ready to be delivered starting at 9 a.m. Other volunteers take turns as delivery drivers, and one delivery shift usually takes about three hours to drop off the meals at the homes of each recipient.

COVID-19 has limited the amount of interaction between volunteers and the people they feed, but Cheney said it still is serving A Caring Place's broader goal, "to reach out as Jesus did to those who had nothing and to show compassion and mercy." ■



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International Black Clergy Conference brings people together across the African diaspora

By Pat McCaughan
Episcopal News Service

Against a backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic and social, economic, political and racial upheaval — including conflicts over policing in the United States — Episcopalians and Anglicans from across the African diaspora gathered virtually to proclaim: “We are woke and ready to go.”

Several hundred viewers joined the Nov. 10-12 International Black Clergy Conference, themed “The African Diaspora United: Woke and Ready to Go,” organized by the Episcopal Church Office of Black Ministries. The conference included multilingual worship and provocative conversations and sermons that addressed Scriptural themes such as “pray and watch, rise and go,” taken from Mark 14:38-42. Laity were invited to join the conference on the final day.

“We know we have challenges out there that we have to face,” said the Rev. Ron Byrd Sr., the Episcopal Church’s missioner for Black ministries. The conference, he said, was intended to strengthen congregations and relationships across the African diaspora and to highlight a new direction, new programs, resources and even a name change for his office.

Bishops from Latin American and Caribbean dioceses, including Cuba, Colombia, Honduras, Central Ecuador and the Virgin Islands, as well as Archbishop Julio Murray, primate of the Anglican Church in Central America, sent prerecorded blessings to conference attendees. Similarly, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, Haitian, Sudanese, East African, West African, Liberian and South African clergy shared prerecorded stories of their ministries.

Bishop Carl Wright, bishop suffragan for the armed forces and federal ministries, sent prerecorded prayers and blessings commemorating Veterans Day on Nov. 11.

Keynote speakers, including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry; Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright; the Rt. Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the first Black female bishop in the Church of England; and Elizabeth Henry, the Church of England’s former



Photo/ENS

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry speaks to clergy and laity during the virtual International Black Clergy Conference.

national adviser for minority-ethnic Anglicans concerns, celebrated a common heritage of resilient faith in spite of challenging times.

A diverse group of clergy and laity from around the world joined the conference.

Being ‘woke’

Curry said the international gathering felt like a family reunion. Being woke, he said, is what the first chapter of John’s Gospel describes when it says, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” From his home in Raleigh, N.C., the presiding bishop told the gathering, “We need to be a seven-day-a-week church.”

“Like Jesus, we can refuse to internalize oppression,” Curry said. “We know what it means to be oppressed. We know what it means to have the gospel used as a weapon against us.”

The real gospel “will show us the way for us to be free and for us to be agents of setting other folks free. That’s the joyful liberty of the children of God,” Curry said.

Or, in the words of Wright, who re-

called the image of the prophetess Miriam dancing for joy after the escape from Egypt in Exodus 15:20-21, “Did you bring your tambourine?”

Hudson-Wilkin said she participated in demonstrations in the United Kingdom in the wake of George Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police. “As part of the African diaspora,” she said, “we have been there as a people, experienced and still experiencing oppression ... because as long as there is one person from the African diaspora experiencing oppression, then we are too.”

And yet, she added, “We do have a message to proclaim. A message of liberty and release. We cannot just stand at the street corner and proclaim it. We have to engage with the authorities in our proclamation in order to see and bring in the changes that are needed.”

Similarly, Elizabeth Henry, the chief executive of the advocacy group Race on the Agenda, shared images of Black Lives Matter advocates in Bristol, England, toppling a statue of a civic leader and former slave trader after “we saw and we witnessed and we heard our brother pleading, ‘I can’t breathe.’ That statement has, across the world, become symbolic around oppression and exclusion,” she said.

The Very Rev. Kim Coleman, national president of the Union of Black Episcopalians, said hearing about the struggle for racial justice in the U.K. “reminded (us) of the common ground that binds us together and extends beyond our identity as Episcopalians and Anglicans.”

“On the other hand, it is invigorating to be reminded that today, right now, we

continued on page G

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Lambeth Conference dates announced for 2022

The archbishop of Canterbury has announced revised dates for the 15th Lambeth Conference. Hosted in Canterbury, Kent, the face-to-face conference is planned for July 27 – Aug. 8, 2022.

The conference has been rescheduled from the original 2020 dates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference organizers will continue to monitor the implications of COVID-19 and follow official health guidance in the months ahead.

With the theme of “God’s Church for God’s World: Walking, Listening and Witnessing Together,” the conference will focus on what it means for the Anglican Communion — shaped by the five marks of mission — to be responsive to the needs and challenges of a rapidly changing world in the 21st century.

This will be the first Lambeth Conference to meet both face to face and virtually. As well as the meeting in Canterbury in 2022, the Lambeth Conference will now be planned as a conference journey that runs in phases before, during and beyond the face-to-face gathering.

Starting in 2021, the focus of phase one will be on introducing some of the major themes and strategic pillars of the conference program. The conference community of bishops and spouses — and wider Anglican audiences — will be invited to take part in the Lambeth conversation in different ways. This will be facilitated through a combination of online, regional and intraregional meetings and supporting resources.

With bishops and spouses invited from 165 countries of the Anglican Communion, the conference community represents a diversity of cultures and Christian tradition. The virtual phase of the conference will give more time to meet one another, discuss conference topics and share insights and experiences from the various provinces and church communities.

It will also ensure that the use of conference resources and planning for future outcomes in the life of the Anglican Communion can be as effective as possible.

A working group is being appointed to shape the conference journey, comprised by representatives from around the Com-

munion. These are Bishop Emma Ineson of Penrith (who also serves as a member of the conference design group); Bishop Anthony Poggio (the archbishop of Canterbury’s adviser on Anglican Communion affairs); the Rev. Joseph D. Galgalo (vice chancellor and associate professor of theology at St. Paul’s University in Kenya) and the bishop of Amritsar, Pradeep Samantaroy (The Church of North India — United). The group will work with



Photo/Anglican Archives

The bishops at the 2008 Lambeth Conference pose for the traditional group photo.

the archbishop of Canterbury and wider conference teams to construct an engaging program relevant to key issues in the world and the life of the Communion.

Phil George, the CEO of the Lambeth Conference Company, said:

“With the message of ‘God’s Church for God’s World,’ it’s vital that planning for our meeting of bishops and spouses responds to the new world we find ourselves in since COVID-19. Despite the challenges and disruption that the pandemic has caused, we’ve also seen huge creativity and adaptability as churches have started to meet virtually. The opportunities that technology provides for online meeting and engagement have opened up new ways for us to connect, pray and be community for one another. I’m looking forward to collaborating with the working group to help develop and deliver the Lambeth Conference conversation.”

The timetable and further details for the pre-conference program will be released in 2021.

For more information, visit lambeth-conference.org/dates.

— Lambeth Conference Company

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CONFERENCE continued from page E

are being called to make our gift of Blackness count towards achieving justice for others who bear the burden of color-based oppression,” Coleman said. “If I am nothing else after attending this conference, I certainly am ‘woke and ready to go.’”

The church as thermostat

During a prerecorded conversation on Nov. 11, Curry and Dean Kelly Brown Douglas of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary in New York, discussed what the church might learn from the Black Lives Matter movement.

Like the Black Lives Matter movement, the Black church — the church created by slaves who would “steal away, steal away to Jesus” — declared freedom “in spite of what they had been told in catechisms that distorted Christianity,” Curry said. Both send the message that “you are not what this world tries to make you out to be. You are a child of God. Live like a child of God. Walk like a child of God.”

He added that the church must become “an incarnational institution in the

community where it dwells ... by becoming part of that community, becoming a part of the issues of that community.”

“We have to learn from those people on the ground,” Douglas said. “Martin Luther King said that, instead of being a thermometer, the church needs to be the thermostat. To set, in essence, the temperature. That’s where we have to get to, to lead the way” in the creation of just and safe communities.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and political and societal upheaval, she asked: “How are we setting the thermostat in all this?”

“We are stepping into a legacy of people who fought for freedom even when they knew that the freedom that they were fighting for was a freedom they would never ever see. But they fought for that freedom anyhow. They believed in the freedom that was the justice of God. That has to haunt and to inspire all of us who are in this diaspora of people blessed with ebony grace,” Douglas said.

Addressing changing times

Byrd said the conference was intended to build on his highest priority since he became missionary for Black ministries

two years ago: “to work toward ensuring an inclusive face for all persons of the African diaspora.”

The office has established eight convocations representing diasporic diversity and hosted its first gathering, of East Africans, in Los Angeles, in 2019. “Plans are underway for a second, with the South Sudanese, for April in Kansas City, Mo., COVID allowing,” he said.

Conference participants were asked to participate in a survey to determine a possible name change for the office to reflect that diversity. In consultation with the presiding bishop, the choice between the Office of Black/African Diaspora Ministries or the Office of Black/African Ancestry Ministries will be announced early next year, he said.

The name change was proposed because, “In our context, the descriptor ‘Black’ is often considered as referring to African Americans,” he said. “This has been perhaps an impediment for some members of the diaspora from engaging, participating, from feeling a sense of welcome and inclusion.”

All conference presentations will be available for on-demand viewing on the Office of Black Ministries page. ■

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**YEAR-END MATCH
 CHALLENGE**

Books reveal a remarkable treasury of Christian art

Review by Stephen Platten

These two books could hardly exhibit a greater contrast; one is an interpretative gallery and the other a reference directory to Christian art. Of contemporary theological writers, Richard Harries is the closest we come to a “Renaissance man,” a true polymath.

In this, his 40th book, he returns to his interest in religion and art. Challenged to choose 30 images by different artists, he alights upon a variety of artists straddling the centuries, from the sixth to the 20th.

The images are grouped under three headings: Time—Creation; History—the Judaeo-Christian Tradition; Christ—the Christian and divine lives. There is a brief theological commentary on each subject, relating the image to contemporary life. Each piece concludes with an attractive and appropriate prayer.

We begin in Monreale Cathedral in Sicily, with a fascinating mosaic depicting creation; here the commentary is accompanied briefly with reference to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose work is credited alongside other extracts. Poetry frequently makes an appearance as do both fiction and non-fiction. There follow images from the Renaissance.

Masaccio and Piero della Francesca (“The Baptism of Christ”) are featured. Later artists follow, including Lucas Cranach, Caravaggio and Rembrandt.

The 14th-century fresco, “The Anastasis,” is a strong representation of the Resurrection. This image is currently imperiled as the Turkish government has converted the Church of St. Saviour in Chora in Istanbul into a mosque. The status of the Christian artworks is unknown.

Harries is a noted speaker and writer on icons and Byzantine art. He cites the powerful “Ascent of Christ from Hell,” which depicts Christ dragging Adam and others out of the eternal fire. Harries’ theological reflections are always enriching although, at times, almost gnomic.

Perhaps a little more space for these would have been a bonus. The 20th century images are equally powerful, such as Marc Chagall’s “Exodus,” which bridges Judaism and Christianity

Stanley Spencer’s “Scorpion” is telling, depicting the testing and temptation of Christ. Nicholas Mynheer’s 2003 “The Spirit Descends to Live Within Us” is both intense and surprising.

Towards the end, we are offered slight-



Seeing God in Art: The Christian faith in thirty images

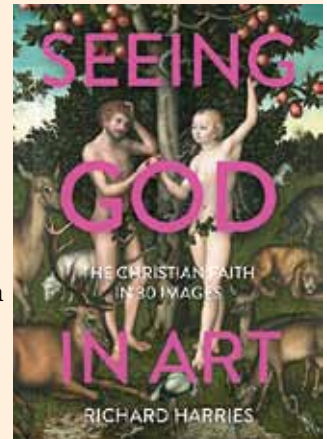
By Richard Harries

SPCK, pp.144. \$21.69

A Guide to Christian Art

By Diane Apostolos-Cappadona

T&T Clark/Bloomsbury
pp.298. \$26.95



ly longer reflections: the mosaic at Hosios Loukas Monastery in Greece of “Christ’s Questioning” is one distinctive example here. The use of David Wynne’s sculpture *Noli me tangere* and Tom Denny’s window in Hereford Cathedral, designed in memory of Thomas Traherne, are both powerful, albeit using very different artistic media. This book would, amongst many other things, be a very useful contribution to a course of confirmation training.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona explains that “A Guide to Christian Art” is intended as a tool for “reading” Christian art. Quite explicitly, this is intended as a reference book, a volume for “both students interested in Christian art from varied disciplines of art history, biblical studies, church history, history of Christianity and Christian theology, as well as the museum visitors who have found the wall text descriptions or catalogue entries of a work of art insufficient to satisfy their curiosity about why certain flowers or animals are include in a particular painting.”

Having personally been guided around the Upper Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, with its remarkable “Life of St. Francis,” and in company with a scholar of art history, the Giotto paintings took on for this reviewer so much more meaning. This book is intended as a general introduction to such interpretation.

continued on page J

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Why I still watch 'Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown'

By Pamela A. Lewis



LIKE MANY Americans of my generation, I have been a big fan of "Peanuts," the cartoon created by the late Charles Schulz. As a kid, I impatiently awaited the delivery of the Sunday papers so I could turn immediately to the page where Charlie Brown, Linus, Lucy, Snoopy, and their motley group of friends held court and made me and my parents laugh at their amusing adventures and experiences.

I loved each of the main characters because of the way Schulz designed their physical characteristics: Lucy's big gaping mouth that either bossed others or was Snoopy's target for one of his dreaded sloppy wet "kisses"; Charlie Brown with his nearly bald pate and woe-is-me expression; or the rumpled Pig Pen, who was eternally surrounded in a cloud of dust. By some mysterious alchemy, Schulz gave his characters personalities that were at turns irritating and endearing.

The Peanuts gang also came across as real children; they were kids like me who went to school, struggled at times with their lessons, and were mystified by the grownups who raised and taught them. They played games (which Charlie Brown never succeeded in winning), teased one another, and developed crushes (see Lucy and Schroeder).

The Peanuts kids also celebrated our culture's popular holidays, and in 1965, Charlie Brown and his pals moved from the funny papers to the big time: Television. First, there was the Halloween special *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown*, where actors gave the gang their unique and now recognizable voices. But *Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown* would be different, playing to a wider audience and handling a more significant story. "Christmastime is here, happiness and cheer," the kids sing in the film's introduction as they glide in a serpentine, Snap the Whip line across a frozen pond (with Snoopy bringing up the rear). I join my voice to theirs, reveling in every note of composer Vince Guaraldi's immortal score. I never tire of the uncomplicated melody,

which evokes joy, hope and innocence. Charlie Brown frets to his pal Linus about not knowing what Christmas "is all about." The commercialization of the season, heavy with bling and glitz, leaves him feeling confused and kind of empty. Even Charlie's dog Snoopy has his canine pad rigged out with colorful and flashing lights. But for Charlie Brown, something is wrong with this picture. Something is missing. Yes, Charlie, I understand.

Charlie later gets what he thinks is a brilliant idea to solve his problem: put on an old-fashioned Christmas pageant, complete with the Three Wise Men and bleating sheep. "No, no, no!" objects know-it-all Lucy. It's got to have "Santa Claus, deck them halls, Ho-ho-ho, and pretty girls," she explains while batting her eyes at her love interest, Schroeder, whose task is to provide the pageant's music.

Despite his best efforts to organize the



pageant, it doesn't come together. No one cooperates, least of all Snoopy, who prefers dancing atop Schroeder's piano rather than listening to his

master's instructions.

Charlie and Linus' trip to the local Christmas tree market to buy one for the pageant doesn't help matters, either. Shiny and glammed-up trees are everywhere, but there is nothing real or meaningful, except for a bedraggled little specimen whose needles have all but fallen off.

Taking pity on it, Charlie buys and presents it to his "friends," who laugh it — and him — to scorn. When he places

continued on page J



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BOOK REVIEWS continued from page H

Apostolos-Cappadona is systematic, almost to a fault, in her pursuit of this aim!

The book falls into two distinct sections, the first dealing with narratives of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The earliest illustration she uses is from the workshop of Quentin Massys, depicting “St. Luke Painting the Virgin and Child.”

The legend of Luke as a painter and physician is chosen as perhaps the earli-



Photo/Wikimedia Commons

The 14th century fresco, “The Anastasis,” depicts the Resurrection.

est reference to art in Christianity. Jan Gossaert’s “The Adoration of the Kings” is used to introduce representations of Jesus, with attention to narrative and symbolic elements. Later in this section, the mosaic of “Christ Enthroned Among the Apostles” leads into discussion of other symbols of Christ, including references to icons of the Pantokrator.

The second section moves its focus toward “themes.” An exhaustive catalogue of objects and motifs follows. Picking up the personal thread from the first section,

biblical and apocryphal figures (“person-ages” as she categorizes them) are gathered before moving on to the subject of places, including biblical locations and other biblical motifs. Thereafter follows discussion of images of saints, celestial figures and symbols.

Both a St. Bartholomew altarpiece and “Adam Naming the Animals” are illustrations used here. The final sub-section moves the focus to more abstract signs and symbols, with animals, botanicals, the human body, colors (and letters, words, and phrases), musical instruments and the “visual church,” including architecture. Hans Memling’s “Angel Musicians” and a chi rho and alpha and omega feature here.

The author is to be congratulated on the sheer scope of her survey, and all in such a relatively concise volume. The descriptions are clear and will enlighten just those groups intended as readers in her introduction.

Perhaps the one regret is the relative paucity of illustrations in a book

introducing the “reading” of a seminal strand within visual art. This leads to a certain sense of prolixity. Taken with Harries’ book, however, the two are an imaginative and complementary initiation into the remarkable treasury of Christian art throughout the ages. ■

Bishop Stephen Platten is honorary assistant bishop in the Dioceses of London, Newcastle, and Southwark, in the United Kingdom. This article was first published in The Living Church.

CHARLIE BROWN continued from page I

an ornament on one fragile branch, the tree bends deeply, nearly breaking under the bauble’s weight. “Ugh, I’ve killed it,” laments Charlie, believing again that he can’t do anything right, not even choose a good Christmas tree.

“I can tell you what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown,” says Linus very calmly, as they stand in the school auditorium where the pageant will take place. One spotlight sheds a beam on Linus (now without his trusty security blanket) as he takes to the empty stage. He recites the ancient verses from the Gospel of Luke (2:1-14): “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger ...” Finally, Charlie Brown understands. The pathetic little tree that looked as if it wouldn’t amount to much, then receives a loving and twinkling makeover from the kids, who present it to Charlie Brown. “It isn’t such a bad little tree; it just needed a little love,” says Linus wisely.

While “*Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown*” is essentially an animated cartoon, whose characters look funny, and behave broadly, and there are silly noises and prat-falls, Linus’ recitation of Saint Luke’s verses is its solemn core. For a few moments, the story’s busyness is suspended to make room for a larger and more eternal story.

Charles Schulz’s brilliance lies in having none other than Linus, often presented and judged (especially by his sister Lucy) as too babyish and meek to be taken seriously, to declaim the biblical narrative about another and very special child’s birth.

Like the puny tree, which the other kids ridiculed and rejected, Linus emerges from his customary lesser status to be the one who knows the truth about Christmas. He “tells” that truth by reciting the Nativity story. Sometimes it takes a child — a blanket-toting, thumb-sucking Linus sort of child — to remind the Charlie Browns in the world what life, love, and other important things are all about.

This is why I added “*Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown*” to my DVD collection, and why watching this animated classic every year over these many decades is one of my cherished Christmas traditions.

Merry Christmas. ■

Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith. This article was first published in the Episcopal New Yorker.

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In the year of the pandemic, a printmaker seeks to honor those we have lost

By Jerry Hames

Troubled by thoughts of the increasing pandemic death toll across the nation, the Rev. Mark Harris, a retired Episcopal priest and creative printmaker, struggled with how he could memorialize those who had fallen victim to COVID-19.

“I was trying to work out how to make real the number of those who had died, how to make it something I could handle, make manifest in some sort of art object,” he said.

Unexpectedly, the answer came in a dream. “What came to me was the idea of a book in which each person who had died would be tallied with a mark of some sort, and the whole collection of those marks would be a book of many pages. I decided to have the book represent all the American dead from January to November 1. The book would be completed and added to the remembering on All Saints Day,” he said.

By the first week of October



Harris added block prints or relief prints, as he describes them, from his own collection, placing them at random in both volumes to elicit a range of emotion.



Photos/Jerry Hames

The Rev. Mark Harris stands with two books he created to mark the lives lost to COVID-19.

he had carved out of wood a plate for the book cover and more or less determined the way he would construct the book. To mark each death from the virus he decided to use the numeral “1.”

He selected sheets of rice paper, a thin, fragile paper readily available, and fed each page though a laser printer with 50 rows of “1,” 40 rows deep, on each page: 2,000 lives on each page.

When a colleague suggested that he ought also to have a book that held the numbers for the rest of the world, Harris set to work on that book as well, working daily in his studio for three weeks.

He superimposed on some pages images from prints he had created through the years, such as a crescent moon and a skeletal figure. He then sewed the pages together



and glued them into the cover he had created.

The complete set, Volume 1 (U.S.) with about 115 pages and Volume 2 (World) with 450 pages was finished a week before All Saints Day and updated until its publication date — November 1 — during a service at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Lewes, Del., where Harris is an associate priest.

The volume tallying the worldwide dead holds more than 875,000 marks on 450 pages. The U.S. volume

contains markings for more than 230,000 dead on 115 pages.

“Holding these books in my hands, I hold an outward and visible sign of the dead,” he said in an interview before the service. “At the same time I remember that each “1” is a person made in the image of God.”

He said that what began as a printmaker’s way of making these large numbers “manifest and real” became a sacramental way to find an outward sign of an inward grace.

“My dream became a project, became a dream again, this time of spiritual knowing. And because spiritual knowing can lead to action, the book states ‘the dead are remembered, the living held to account.’” ■

Jerry Hames is editor emeritus of Episcopal Journal.

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Modern-day ‘Old Master’: Painter depicts African-Americans as Bible characters

By Pamela A. Lewis

The term “Old Master” painters always brings the well-known heavy hitters to mind: Rembrandt, Giotto, da Vinci, Dürer, and Mantegna, who are on the long list of European men (and a few women) who, between the 13th and 19th centuries, produced some of the greatest paintings in Western art.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an “Old Master” was “a pre-eminent artist of the period before the modern; especially a pre-eminent western European painter of the 13th to 18th centuries.”

At first glance, contemporary artist Tyler Ballon may not remind anyone of the traditional image of an “Old Master.” On the day of his Zoom interview with Episcopal Journal, he was clad in a T-shirt bearing the words “God vs. my enemies,” and jeans.

From his canvas-packed studio at the Mana Contemporary Center in Jersey City, N.J., the 24-year-old African-American figurative artist turns out large-scale

paintings like those that Renaissance and Baroque-era European artists typically produced.

However, the common themes of old master paintings have also strongly inspired Ballon, a Jersey City native and graduate of the Maryland Institute College

of Art in Baltimore. He traces to early childhood his first encounters with these works’ depictions of mythological heroes, and, more specifically, biblical characters and saints. Over the last several years, Ballon has used old master techniques from celebrated works to draw attention to the challenges facing Black Americans.

Ballon grew up in a “challenging environment,” where many of his peers were incarcerated, struggled to support families, or died violently. But he credits his parents (who are both pastors in the Pentecostal church) and his love of art for setting him on a different path.

“Art saved me,” Ballon asserted. At first it was merely a hobby that competed with his other love, boxing. But his now-deceased grandmother, upon seeing a drawing he did of her, encouraged him to “keep it up,” because it would bring him and the family success.

In 2013 and 2014, he received the Young Arts awards (presented by the National Young



Photos/courtesy of the artist

Above, Deposition, 2018; far left, Called, 2019; left, Take up Your Cross, 2020, oil on canvas.



Arts Foundation in Miami), and since 2014, his work has been included in several group exhibitions in this country and in Sweden.

During his years attending a Roman Catholic grammar school and church, Ballon was exposed to and fell in love with traditional iconography that tells the

sance and Baroque periods.

“I was always very observant, and I noticed and was impressed by their technical skill, use of color, and profound knowledge of the human anatomy, as well as their ability to turn the Scriptures so powerfully into ‘real life’ onto the canvas,” Ballon said.

continued on page M

BALLON continued from page L

However, his deep affection and respect for the work of the Old Masters gradually came into conflict with his growing and discomfiting awareness of their Eurocentrism.

“I felt a separation from the art because all of the figures were White people. I loved the work, but none looked like me. It left me feeling excluded from the conversation,” he said.

Representations of what is now often termed the “Black body” in European art have been scant and largely peripheral. Black figures, frequently unidentified, were relegated to the margins, in the background of paintings, or portrayed in servile roles.

One exception is Balthazar, recounted in legend as one of the three magi who brought gifts to the Christ Child. As Ballon explained, “We live in direct relationship to our heroes. If our heroes are in the Bible and yet don’t resemble us in images, we can’t see ourselves as trying to be like them or trying to do what they’ve done.”

Ballon has filled this pictorial vacuum. Using the tools of the old masters — grand canvases and oil paint, and fluently speaking their iconographic language — Ballon has moved Black bodies from the shadowy margins of the canvas to the forefront, portraying (and also honoring) them as biblical characters.

His paintings document the struggle and pain still embedded in the contemporary Black experience, while interpreting these circumstances within the Christian narratives of faith and redemption.

Ballon’s meticulously detailed paintings often evoke the work of American illustrator Norman Rockwell, as well as that of Kehinde Wiley, the African-American artist whose paintings also reference European masterpieces, and whose portrait of former President Barack Obama drew accolades. Ballon is not bothered by the comparison to Wiley, whom he met when he was 18 years old and whom he idolizes for the older artist’s technique and his broad knowledge of art history.

While Ballon draws inspiration from a variety of old master painters, the use of color and light, strong composition, and powerful storytelling seen in works by the renowned Roman Renaissance and Baroque painter Caravaggio (1571-1610), are reflected most prominently in his work.



Photo/courtesy of Tyler Ballon

Tyler Ballon is seen in his studio.

Ballon brings these elements together to emphasize the pathos and theatricality of *The Deposition* (2018), one of his most pointedly Caravaggio-inspired works. Here, the mourners, one of whom locks his eyes with ours, are captured in the same fan-shaped arrangement as those in the Italian master’s 1603 *The Entombment*.

In Ballon’s hands, they have become residents of an African-American neighborhood lamenting over the murdered body of a loved one. As a kind of homage to Caravaggio, who often included himself in his paintings, Ballon has cast himself as the corpse in this work.

With an economy of gesture and expression the artist gives his attention to hands in *Called* (2019), where another young man (again, the artist), wearing a baseball cap, sits on a damaged set of steps.

He is interrupted from counting the money he holds in each hand by a white jacketed but faceless figure who holds a Bible in his right hand while pointing to the young man with his left. Looking up, the young man points to himself, as if to ask, “Who, me?” Inspired by Caravaggio’s *The Calling of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600), the work represents subtly yet powerfully the decisive moment when the soul is summoned.

Take Up Your Cross (2020) offers an ambiguous portrayal of its subject. Drenched in dramatic, Caravaggesque light, he looks penetratingly at the viewer, appearing to be just another elementary school kid clutching an unusual object he has found. But in truth, he is the young Jesus embrac-

ing the instrument of his death.

Mary in Prayer (2018), based this time on Francisco de Zurbarán’s *The Young Virgin* (1632-33), is a nearly full-length figure work and one of Ballon’s most explicitly devotional images. The open book (suggesting the Scriptures) on Mary’s lap and her hands positioned to receive the Holy Spirit place her solidly in Western iconography, yet Ballon uses her to address current conversations about whose body can embody holiness.

Although not a member of a faith community, like the message on his T-shirt, Ballon is forthright about his beliefs and self-identifies as a devout Christian who dedicates all of his work to God’s glory.

“God is the source of my gifts and my greatest agent, who brings opportunities to me,” he said. He feels closest to the Old Testament’s Joseph, on whom God bestowed the gift to interpret dreams, whereas Ballon feels that he has received the gift to interpret the Scriptures through his paintings. His goal is to become one of the greatest figurative painters in the art world, and to be a mentor to other young artists. But, again, he said he leaves that in God’s hands.

Ballon is part of a small but growing group of artists who have returned to representing the human form. His models are friends, family, and members of his immediate community, and in his view, the figure expresses most effectively all that can be expressed in life. As was true for these painters from Europe’s past, composition, vivid color, light and gesture are his currency.

Whereas some may accuse the artist of a lack of originality, his references to and evocations of their works are in keeping with past practices of artists borrowing from one another’s masterpieces. After all, imitation is the highest form of praise.

But more importantly, Ballon is contributing meaningfully to the growing interest in and discussions about the lives of African-Americans and other people of color by bringing together their underrepresented bodies and a European art form to tell the Bible’s compelling stories. His work unapologetically affirms that these bodies can portray sacred characters, be the bearers of eternal truths, and can reflect the *imago Dei*. ■

Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith. She attends Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue in New York.

Keeping a simple Christmas in a time of anxiety

Review by Solange De Santis

Texas-based Christian author and blogger Jen Hatmaker could hardly have foreseen how the COVID-19 pandemic would upend many Christmas traditions this year, but her observations in “7 Days of Christmas” on leading a more thoughtful, authentic holiday certainly ring true in 2020.

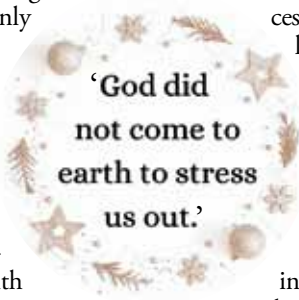
Published in 2019, this graphically attractive book builds on Hatmaker’s earlier book, “7: An Experimental Mutiny Against Excess.”

In that book, her family launched “a seven-month experiment to tackle seven areas where we were spinning out of control: food, clothes, spending, waste, media and technology, possessions and stress.”

They reduced their choices in each area to seven, one month at a time. Hat-

maker also researched the influences on and effects of those choices in areas such as labor supply chains, local economics, stress-induced anxiety and sustainable farming.

However, she notes in the Christmas book, the “7” experiment stopped in November. “For a project focused on consumerism and excess, December now seems



like a very strange season to leave out ... the month in which Americans spent \$721 billion [in 2018].”

The seven areas of Christmas are food, clothes, stuff, streaming, tossing, spending and stressing. The idea of reducing waste and consumption in all these areas takes on new resonance this year.

For example, take clothes. Give some away and don’t buy more, says Hatmaker. You have what you need in your closet. One might add that in 2020, we’re not



7 Days of Christmas

By Jen Hatmaker

Abingdon Press, 2019, 200 pages, \$21.99

going to parties, concerts, school plays, fancy restaurant dinners, so who needs new outfits?

Food? Did we ever really need five side dishes and three pies at Christmas dinner? We’re having smaller (or no) gatherings this year, so perhaps we could prepare what we can actually consume and dial back the Christmas baking frenzy.

The story of Jesus, Hatmaker notes, begins in humility and ends in glory and “the weary world rejoices still.” This year, we sure are weary and need a reason to rejoice. ■

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Convention Sermon, continued

Moses who declined, and who interceded for the people. Scripture also calls him “the meekest man on earth.” And this was how he could go face to face with God.

One hesitation and Moses lost participating in “Mission Accomplished.” Maybe that was it. Or, maybe God knows when a mission is accomplished and when there is more to be done, and God knew that Moses had finished his race. God didn’t want to see him face the disillusion of the settling into Canaan, or the establishing of kings and the fading of what was once Promise.

It is a story that brings to mind Dr. Martin Luther King’s Mountain Top sermon, for after all, this moment with Moses provided the metaphor.

Moses didn’t offer any words in Deuteronomy as he stood on the mountain top. But we can imagine him saying that God had allowed him to go up the mountain. And that he had looked over. And how he had seen the Promised Land; that he may not get there with the people, but that didn’t bother him. For as a people we would get there. Moses might have added that he was happy; not worried about anything; fearing no man. And having once been told that no man can see God’s glory and live, he might have dared to add: and yes “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”

About every year, in our house, we celebrate Passover. It is not a cultural appropriation. My wife’s roots come from an ancestry flowing from a Dutch Jew slaveholder called Jacob Prillerman, who “had children by his slave Nancy” and gave them his family name. Donna feels powerfully attached to this inheritance.

In the liturgy or Haggadah that we use for the occasion, there is a strong emphasis on human rights. You might expect that from a couple who found each other advocating for religious freedom in a communist land. At one key point it reads:

“the struggle for freedom is a continuous struggle, for never do human beings reach total liberty and opportunity. In every age some new freedom is won and established, adding to the advancement of human happiness and security. Yet each age uncovers a formerly unrecognized servitude, requiring new liberation to set human souls free. In every age the concept of freedom grows broader, widening the horizons for finer and nobler living. Each generation is duty bound to contribute to this growth, else humankind’s ideals become stagnant and stationary. The events in Egypt were but the beginning of a force in history which will forever continue...for we must dedicate our energies to the cause there begun.”

That’s how it was for the people who reached the Promised Land with Moses. He had reached his destination and another, Joshua, took up his mantle. That’s how it was for Dr. King. He could claim that he had seen the coming of the glory of the Lord in his vision of a Beloved Community.

He did not get there with us. His mantle, however, has passed on to every person who works towards that same vision, and engages the current racial reckoning. And so it goes on. I would like to think that the hopeful news of Pope Francis’ statement supporting same sex civil unions might share in this same movement.

And one thing is clear: this is always our call as followers of the Way of Jesus; and for this purpose He gives us two sources of encouragement:—first, His own example, what the apostle Paul calls the invitation to share in Christ’s sufferings in love, that we might know the power of His resurrection, His Promised land; and second, the articulation of how we find the strength to keep moving forward, even as the celebration of one new freedom reveals the call of a new struggle. That strength is inspired in the great commandments—to love God and to love your neighbor. All of these things are linked; and all give incentive to a common goal of belovedness.

And one last thing. I was talking with a fellow bishop of another denomination about whether all this current emphasis in racial healing is causing us to lose our balance as a Church. His reply was quick and stunning, “you are actually saying that you just don’t want to do the work!” I pray as I write this today, by Convention Sunday, we will have begun to commit ourselves to the work in our response to our resolutions, especially the calling for a Season of Truth and Healing.

And if it happens that one day we get to the mountain top and see this journey’s fulfilment, I have no doubt in guessing what we will see: God standing on a Native reservation holding the hand of a young mother and her child, or in a refugee camp in Uganda, or within a slum in Brazil, or a migrant camp on the English Channel or among the Greek islands, and we will hear God’s voice reminding us yet again: Love Me with all your heart, soul and mind; and love these, my and your neighbors as yourself. These are My greatest and changeless commandments.

Amen.



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