

Episcopal JOURNAL

MONTHLY EDITION | \$3.75 PER COPY

VOL 7 NO 1 | JANUARY 2017



NEWS Standing Rock 'water protectors' see victory



FEATURE Lutherans and Episcopalians mark partnership



ARTS Photos reveal craftwork in worship space

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Photo/Wikimedia Commons/Historisches Museum, Bamberg

O come, let us adore him

Jan. 6 marks Epiphany, the commemoration of the visit by the Magi, or Three Wise Men, to the infant Jesus. The tradition of Christmas gift-giving stems from their three gifts: gold, a tribute befitting a king; frankincense, which is poured on a sacrifice and symbolizes Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and myrrh, an embalming resin that foretells the Savior's death. In Jan de Bray's "Adoration of the Magi" (1674), light focuses on Mary and the child, but a chilling hint of Calvary can be seen as Roman military spears are depicted in the upper left corner.

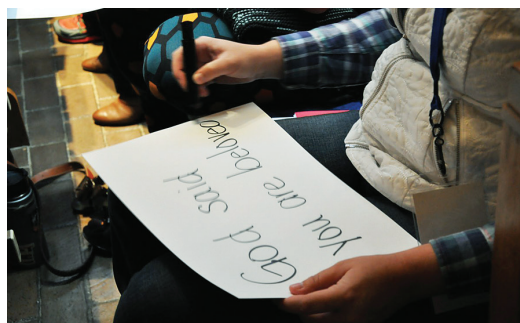
Evangelism matters to the world, say 400+ Episcopalians, Anglicans

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

The slogan on the swag bag read: "Episcopal Evangelist. It's not an oxymoron."

While some people might think that an Episcopal evangelist is a rare breed, more than 400 evangelism veterans and fledgling practitioners spent Nov. 18-19 being inspired, finding camaraderie and learning new ways to live up to that slogan during the Evangelism Matters conference at Church of the Transfiguration in the diocese of Dallas.

The Rev. Emily Schnabl, rector of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Midwest City, Okla. said she was already convinced of the need for evangelism and came to the conference looking for practical ways to bring that idea alive in her parish. She told Episcopal News Service that she left feeling supported in some of what St. Christopher's is already doing and with some "really achievable things



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS

In an exercise on the closing day of the Evangelism Matters conference participants engage in "cardboard testimonials," writing on one side of their paper about something with which they have struggled and, on the other side, what God has done for them about that struggle.

that I've literally got in my bag to take back."

The Episcopal Church is waking up to the need for evangelism, said Ron Braman, an enrolled member of the Eastern Shoshone tribe in Wyoming and music minister at the

Stewardship focus shifts to year-round giving, community building

By Pat McCaughan
Episcopal News Service

This year, parishioners at St. Bartholomew's church in Poway, Calif., posted notes to a "giving wall" in the sanctuary, sharing the reasons they give to the church.

"Because I so easily 'fall in love' with money," wrote one respondent. "Giving, even though it scares me, forces me to notice when materialism is driving me more than trust in God."

The invitation to link church members' money lives to their faith lives transforms the totality of their lives, according to the Rev. Chris Harris, St. Bart's curate.

The giving wall, like the money autobiographies and simple-living classes he offers, are spiritual exercises and are part of the church's year-round formation efforts — not to be confused with seasonal pledge drives.

The focus and emphasis of traditional stewardship campaigns are changing, according to Richard Felton, executive director of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, or TENS, which partners with and offers resources to dioceses throughout the Episcopal Church.

Gone are traditional seasonal money pitches. Big red thermometers with dollar-and-cent signs inching upward have been replaced by budgets detailing ways staff and office hours translate to mission and ministry.

The once church-wide dinner galas marking stewardship campaigns have been replaced by smaller potluck meals, and more intimate opportunities for conversation and deeper relationships in members' homes, according to Felton.

Gone also are pleas for assistance with campus repairs from finance-minded parishioners. Instead, parishioners hear personal stories of transformation, of deepening faith and ministry that, said Harris, when "authentic and vulnerable, end up building community in a way that giving flows from that."

The new stewardship focus includes stories like the one Joyce Vidal recently told Sunday morning worshippers at St. Barnabas on the

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ANGLICAN DIGEST

Anglican Digest is a column of news and features from churches in the Anglican Communion. The following are credited from Anglican Communion News Service.

Africans focus on climate change

Young people from three Portuguese speaking dioceses of Mozambique and Angola met Nov. 25-30 in Maciene, Mozambique to discuss action on climate change. Although the two countries are Portuguese-speaking, they are separated by more than 2,000 km; as a result up to now contacts between them have been few.

Green Anglicans, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's environmental network, led a workshop on environmental issues. While Mozambique has suffered from devastating floods, Angola has undergone crippling drought.

The workshop included a presentation on the effects of climate change, consideration of the theology of caring for creation and a workshop on the actions that young Green Anglicans can take.

Among the actions that were decided:

- The diocese of Lebombos in southern Mozambique will start a tree planting campaign and develop a nursery. A diocesan Sunday school project called Little Seeds of God teaches children to save and plant seeds whenever they eat fruit. They will also have quarterly clean-up days, environmental training and recycling programs. They will also plant parish vegetable gardens.

- The diocese of Angola is calling its program "Greening my habitat." At their upcoming youth conferences, diocesan members will celebrate Green June, calling on every young person to plant a tree at a local church every year. The young women's network plans to take up the Little Seeds of God project and plant fruit trees at schools and churches.

- The diocese of Niassa in Mozambique will be training young people to do clean up work in the main city of Cuamba. They will leverage the presence of clergy at the upcoming consecration of the bishop to run a workshop on environmental ministry and call upon families to plant a tree at every baptism.

The workshop concluded with the planting and blessing of trees.



Photo/Lurdes Macie

Some of the participants at the youth conference for Portuguese speaking dioceses in Africa

Leaders speak out against gender-based violence

Christian leaders in Fiji have united to declare that gender-based violence is a sin, in an advertisement shown on movie screens and national television. The 60-second ad has been shown during Fiji television's main evening news for the past three weeks and before films in 16 cinemas. The video was the idea of Anglican Archbishop Winston Halapua, who received backing from other Fijian Christian leaders, the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia said.

Coptic, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Methodist, evangelical, Salvation Army and independent churches have all backed the ad, which was produced by the communications department of Fiji's Methodist Church.

Welby meets Pakistan terror victims

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby visited Pakistan in mid-November to meet victims of anti-Christian terror attacks, including Christians at St. Thomas Church in Islamabad and Christ Church, Youhanabad. They were survivors of the 2013 Peshawar church and the 2015 Youhanabad bombings — both Christians and Muslims. The visit was hosted by the moderator of the Church of Pakistan, Bishop Samuel Azariah, who praised Welby.

"He was determined to visit Pakistan," Bishop Azariah said. "He was advised not to attend the church in Islamabad, but he said that he would go there and as an Archbishop visiting a province how could he not go to the church and not meet his people."

"So we want to thank him from the depth of our heart. We are grateful to the Communion for thinking of us and praying for us, for a church which is struggling, for a church which is marginalized, for a church which lives with hope — with hope in God's great grace."

The ministry officer for the diocese of Polynesia, the Rev. Sereima Lomaloma, said that it was a "sadly relevant message" in a country where 64 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 have been the victim of "intimate partner violence."

The advertising campaign is part of increasing participation by Fijian churches in Break the Silence Sunday, observed on the Sunday immediately

Welby also met with children, young people, theological students and government officials, including the prime minister's foreign affairs adviser, Sartaj Aziz, "to discuss freedom



Photo/courtesy of Lambeth Palace

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby meets young people at Christ Church, Youhanabad during a two-day visit to Pakistan.

of religion and protection of religious minorities in the country, as well as to hear of the suffering of so many of the people of Pakistan in the struggle against terrorism," Lambeth Palace said in a statement.

The Church of Pakistan later reflected on the visit. Coordinating Officer Mano Rumlshah said that the visit "fulfilled its main purpose of feeling the pain of the wounded and sharing the hope of healing and reconciliation offered by our Lord Jesus Christ." ■



Photo/courtesy ACNS

Coptic Orthodox Church leader Father Anthony Lemuela in a television and cinema ad in which Fijian church leaders declare that "gender-based violence is a sin."

prior to Nov. 25, which is the U.N.-backed international day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the start of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence.

In 2013, the Polynesia diocesan synod declared "zero tolerance"

for violence against women and children in Anglican churches, schools, communities and homes. ■

Episcopal JOURNAL

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Advertising: Shanley + Associates, LLC

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Subscriptions: To change subscription addresses, contact: Episcopal Journal Circulation Department PO Box 937, Bellmawr NJ 08099-0937
ejournal@egpp.com or call 800-691-9846.
Individual subscriptions are \$36 per year, available through www.episcopaljournal.org.

Episcopal Journal is an independent publication, produced by and for members of the Episcopal Church in the United States and abroad. Episcopal Journal is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable corporation, registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Episcopal Journal is published monthly by the Episcopal Journal, Inc. Episcopal Journal is published monthly and quarterly in partnership with dioceses and individual churches and is distributed to individual subscribers. Postage paid at Bryn Mawr, Pa. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to: Episcopal Journal, P.O. Box 937, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0937.
ISSN: 2159-6824

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Religion News Association has announced its list of the top religion stories of the year and it seems we still can't get away from the presidential election.

White evangelical support of presidential candidate Donald Trump, and the effectiveness of that support in his election, was chosen the top religion news story although the candidate himself seems to have no particular religious commitment or depth.

In terms of Trump issues touching religion, his proposed ban on Muslim immigration to the U.S., or his idea that Muslims should be subjected to so-called "extreme vetting" alarmed some voters but drew approval from others.

Interestingly, the RNA diverged

from Time magazine (which named Trump its Person of the Year), naming the religion newsmakers of the year Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim Gold Star parents of U.S. Army Captain Humayun Khan, who was killed in Iraq.

The Khans appeared at the Democratic National Convention this July where they denounced Mr. Trump's proposed ban on Muslims entering the country as unconstitutional, with Khir Khan memorably holding up a copy of the U.S. constitution and asking Trump, rhetorically, if he had ever read it.

Among the top stories involving the Episcopal Church was the meeting in January 2016 of Anglican lead-

ers, called primates, and their request that the church step down from certain leadership roles for three years due to its more-liberal stance on same-sex marriage.

The Standing Rock Sioux protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota were chosen as a top news story and tribe members were cited as major newsmakers. Episcopal clergy and lay people have been active in the protests, as has Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

Looking toward 2017, President-elect Trump will certainly continue to be a key newsmaker and Episcopalian should keep watch on any proposed policy developments that affect religion. ■

NEWS

Episcopal Church pledges support for 'water protectors'

By Kevin Cummings

After the latest victory for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in the effort to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from crossing under Lake Oahe on the Missouri River, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said the Episcopal Church will continue backing the "water protectors."

On Dec. 4, the Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would deny an easement to allow the oil pipeline under the water source for the Standing Rock Reservation, which is home to about 8,000 people in North and South Dakota. The announcement came one day before the Corps' deadline for protestors — who call themselves "water protectors" — to vacate their main camp about a mile from the pipeline's planned Missouri River crossing. After issuing the evacuation order last month, the Corps of Engineers stated it would not forcibly remove the protestors.

The Episcopal Church is officially a backer of those at Standing Rock and in a statement Curry praised the Corps of Engineers and President Barack Obama's administration for halting the pipeline and potentially rerouting the project.



Photo/Michael Pipkin/Facebook

Fireworks marked the celebration over the Oceti Sakowin Camp following the federal government's Dec. 4 announcement that it would not allow the Dakota Access Pipeline to cross the Missouri River at Lake Oahe.

Curry said there is still a challenge ahead.

"We will also urge the current and incoming presidential administration to launch a thorough Department of Justice investigation into the use of brutal force by law enforcement on Standing Rock. Our work is not over, and the

Episcopal Church has a critical role to play in ensuring a just and humane outcome is fully realized," Curry said.

"We recognize that this struggle for the protection of water and of the basic human rights of indigenous people is one moment in a wider movement for

social and environmental justice," he added.

Energy Transfer Partners, the pipeline construction company, issued a statement after the Corps' decision stating that the 1,171-mile pipeline from the Bakken oil fields in northwestern North Dakota to an oil storage and transfer site in Patoka, Ill., will move forward.

"(We) are fully committed to ensuring that this vital project is brought to completion and fully expect to complete construction of the pipeline without any additional rerouting in and around Lake Oahe. Nothing this administration has done today changes that in any way," the company stated.

"The White House's directive today to the Corps for further delay is just the latest in a series of overt and transparent political actions by an administration which has abandoned the rule of law in favor of currying favor with a narrow and extreme political constituency," the statement continued.

The Corps of Engineers has ordered an Environmental Impact Study that could delay the project for more than a year, but Energy Transfer Partners filed a federal lawsuit on Nov. 15 demanding

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Churches step up action on climate change

Anglican Communion News Service

The Church of England is to launch a new data analysis tool in January to help investors monitor companies' climate-related risks.

Meanwhile, a group of bishops in the Episcopal Church have questioned President-elect Donald Trump's decision to appoint climate change sceptic Scott Pruitt as head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

In May, the Church of England's national investment bodies adopted a new climate change investment policy that had been drawn up by the province's Ethical Investment Advisory Group. The policy excluded two groups of companies from potential investment: those that derive more than 10 percent of their revenues from the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from tar sands.

The policy also committed the church's investment bodies to active engagement on climate change issues with companies they invest in. As part of the church's engagement policy, a new Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) will be launched in January 2017 to help investors keep track of companies' climate related risks.

Pioneered by a partnership between the Church of England, the U.K. Environment Agency Pension Fund and the London School of Economics, the TPI will provide investors with accurate data to help them judge a company's actions on climate change. The tool is currently undergoing testing ahead of a public launch anticipated in the middle of Jan-



Photo/ACNS

The Rev. Rachel Mash, environmental coordinator for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, supports the climate change divestment campaign.

uary. It will focus initially on companies in the mining, oil and gas, automotive and electricity sectors before being rolled out to other sectors. A number of investors have already been signed up to use the tool.

According to the U.K.-based Divest-Invest Campaign, churches and other faith-based groups account for some 23 per cent of climate change divestment; a further 23 per cent is represented by charitable groups. Anglican churches in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, Australia, Canada, Southern Africa and England are among those who have made moves in this area.

The Divest-Invest Campaign says that 688 organizations and 58,000 individuals around the world have committed to divesting their money from fossil fuels.

Welcoming the announcement, the Rev. Rachel Mash, environmental coordinator for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, said that "the burning of fossil

fuels is leading to climate change which will increase poverty and hunger. We are on the cusp of a transition to green energy and divestment is a practical action that churches can take to encourage this transition to take place more quickly."

In his current role as Attorney General of Oklahoma, Pruitt has filed numerous law suits against the Environmental Protection Agency, including a legal bid to halt President Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, which is designed to curb greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants.

In an open letter to President-elect Trump, the bishops of Western Massachusetts, Douglas Fisher, and Massachusetts, Alan Gates, alongside a suffragan and two retired bishops, challenged the appointment of Pruitt as EPA administrator.

"The Episcopal Church stands strongly for the protection of the environment,"

they said. "We respect the facts of science. We support laws and policies that address the reality of climate change. We are in the process of divesting our financial interests in fossil fuels.

"Our respect for government leaders and our reverence for the earth as God's creation impel us to write to you to express our dismay" about Pruitt's appointment. "We wonder why a person who has consistently and adamantly opposed all laws and policies that provide even minimal 'protection' to the environment should be trusted with leading such an agency."

The bishops say that climate change is a matter of national security, and — quoting senior U.S. military intelligence officers — say that climate change is a "threat multiplier" that is "already creating instability around the world and will likely create significant security challenges in the years ahead." ■

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EPISCOPAL LIVES

U.S. fire recovery gets Episcopal help

Episcopalians in the path of catastrophic wildfires that have destroyed a large swath of the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in the southeastern U.S. are working to help their communities in the aftermath.

As of early December, fire had killed seven people, injured 14, forced the evacuation of 14,000, destroyed 150 buildings and damaged 400 in total.

"Several of our parishes are working with local fire and police departments to begin to collect items that are of need as we move through the rescue phase of the response to the fires," Diocese of East Tennessee Bishop George Young said on Nov. 29.

Communication is difficult but Episcopal Relief & Development has been in contact with Young and is to receive



Photo/National Wildfire Co-ordinating Group

Rough Ridge Fire burning in the Cobutta Wilderness.

the diocese's assessment of damages and needs.

In the historic resort town of Gatlinburg, Tenn., hard hit by the fires, Trinity Episcopal Church survived. About 4,100 people live in the town at the gateway to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Officials said Dec. 1 that the fires damaged or destroyed more than 700 homes and businesses throughout Sevier County — nearly half of them in the city of Gatlinburg. At least 53 people were treated at hospitals for injuries, according to news reports.

"We are not yet able to get to the church until the authorities have cleared the way and allowed folks back into Gatlinburg," Trinity's interim rector, the Rev. Bob Beasley, said. "I have heard from two sources that the church is okay though there is much damage nearby. I've heard from four parishioners whose homes were destroyed and heard about more possibilities. We will have to give each other a lot of love and support and rely deeply on the peace and power of God."

Beasley, who was in California when the fire began, said that he was stunned by the fire's devastation in Gatlinburg and in the rest of Sevier County. "Many of Trinity's parishioners have expressed the trauma the fires have caused in their lives," he said.

— Episcopal News Service

TRANSITIONS

Los Angeles elects Taylor as bishop coadjutor

The Rev. John Taylor of Rancho Santa Margarita was elected bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of Los Angeles on the eighth ballot on Dec. 3 by delegates gathered for the 121st annual meeting of the diocese at the Ontario Convention Center.

Taylor, 62, has served as vicar of St. John Chrysostom Church and School in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., since 2004. He was elected by 122 votes in the clergy order and 194 votes in the lay order.

The election culminated a nearly two-year search process. Los Angeles Bishop J. Jon Bruno announced during his address to convention that he will retire at the beginning of Diocesan Convention 2017. He had called for the election of a coadjutor bishop, or successor to the diocesan bishop, in December, 2014. Bruno has served as diocesan bishop since 2002.

After the election, Taylor said, "to our divided nation, to those living in fear and uncertainty, to anyone yearning for a rich relationship with the God in Christ who loves everyone without reservation, The Episcopal Church throws its arms open."

"In our diverse, far-flung diocese, we are united in our baptismal pledge to strive for justice and peace among all people and to respect the dignity of every human being, especially those who are most vulnerable. I look forward with joy to serving alongside my fellow



Taylor

ministers — laypeople, deacons, priests and bishops — as we continue to proclaim the gospel in word and deed."

A lifelong Episcopalian, Taylor was born in Detroit in 1954, the son of journalists and formerly served as chief of staff to former President Richard M. Nixon and later as the executive director of the Nixon Library.

He received a bachelor's degree in political science at the University of California, San Diego, and a Master of Divinity degree at the Claremont School of Theology and Bloy House. He was ordained a priest in January 2004 and also served as curate at the Church of St. Andrew the Apostle in Fullerton, Calif.

He is married to Kathleen Hannigan O'Connor and has two daughters and two stepchildren.

Pending the canonically required consent of a majority of the Episcopal Church's diocesan standing committees and bishops with jurisdiction, Taylor will be ordained and consecrated as bishop coadjutor on July 8, 2017 in Los Angeles.

Bexley Seabury President to retire

Bexley Seabury, one of 10 accredited seminaries of the Episcopal Church, today announced that the Rev. Roger Ferlo will conclude his term as president in fall 2017.

Ferlo will retire after 32 years of ordained ministry and five years of service as the first president of Bexley Seabury. A search is under way for the next president;

Since Ferlo joined Bexley Seabury



Ferlo

in 2012, the seminary has introduced a series of operational and curriculum changes, including a more diverse faculty and student body; consolidated operations; a new low-residency Master of Divinity program that incorporates a new model for spiritual formation through internships that are designed and supervised in collaboration with Episcopal dioceses; and increased enrollment.

"President Ferlo has led Bexley Seabury with equal measures of imagination and pragmatism," said Board of Directors Chair Bishop W. Michie Klusmeyer. "I believe the Ferlo era at Bexley Seabury will be remembered as a period of innovation and restoration that laid a firm foundation for the seminary's next phase of service to the church."

A native of Rome, N.Y., Ferlo came to Bexley Seabury from Virginia Theological Seminary where he was associate dean and director of the Institute of Christian Formation and Leadership. Earlier, Ferlo spent 19 years in parish ministry in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and New York.

He has more than 17 years of teaching experience at the university and seminary levels, including as professor of biblical interpretation and the practice of ministry at Bexley Seabury. Ferlo trained for the priesthood at General Theological Seminary after earning an A.B. degree at Colgate University, and M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees at Yale University. He was one of the first recipients of the Yale Faculty Distinguished Teaching Prize. In 2002, Colgate University awarded Ferlo an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. He has authored and edited three books and has published numerous essays, sermons, and reflections.

— Episcopal News Service

WATER continued from page 3

to continue construction. That lawsuit is expected to move further through the court system in early 2017.

The water protectors made up of Native Americans and indigenous people representing about 300 tribes have stood in solidarity at Oceti Sakowin Camp about a mile from the pipeline site for months. Many others, including Episcopalian clergy and church members, have joined protestors at various times. As the Dec. 5 call for evacuation neared, thousands of people poured into the camp and region in support.

When the news of the Corps' decision to halt the pipeline reached the camp, Episcopal and interfaith chaplains were on the verge of raising a tent. People gathered around the sacred fire for the big announcement.

"You could feel joy, shock and excitement all rolled into one; it was like the entire earth was vibrating," said the Rev. Lauren Stanley, superintendent presbyter of the Rosebud Episcopal Mission West in South Dakota, adding that fireworks and victory songs continued into the night. "They were saying 'thank you

to everyone who has supported them; it's been a way of proving to the government that people do care, and that's not been the history of native people."

Some Episcopal parishes have held fundraisers and sent supplies as well as supporters. At the camp on Dec. 4, the interfaith chaplains came back after the victory celebration to erect their tent and the next day offered care to people in the camp.

"We're going two-by-two knocking on tents to make sure people are warm enough; if they are not we can help them get to a warming place; we have hand warmers and blankets," said the Rev. Michael Pipkin, a former Navy chaplain on the Minnesota diocesan staff.

After physical needs, Pipkin said the chaplains attended to the emotional and spiritual needs of those in the camp.

"We all understand that this is a prayerful place; Oceti Camp is a camp of prayer. In my whole life, I've never been around so many people praying and praying for a single cause..this is prayer in action and prayerful action all at the same time," he said.

The Rev. John Floberg, supervising priest of the Episcopal churches on the

North Dakota side of Standing Rock, said some people will remain at the camp even with the snow and brutally cold temperatures.

"People will not leave until this situation is secure and that the victory that was won (Dec. 4) is sustained, and we have confidence that it will be sustained even into a new presidential administration," Floberg said. "Will some people go home? Yes, there can be a large stand down right now, but there will be a significant presence maintained, that will call back this force of people from throughout this country and around the world if this course is not maintained."

According to Popular Science, now that the planned pipeline is mostly complete, rerouting options are fewer, but a possible route 10 miles north of Bismarck could be reconsidered, although the Corps' initially rejected the option due to potential hazards to the city's water supply. ■

Kevin Cummings, freelance writer for the Sewanee School of Theology in Tennessee, compiled news reports from Episcopal News Service and other sources for this article.

NEWS

Commission to present options on prayer book revision

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) plans to present the 2018 General Convention with four options regarding the possible revision of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, said the Rev. Devon Anderson, commission chair.

The options, discussed in detail on the SCLM's blog, are:

Revision of the prayer book beginning after the 2018 General Convention;

Creation of a book or books of alternative services beginning after the 2018 General Convention, with no accompanying revision of the prayer book;

A postponement of the decision on the prayer book and supplemental resources until the completion of a church-wide conversation on liturgical theology and practice during the 2018-2021 triennium;

A step back from liturgical revision and a commitment to exploring the theology of the current prayer book in greater depth.

"We want to give General Convention everything it needs to give the SCLM very detailed direction and sufficient funding to follow that direction," Anderson said. "We want to call the church to a collective discernment that leads to a decision."

Resolution A169 of the 2015 General Convention directed the SCLM "to prepare a plan for the comprehensive revision of the current Book of Common Prayer and present that plan to the 79th General Convention."

The commission is taking a data-driven approach to its work, and hopes to use several methods of gathering the information and opinions that will shape its conversations, Anderson said.

These methods include collecting and analyzing bulletins to gauge current practice in the church; interviewing Anglican partners who have recently revised their prayer books; holding small group discussions about the prayer book across the church, beginning at the 2018 General Convention; and sponsoring con-

ferences on the prayer book at Virginia Theological Seminary and the School of Theology at Sewanee, the University of the South.

These methods can be tested over the next two years and deployed church-wide between the conventions in 2018 and 2021, Anderson said.

The commission is also hoping to commission a church-wide research project in cooperation with the Church Pension Group to determine Episcopalians' current attitudes towards the prayer book. "The Book of Common Prayer is the fullest statement of our faith, and

the deepest expression of our theology," she said. "If we are going to revise it, it is essential that people from across the church can share their thoughts, their anxieties and their hopes with us. That is why we are focusing, at this point, on hearing the voices of our people."

The SCLM blog also includes updates from subcommittees working on the Book of Occasional Services, the Calendar of Commemorations, congregational song, and liturgical resources that speak to issues of racial injustice and reconciliation.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Peace group urges life sentence for Roof

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship on Dec. 14 urged that a sentence of life in prison, rather than the death penalty, be considered for Dylann Roof, who is accused of killing nine parishioners at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, S.C.

Roof's first trial began in early December. He faces 33 charges, including hate crimes, murder, attempted murder and obstruction of religion, and could face the death penalty because of "the nature of the alleged crime and the resulting harm," U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch said in May, 2016.

The 22-year-old has also been charged in a state murder case, which also carries the death penalty and is scheduled following this trial.

On June 17, 2015, Roof allegedly entered a Bible study class at the church, known as "Mother Emanuel," and gunned down the nine victims.

The Rev. Allison Liles, EPF Executive Director, said "Over a half-century ago, the Episcopal Church declared its position regarding capital punishment, which was reaffirmed at the 2015 General Convention of The Episcopal Church:

"The General Convention of the Episcopal Church opposes capital punishment on a theological basis that the life of an individual is of infinite worth in the sight of Almighty God, and the taking of such a human life falls within the providence of Almighty God and not within the right of Man."

"Jesus calls us to a life of love, mercy and redemption," she said. As his followers we must reject state sanctioned retribution and collective vengeance as reasons for taking human life. Scripture repeatedly calls us to overcome evil with good and to transform hatred with love."

— Episcopal Peace Fellowship

Young Adult Service Corps accepting applications

The application deadline nears for young adults (21-30 years old) for 2017-2018 placements in the Episcopal Church Young Adult Service Corp (YASC).

Through YASC, young adults have an opportunity to transform their own lives while engaging in mission and ministry in the Anglican Communion.

More information is available at www.episcopalchurch.org/blog/YASC. The application deadline is Jan. 6, 2017.

Currently YASC members are serving throughout the Anglican Communion, working alongside partners in administration, agriculture, communication, development, and education. They are serving in Brazil, Costa Rica, England, France, Haiti, Hong Kong, Japan, Jerusalem, Panama, Philippines, and South Africa.

Among possible placements for 2017-2018 are Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, England, France, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, Japan, Jerusalem, Mexico, Panama, Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, and Tanzania.

Interested applicants may also contact Grace Flint, Episcopal Church Staff Officer for YASC Programming, at gflint@episcopalchurch.org.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office



Church establishes Director of Reconciliation post

Applications are being accepted for a new Episcopal Church position: Director of Reconciliation, Justice and Stewardship of Creation, a member of the Presiding Bishop's staff.

The Reconciliation, Justice and Stewardship of Creation department includes staff who facilitate and lead churchwide ministry in relation to racial reconciliation and justice, domestic poverty, stewardship of creation, and the United Thank Offering.

This full-time position reports directly to the Canon for Evangelism, Reconciliation, and Stewardship of Creation, and was developed in direct response to the church's call to transform unjust so-

cial structures, to respect the dignity of every person, and to protect the gift of creation. The Director of Reconciliation, Justice and Stewardship of Creation will be responsible for Domestic Poverty and Jubilee Ministries and will partner with the Advisory Council on Stewardship of Creation to develop and support eco-justice sites and networks. The director will also supervise and provide support to staff officers who organize the church's justice and reconciliation efforts.

The deadline for applying is Jan. 9, 2017. For more information contact a member of the Episcopal Church Human Resources Team at hmr@episcopalchurch.org.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

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NEWS

EVANGELISM continued from page 1

Episcopal Mission of the Good Shepherd in Fort Hall, Idaho. Braman said he was encouraged by the presence of lay evangelists because too many people assume that the work ought only to be done by the clergy. That expectation is self-destructive, he said, “because if we’re not doing our part, we’re just setting up our leaders to fail.”

Fighting the oxymoron perception begins with individuals, the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop’s canon for evangelism and reconciliation, said during a plenary, asking “why do we need a conference to convince ourselves or to proclaim that evangelism matters?”

“I think you know why,” she answered. “I think we know that, deep down, we’ve been ambivalent” about even the word “evangelism,” much less being evangelists.

When she asked people to shout out why that is so, some of the answers were “fear of rejection,” “fear of looking tacky,” “hurtful things that have been done in the name of evangelism,” “leave it to the clergy,” “people have to be gift-



During an Evangelism Matters workshop, Viliami Lino from Honolulu, talks to a fellow participant during a faith-sharing exercise.

ed to do evangelism” and “I’m not sure; what is the Good News?”

Evangelism Matters, which quickly sold out its 400 spaces, was co-sponsored by Episcopal resource producer Forward Movement and the Presiding Bishop’s Office.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, during his keynote address and a sermon, set an ambitious agenda, gave a rousing call to action and explicated what Episcopal evangelism is and is not.

“Jesus did not go to the cross for a bigger church,” Curry said, adding that, likewise, evangelism doesn’t have anything to do with making a bigger church; it has to do with a better world.

It also has nothing to do with cultural or religious imperialism, the presiding bishop said. “This is not about conquering the world for Christ,” he said. “It’s about saturating the world with love.”

Maybe, Curry suggested, the Episcopal Church is supposed to tell the world that Christianity’s foundation is the love shown in Jesus.

And, he said, God is at work in this

growing awareness. “I think we’re in one of those cultural moments in which we very well may be participating in God’s re-evangelization of the western world and a re-evangelization via a Christianity that resembles Jesus.”

Curry said “evangelism is about going home and helping each other find the way” and it is about helping people find God and build a relationship with God, who made them for love and longs for them.

“Evangelism matters because God didn’t make us for a nightmare,” he said.

Curry described his dreams for the church. In what he called a fantasized possibility and not a proposed program or an official statement, he asked the conference to imagine what it would be like if the Episcopal Church adopted the model of Doctors Without Borders by marshaling its resources and going anywhere there is a need.

“What if the churchwide budget — General Convention — said to heck with some of this structure, let’s just use this money for evangelism wherever there is a need?” he asked, adding the question of what if dioceses purposefully contributed to evangelism going on anywhere in the church.

Curry asked what would happen if every time a church had to close somewhere and the property sold “some percentage of that money were taken and put in a ‘new generation fund’ to start new churches anywhere in the Church “so that the death of one leads to the resurrection of another?” The audience responded with loud and sustained applause.

The presiding bishop suggested some other possibilities for anchoring an evangelism ethic in the Episcopal Church. One suggestion was to require people preparing for ordination to get intense training in how to be evangelists just as they are now required to take a unit of clinical pastoral education to learn how to be spiritual caregivers. Another was finding ways to turn social media into “the new evangelism superhighway” similar to the way the efficiency of the Roman Empire enabled the swift spread of budding Christianity.

For two of the organizers, the conference was evidence of God at work. “We dreamed of something happening in the church and God did something more than we could have dreamed of,” the Rev. Frank Logue, Diocese of Georgia canon to the ordinary and Executive Council member, said of the size and mood of the conference.

But, he added, the conference has to



Photos/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS

The Rev. Scott Gunn, executive director of Forward Movement, right, introduces the conference’s main panel on “What is Evangelism?” Participants were, from left, Carrie Boren Headington, missionary for evangelism, Diocese of Dallas; Mary Parmer, creator of the Invite *Welcome* Connect program, Diocese of Texas; the Rev. Marcus Halley, Diocese of West Missouri; and the Rev. Alberto Cutié, Diocese of Southeast Florida.

be a beginning, not an accomplishment. It could be tempting to accept Curry’s self-declared role as “chief evangelism officer” and assume that is all that is needed.

Instead, as Anglican Communion Secretary General Josiah Idowu-Fearon suggested, if Episcopalians become chief evangelism officers in their diocese, their congregations and in their families, “then we will have really joined the movement.”

The Rev. Susan Snook, another Executive Council member and founding rector of Church of the Nativity in Scottsdale, Ariz., said when she sponsored Resolution D005 at General Convention in 2015 to set up a church-planting network and when Logue convinced that same meeting of convention to add \$2.8 million to the 2016-2018 budget for evangelism work, “we thought we were pushing at a closed door.”

“Or maybe we’d crack it open a little bit and, oh my gosh, we have found that the Spirit has blown that door wide open.”

She told ENS she would like to see Episcopalians connect with the people from their diocese who attended the conference and who can show them how to spread the good news of Christ through their communities.

Snook, a veteran evangelist and church planter, said she found renewal and refinement of her ministry at the conference. She went to the “Elevator Evangelism” workshop, run by the Rev. Casey Shobe, Transfiguration’s rector, and learned how to hone the story of why she follows Jesus down to one minute. “I got in touch with a way of speaking about it that I hadn’t

done before,” she said.

Participants had their choice of 25 workshops, including “Talking God Today,” “Compassionate Evangelism: A Non-Judgmental Approach to Sharing Your Faith,” “Social Media, Evangelism and Connecting with Emerging Cultures,” and “How To Make a Rocking Welcome Video on a Dime.” Many of the workshops offered handouts to participants and most of them can be found at www.evangelismmatters.org.

Parts of the conference were streamed live and at one point more than 1,000 computers had connected to the broadcast. Those streamed events are now available for on-demand viewing at the Evangelism Matters website. (In each viewer labeled “Church” and “Performance Hall” click on the icon in the upper right corner to find individual sessions.)

Prior to the Evangelism Matters conference, leaders of new church plants or mission initiatives met Nov. 16-17 in the inaugural Genesis Gathering of the Episcopal Church at the Church of the Ascension, also in Dallas. The conference’s goal was to help establish a community of practice among such leaders in which they could encourage each other and learn from each other. The Episcopal Church’s Genesis Group (formally known as the Advisory Group on Church Planting) sponsored the event.

A third gathering, an invitation-only meeting called “the summit,” gathered some participants of each of the other meetings before and after Evangelism Matters to discuss the current and hoped-for future state of evangelism in the Episcopal Church, and what resources are needed. ■



The Rev. Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop’s canon for evangelism and reconciliation, leads the conference’s final plenary.

NEWS

STEWARDSHIP continued from page 1

Desert about her shift from being a “reluctant churchgoer under the radar” to gratitude for “the opportunity to serve, to grow in faith and in my relationship with God and to experience the healing presence of Jesus.”

After participating in the choir and various ministries, the eight-year member of the Scottsdale, Arizona, congregation said she began to understand that “this community is such an expression of discipleship on so many levels.

“I belong,” Vidal said. “The more I participate at St. Barnabas, the more my gratitude grows.”

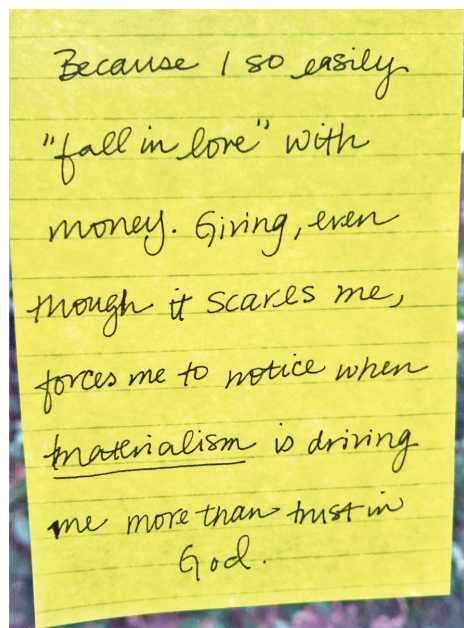
The church’s mission: making disciples

Making disciples is the church’s mission, said the Rev. Jim Clark, St. Barnabas’ rector.

“People give to cancer research because it’s clear to them what the mission is and people value that; they give to the mission of a university because it’s clear what the university is doing,” Clark told the Episcopal News Service. “Other people give in a very particular way because they believe in what is being accomplished.

“But the church has not done a good job of (communicating the) great value in making disciples of Jesus. That is the church’s mission.”

He said the church’s mission “is not to be a soup kitchen or a food bank. If disciples go out and do all those things, that’s the genius, but the charism, the unique thing the church has to offer the world, is to make people like Jesus. It is



One of the many Post-It notes on the Giving Wall at St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in Poway, Calif.

worthwhile, perhaps the most important thing any human being can do to support one another.”

Marcia Shetler, executive director of the Richmond, Ind.-based Ecumenical Stewardship Center, said the most successful stewardship happens in churches that offer year-round formation and that practice generosity as a spiritual discipline, as “part of what God calls us to do as Christians.”

At the same time, the ESC director said, a pledge drive is also necessary because “it’s the way to show and to

practice what we are planning to do” especially if churches present mission-based budgets detailing how giving impacts various ministries of the church.

ESC offers resources and educational opportunities to 20 North American denominational partners, including the Episcopal Church and TENS, an associate partner.

But a huge challenge is our culture’s reluctance or inability to talk about money, and that often spills over into church life, she said.

Unlike the early church where members pooled financial resources to help one another, “the challenge for us in North America in general is this attitude of secrecy about money, that our finances are a private matter, not really something we should talk about in church,” Shetler said.

For those heavily in debt, “it becomes a matter almost of shame, and the last thing they want to do is share their finances with their sisters and brothers in Christ, unfortunately, because the church has not always done a good job of creating safe space for them.”

Harris, a former attorney, agreed that money talk is a challenge. “Take a look at social media. We put all kinds of stuff up on Facebook. We share our love lives, our health, if our dog dies, but how often do you see a post where someone says, ‘Anyone know a good bankruptcy attorney? I’m getting worried about my debt.’”

And yet, says Harris, 47, most Episcopalians are statistically three paychecks away from having a concern about whether or not they will be able to make their next mortgage or rent payment. “It’s hard to preach about abundance when people are living in that reality,” he said.

“There’s a reason Jesus talked about money as often as he did,” added Harris. “It is a complete disservice in this hyper-consumer culture we live in when we don’t talk about it. If money was one of the major distractions to our relationship to God 2,000 years ago, tell me it’s not a thousand times more so today. Besides sex, it’s the other reason our relationships break up.

“If we don’t want to talk about money and we’re nervous about that, then you really need to talk about it.”

Or, he said, if money talk prompts eyes to start rolling and people are hoping we’ll get back to spiritual matters and off this money talk, “pay attention — because that’s ground zero of what Jesus was trying to get us to notice,” Harris said. “That whole notion is false — that I can let Jesus into part of my life but not my lifestyle, not my pocketbook, (because) I don’t want to change that much.”

Often rectors, too, are uncomfortable with money talk — St. Barnabas’ Clark acknowledges he once was.

But he realized that “making disciples is not just about money ... it is about the much bigger picture — of my whole life in response to God’s goodness, abundance and generosity to me, God’s grace — and what is my response to that?”

With 455 pledging households, St. Barnabas’ three-pledged financial pledg-



Photos/courtesy of St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church

The “giving wall” at St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in Poway, Calif., is filled with parishioners’ reasons for why they commit to giving to the church.

ing campaign this year included sharing stories of parishioners’ growth in faith, presenting to the congregation a mission-based budget, and a series of potluck meals in homes to share gratefulness for the church.

“We had conversations. We told stories. We put it on Post-It notes on boards positioned around the campus,” Clark said. “Everybody said it is one of the most meaningful things we’ve done. It changes people’s lives. It’s a mission worth giving to.”

Shetler said another challenge results from churches’ reluctance to adopt acceptable philanthropic practices, such as using legacy programs and endowments. “Many church members make big gifts to their alma maters and to other charities but somehow the church isn’t looked at in the same way,” she said. “And the majority (of churches) do not encourage folks to consider leaving a legacy through their will to the church.”

But she said there is hope — and help. The Lake Institute for Faith and Giving, a research and educational arm of Indiana University, offers assistance

and resources for religious fundraising.

TENS’ Felton said perceptions about stewardship have evolved from being a dreaded seasonal task to “teaching and inspiring generosity in all sorts of ways. That is what the church should be about, generosity — not just in money but in how we forgive people and how we welcome strangers.”

The organization’s “Living Generously” stewardship resources offered assistance to member partners for 2016. An annual conference, “Journey to Generosity,” is planned for May 18-20, 2017 at St. Mark’s Cathedral in Minneapolis.

St. Barnabas’ Vidal said she still isn’t all that comfortable talking about money, but “I am comfortable talking about my gratitude for St. Barnabas that includes my commitment to pledge ... and how this gratitude is manifested in my pledge.

“Writing my check is an act of prayer for the mission of St. Barnabas,” she said in her remarks to parishioners. “Dropping that check in the basket, seeing it raised and blessed reminds me that God is blessing my gift of gratitude.” ■

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FEATURE

Fifteen years of Episcopal-Lutheran partnership

By Richelle Thompson
Episcopal News Service

Most of the time, the Rev. Miriam Schmidt doesn't think about the differences in her union congregation of Episcopalians and Lutherans. Members of both denominations — and others in the small community of Big Sky, Montana — work together for common cause, sharing worship, meals and ministries.

But there are some challenges, Schmidt concedes. Among them: picking out beloved hymns — and with the same text and tune — for both constituents.

All Saints is among about 65 worshipping communities across the country engaged in Episcopal-Lutheran partnerships. These congregations and campus ministries are living into Called to Com-



Photo/courtesy of ENS

Pastor Miriam Schmidt installed January 2016 at All Saints, Big Sky, Mont.

mon Mission, an agreement between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to be in full communion, able to share clergy leadership and operate as blended congregations.

Nearly all of the more than 20 people interviewed for a series of stories commemorating this year's 15th anniversary of Called to Common Mission lauded the benefits of working together — from sharing resources, especially in small places, to being a model for unity and collaboration. Merging congregations in Baltimore has created a dynamic, vibrant ministry of "Lutherpalians" intent on serving the neighborhood. A college chaplaincy program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a place of sanctuary and community for students. And in Alaska, a union congregation (they call themselves Lutepiscs) is the only mainline Protestant presence for more than 200 miles.

All Saints in Big Sky is growing in numbers, said longtime member Laura T. Sacchi, and more importantly the people are growing spiritually as they learn about

different traditions.

They had to work together to figure out how to compromise and sacrifice, "how to make everybody feel welcomed and included." Those good habits have carried over and shaped a church committed to hospitality and to welcoming the stranger and neighbor alike.

This sense of welcome is echoed at Epiphany Lutheran-Episcopal Church in Alaska, where they don't lock the doors. They want the building to be open to any one, a stranger in need, another denomination in search of a worship space, a visitor looking for a faith home.

"We've always been known as the church in town where everyone was welcome to come and worship," said the Rev. Christina Mauntel, a Lutheran pastor at Epiphany. Her church was ahead of the curve, coming together as a joint ministry in the late 1970s. Called to Common Mission confirmed what the congregants have believed all along: that they are better together.

"What was 'we-have-to' has now become a point of pride," said Mauntel. She believes the small congregation is a living example of what many churches will look like in the future: strong lay leaders and collaborative ministry with other traditions.

"We try to make people feel the love of God when they come in the door. We don't ask who they know or how long they've been here or which denomination they are. We treat everyone who comes here as beloved children of God."

In the history of Christendom and the rise of denominations, sometimes people and churches lost sight of what binds them, says the Rev. Margaret Rose, deputy for ecumenical and interreligious relations for the Episcopal Church.

"Our divisions — not our differences — are part of the polarizing nature of today's culture. They prevent us from working together for a better world," said Rose. "I'm very clear that our differences are part of the unique richness that allows us to understand 'the other' and ourselves."

Our work as Christians, said Rose, is "to reveal the unity of the church that is already there." This requires forging relationships with people who have different faith traditions, "getting to know one another at the deepest levels of who we are and to be transformed by that."

On a practical level, this commitment to unity takes shape in the form of sharing space, worship, ministry and mission. "It's a big, chaotic and wonderful mess," said Rose.

Local iterations of partnerships between Lutherans and Episcopalians take all forms: from union congregations and merged ones to two separate legal entities committed to working as one. Some congregations have vestries and councils and are under the jurisdiction of both an



Photo/courtesy of ENS

A group shot of Epiphany Lutheran-Episcopal Church members on a bike during a youth retreat this fall.

Episcopal bishop and a Lutheran one. Others fall under the episcopal authority of one denomination but work closely with the other.

On a church-wide level, Called to Common Mission has prompted increased collaboration and discussion. The ecumenical officers often work together to find common interests and ways to amplify each other's ministry. For instance, Rose's office will soon be sending out to dioceses "Discover Islam," a set of DVDs and curriculum developed by the ELCA and the Islamic Society of North America. The Episcopal Church and ELCA share one full-time employee in the Office of Government Relations. That office also developed and produced, with their counterparts in Canada, a free Advent devotional this year.

The two denominations collaborate and coordinate on social issues, said Kathryn Johnson, director for ecumenical and inter-religious relations for the ELCA.

Lutheran Immigration Services is working with the Episcopal Church, she said. And the ELCA is "grateful for the Episcopal Church's longer attention to some of the questions of justice for Native people. We have really appreciated the leadership from the Episcopal Church in Standing Rock (the controversial proposal to build a pipeline through sacred land)."

Even with the progress of the past 15 years, there is still tremendous work to be done. Some is structural. The ministries in Alaska, Montana, Maryland and Massachusetts all talked about challenges in governance. Epiphany in Alaska still doesn't have a constitution and bylaws because of conflicting demands by the denominational structures. In Maryland, they are trying to navigate insurance: One denomination won't extend insurance coverage to the other's leadership group. Programming provided by a diocese or synod has to be adapted for a multi-

denominational audience at MIT. And in Montana, Schmidt is always weighing how to promote church-wide activities.

"Do I advocate for Lutheran Relief or Episcopal Relief & Development? How do I choose?" she asked. "I want to retain our denominational ties, but there's also only so much energy a congregation has for mission and outreach."

Johnson said that she hopes more work can be done in formation, particularly with seminaries. "We should be teaching

about one another's traditions," she said. "In this time of great challenge for the viability of seminary institutions, we haven't looked at this issue with as much intention as I wish we had."

The Rev. Tom Ferguson, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Sandwich, Mass., recalls the early days of the agreement. He joined the staff of the Episcopal Church just a few months after Called to Common Mission officially came into effect on Jan. 1, 2001. There were two challenges in the early years: the practical one of figuring out policy and the more ambiguous one of healing rifts and finding ways to bring everyone onboard, even those who had vigorously opposed the agreement.

Today, most people agree in theory about the importance of common mission, but many of the structural changes are unresolved, Ferguson said.

Now that the agreement has been in place for 15 years, it's probably time to reevaluate and reinvent it, he said. The church has changed from what it was

then. As both denominations continue to decline in numbers — as have most mainline traditions — it's apparent that churchwide structures need to change, he said.

"Maybe the purpose of the agreement was to get us where we need to be in the coming years," Ferguson said. "Now is the time to live into the incredible vision and freedom that the original agreement gave. We

should be asking the questions: What other ecumenical partnerships can we pursue? What do we need to be doing our work together?"

Jesus came to establish the kingdom of heaven, not denominations, Ferguson said. "I've served in a Lutheran congregation, and I've served in an Episcopal church, and I've preached the same gospel in both places. I'm way more interested in the way to be a Christian and to find our common ground." ■



Photo/courtesy of St. John's Episcopal Church

The Rev. Tom Ferguson, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, Sandwich, Mass.

FEATURE

Blending Episcopal-Lutheran congregations in Baltimore

Celebrating 15 years of 'common mission'

By **Richelle Thompson**
Episcopal News Service

On Jan. 6, 2001, after 30 years of dialogue, the Episcopal Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, while maintaining their autonomy, agreed to work together for joint mission in the world and to allow clergy to move freely between the two churches.

In the winter months, Holy Comforter Lutheran Church in Baltimore faced \$4,000 gas and electric bills — a financial hit that meant essentially every person in the pew would need to give \$100 just to pay the balance. That didn't take into consideration the need for a new roof and boiler, payroll, maintenance and other expenses. The building was in bad shape, and the congregation, though vibrant, was dwindling in numbers.

"We had to make a decision," said Jeff Valentine, a member of the congregation since 1972. He and his wife raised their family in the church — their three children were born, baptized and confirmed at Holy Comforter. The roots were deep and strong.

"What was important to us as a congregation? In the ideal world, we would have loved to stay in the building. But what was more important was that we stay together as a church family."

One option was to open a storefront church or meet in borrowed space. Another was to see if there was a congregation with which they could partner. Valentine and other leaders acted as scouts, visiting area congregations to determine a possible match. There was no shortage of nearby churches: other Lutheran congregations, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, United Methodist. On a snowy Sunday — Feb. 1, 2015 — Valentine attended Nativity Episcopal Church.

In less than a year, the two congregations formed a partnership and became one of the newest expressions of the Episcopal-Lutheran Called to Common Mission initiative. On Nov. 1, the Baltimore congregation celebrated its first year together and changed the name from the plural — The Churches of the Nativity and Holy Comforter — to the singular The Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter. It's a symbol of the progress and success of the partnership, and the continued commitment to working together as self-described "Lutherpalians."

Challenges arise

That doesn't mean the union of the two churches was easy. Both groups had to make compromises, letting go of a sense of ownership and being willing to experiment and learn from each other.

The Rev. Stewart Lucas, the Episcopal priest who began serving Nativity in 2013, jokes that the biggest hurdle was sorting out who ran the kitchen.

"The kitchen czars had to come together," Lucas said. They had to figure out that "when we move the knives, we'll decide together where they go." After some initial discomfort, Lucas said that those relationships forged in the kitchen are some of the tightest in the church. Shared mission and responsibility, he said, builds community.

Nativity's building was in better shape, so the two groups of leaders decided to sell Holy Comforter. But then the challenge arose: The congregations had to decide how to merge 100-plus years of furniture and liturgical accoutrements. Whose organ would they use? Altar? Linen cloths? Communion ware? Pews, chairs, tables, wall hangings?

As Lucas said, "How many purifiers does one place need?"

In a single congregation, moving a beloved picture from one wall to another can incite passion. Imagine the patience and compromise it takes to incorporate two churches' full of stuff.

It was harder for the Lutherans, of course. They were giving up their build-



Photos/courtesy of Church of the Nativity

Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter parishioners celebrate the Eucharist.

leaders — an Episcopal priest and a Lutheran pastor — also had to figure out how to work together. The Episcopal diocese paid for a coach to meet with the two leaders, similar to a marriage counselor, so they could talk about their union, the opportunities and the challenges.

The two congregations have had to figure out differences in worship and liturgical styles. Holy Comforter broke bread for Holy Eucharist; Nativity had the tradition of wafers. They had to learn how to navigate two hymnals, a problem solved with using red letters on the hymn board to signal the Lutheran book.

Overall, the worship styles were similar, Lucas said. Working with the Lutheran pastor, the Rev. David Eisenhuth, the two have crafted a fully blended worship service.

"Neither congregation was so tied to liturgy and music. We weren't destina-

tion music-and-liturgy churches. Our focus was more about mission and outreach," Lucas said. "That enabled us to look more broadly at what we do on Sunday morning and figure things out. Not holding on so tightly to one way of worship enabled us to open our eyes and arms to some other plan."

And, he said, "To be honest, this worship together is better than what we were doing separately."

Longtime Episcopalian Rob Sohlberg said the differences between the two congregations were far less important than their similarities. The demographics of the two congregations mirrored one another. Both had a mix of white and black, some expatriates from Eng-

land, the Caribbean, and Bermuda, and a sizable population of Liberian immigrants. The congregations attracted blue-collar and professional folks, liberal and conservative, young and old.

Bringing the two congregations together has meant 100 or more on Sundays, instead of 40 or 50 in each. The singing is more robust, more volunteers have stepped up and more people come to coffee hour to connect with others and share ideas.

"We were a pretty energetic congregation already," said Sohlberg. "But this has injected a whole bunch of new life into our congregation." The Episcopalians joined the Lutherans in their longtime project of putting together Christmas stockings for the Salvation Army. And the Lutherans joined the Episcopalians in their ministry to seafarers and in working on a Habitat for Humanity build.

"We're not really two congregations anymore," said Sohlberg. "It's two legal entities but in terms of everything else, we are just one big mash-up. You would not be able to walk in on any given Sunday and know who was Episcopalian and who was Lutheran. We're all there, participating in the liturgy, coming to coffee hour, washing the dishes in the kitchen and sending our kids to Sunday school. It's everybody doing things together."

Sure, said Valentine, the process had some niggling challenges at the beginning. But "when people ask me now how it's going, on a scale of 1 to 10, I rate it a 12. I believe it's a model that other congregations ought to look at."

Just a year after the union, God is doing a new thing with this combined congregation, said Lucas. When a property became available next to Nativity, the church leaders decided to purchase it. They are still figuring out what God wants them to do with the building, but they have an inkling already.

Recently Lucas was planting some bushes in front of the building and a rabbi stopped by. He asked about possibly renting some space for his congregation. Lucas and the other church leaders don't know yet whether that proposal will come to pass, but they believe that they are called to be a living example of life lived in shared community.

Said Lucas, "We can't solve all the problems ourselves, but we can be a model of how ... different groups can come together and be fruitful." ■

Richelle Thompson is deputy director and managing editor of Episcopal resource producer Forward Movement.



The Rev. Stewart Lucas celebrates Holy Baptism at the Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter in Baltimore.

ing and moving into someone else's space. But the organ came with them. So did a set of seasonal banners created by a talented seamstress from Holy Comforter. The Lutheran altar has been re-stained to match the Episcopal woodwork and likely will be installed in early 2017.

Legal details

The two congregations also had to work through intricacies of church polity. They are two separate legal entities with two different budgets — although that may change in the coming years. They are working on how to govern the congregation, building from the model of a vestry and a council. The two clergy

COMMENTARY

The meaning of “Christian Unity”

By David W. T. Brattston

Editor’s note: the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was proposed in 1908 as the Octave of Christian Unity by Fr. Paul Wattson, cofounder of the Graymoor



Franciscan Friars. It is generally observed between Jan. 18 and Jan. 25. In the southern hemisphere, where January is vacation time, churches often find other days to



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celebrate the week of prayer, for example around Pentecost. The theme for the week in 2017, which is also the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation, is “Reconciliation — The Love of Christ Compels Us.”

What is Christian unity in the Biblical sense? Is it merely two neighboring congregations of the same denomination sponsoring a joint meal? Or two congregations of different denominations doing so? Intercommunion agreements? Co-operation in the World Council of Churches, and similar national and local organizations? Or did Jesus and his first followers mean nothing less than the thoroughgoing structural union of two previously independent denominations? Does Christian unity require a complete structural merger from different denominational families, such as Episcopal with Lutheran?

Jesus called for unity among Christians, as indicated in John 10.16 (“there will be one flock and one shepherd”) and his oft-cited prayer in John 17, which contains the phrase “that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee.” However, these passages do not tell us exactly what Christian unity is, or how we can know it exists in a particular situation or community.

We must therefore examine the Bible and the earliest non-biblical Christian sources to see what “unity” means and how we can work towards it. As an aid to interpretation of the New Testament, let us look at the writings of Christians from the era when memories were still fresh with the unwritten teachings and Bible interpretations of Christ and could recall what he and the apostles did in practice, before there was opportunity for the gospel to drift far from its roots. Consulting the earliest post-biblical sources enables us to ascertain the meaning of such unity in the practice of the apostles and how “unity” was understood in the next few overlapping generations.

In John 17, Jesus prayed that Christians be united in the same way that he and the Father are united. Not knowing the mechanics of heaven, we humans are little assisted by this statement in determining the quality and extent of unity, except to observe — important later in this article — that the Father and Son are persons in constant or perpetual contact with each other.

The essence of Christian unity later in the first century AD was the considerate treatment and mutual acts of brotherly love among Christ’s followers at the congregational level on a frequent basis.

In the first century, while some apostles were still alive, the congregation at Rome wrote to the one in Corinth a long letter urging the Corinthians to reinstate congregational office bearers they had unjustifiably unseated, resulting in a rift in the congregation. The letter encour-

aged restoring the office holders in order to re-establish peace, love and unity among Christians who were in at least weekly contact with each other. In both biblical and non-biblical first-century letters, the contexts assume a single local church in a single city or town, and do not speak of relations between the addressees and Christians in other congregations, let alone other denominations, such as the Gnostics.

Shortly before his martyrdom in AD 107, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch encouraged Christians to be united to God, and

other Christians.

According to the same authors, Christian unity is incompatible with strife, jealousy, dissimulation, arrogance, overthrowing congregational leaders, wisdom in one’s own conceits, repaying evil for evil, and thinking too highly of oneself.

All these are attitudes, qualities of character, or modes of interacting with people or conditions of relating to people with whom one is in personal contact. In the biblical sense, unity is thus a pattern of mind and behavior, a method for conducting interpersonal relations among Christians in frequent contact, and which fosters Christian peace, love and harmony at the neighborhood level.

Not mentioned in the Bible, although Christianity had divided into different sects by the first century, formal

interdenominational mergers contribute to Christian unity only to the extent that they promote these local objectives. The shared communion between Episcopalians and Lutherans is one of these objectives, for it enables us to gather together, pray together, accept each other as equals in Christ, and share together in a foretaste of heaven.

When planning or beginning a new inter-church project, we must avoid expressions — or even thoughts — such as “forgive,” “reconcile,” “repent,” or “we are glad you see the matter our way.” This is another method of accusing the cooperating denomination and its members as having long been morally or theologically inferior to our own. An attitude of “them” and “us” or of winning or losing concerning a former difference between the denominations is the opposite of peace, love, courtesy, and lowliness/humility.

Such words and attitudes exhibit a continuing lack of longsuffering, forbearance and recognition of the spiritual gifts in what the other church had always done. Part of Christian unity is forgetfulness of past variances and stifling temptations to think about past differences in non-essentials. I doubt that the Father and the Son, as persons in perfect unity, communicate this way with each other. ■



also to the apostles and each congregation’s clergy. In the early third century, a church manual stressed unity of clerics among themselves in a congregation. Both Ignatius and the manual pressed for greater consolidation and comity within the existing ecclesiastical or congregational structure to improve relations between Christians who had daily or weekly interactions with each other. In AD 197, the church father Tertullian wrote of Christian unity as being the gathering together of Christians in local public worship and sharing this world’s goods as a voluntary unity of property.

Preached about AD 249, Origen’s Homilies on Joshua saw effective unity in two or three Christians agreeing in prayer on a joint request, and in the apostles praying with one accord. These examples are of persons in each other’s presence cooperating towards a common spiritual goal. Origen was the foremost Bible scholar, teacher, and preacher of his own time and for centuries afterwards.

For confirmation of this view as to what the ancients meant by Christian unity, let us look at what the above authors classed it with as desirable Christian traits: peace, love, gentleness, compassion, courtesy, meekness, lowliness, longsuffering, forbearance, hospitality, and recognition of the spiritual gifts of

Celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas

Episcopal resource producer Forward Movement is extending an invitation to celebrate the full season of Christmas with online meditations called “12 Days.” This free resource produced by Forward Movement and created by author Mary Ann Frishman features daily meditations on the gift of Jesus that can help families celebrate the 12 days of Christmas, starting Dec. 25 and running through Jan. 6, Epiphany.

Using the familiar framework of an English Christmas carol, “12 Days” shines a light on simple ways to engage faith and deepen conversations — including thoughtful questions for discussion, optional activities, suggestions for Bible reading, and familiar songs.

The meditations will be posted each day on www.GrowChristians.org and can be shared at #12Days. ■

**12
DAYS**

NEWS

New Englanders train for advocacy

By Heidi Shott
Episcopal News Service

Since the first days of his episcopate in 2008, Diocese of Maine Bishop Stephen Lane hasn't shied away from raising a prophetic voice in the public square. As a church leader, he has spoken publicly in newspapers and at the state legislature in support of marriage equality, common sense gun laws, state budgets that ensure protections for vulnerable families and against hate speech and intolerance.

In late 2014, however, questions like, "How do we engage Episcopalians in our congregations to get involved in advocacy?" and "How do we determine which issues to direct our focus?" led Diocesan Council to create a Public Policy Steering Group. Among the members invited to serve was John Hennessy, a parishioner at St. Luke's Cathedral in Portland. Hennessy spent 20 years at the state house in Augusta as a lobbyist for progressive causes, and had recently returned to private consulting after five years as the policy director for Maine AARP.

During its first and only conference call, members of the steering group decided to create a statewide network modeled on the church's Episcopal Public Policy Network to teach Maine Episcopalians how to advocate with local, state and national policymakers about gospel issues of poverty, homelessness, hunger, and justice for the incarcerated, immigrants and all those at the margins.

Although a statewide public policy network resonated, volunteer members of the steering group and diocesan staff were already stretched too thin to make it happen. Then a chance call to the Rev. Chuck Wynder, the Episcopal Church's officer for social justice and advocacy engagement, made all the difference. A grant program to support statewide public policy networks was included in the 2013-15 triennial budget. Since funds were still available, Wynder encouraged Hennessy to write a grant application. Suddenly, the creation of the Maine Episcopal Network for Justice (MENJ) seemed more like a reality.

By November 2015, with assurances of a one-year grant of \$30,000 and an \$8,000 commitment from the Diocese of Maine, it hired Hennessy as the network's part-time director.

"Maine has developed an innovative approach for advocacy and engagement and demonstrated a collaborative spirit that can serve as a replicable model for dioceses in other states," said Wynder. "As The Episcopal Church works to enhance our network of Episcopal statewide public policy networks, I look forward to drawing on their successes and lessons learned."

"MENJ was created, in part, to address the growing interest of people across the diocese to actively and meaningfully engage in the public square. One of the many benefits of reaching out to people is helping them realize they are not alone," said Hennessy.

Over the last year, Hennessy has visited more than a dozen Maine congregations, hosted a training session at St. Luke's Cathedral, conducted workshops at diocesan training events, advocated with legislators in Augusta and supported the work of two statewide referendums: one to raise the minimum wage for Maine workers, which passed in November; and one to close background-check loopholes in gun laws, which did not.

MENJ also partnered with the diocesan Compensation Committee to develop a resolution that passed at Maine's convention in October to raise the mini-

mum wage for lay employees to \$12 an hour in 2017. The intent is to continue to raise the minimum each year until it reaches \$15 an hour in 2020.

"We will join with interfaith, ecumenical and community partners to host a two day Advocacy Days session in March," said Hennessy. Because the dioceses of northern New England share many common concerns, Lane tested the interest of the bishops of New Hampshire, Vermont, and the New England Lutheran Synod about becoming partners. The response was enthusiastic by both bishops and their staffs.

New Hampshire's new Missioner for

Community Engagement Laura Simoes signed on from the start, "Advocacy work, done by our parishes, has the power to change laws, change minds, and change us as individuals. The Episcopal Church of New Hampshire has energy and vitality. We are now growing our agency and gaining experience, to influence policy for the benefit of our communities. We welcome the chance to share in this work with our friends in Maine." ■

Heidi Shott is canon for communication and advocacy for the Episcopal Diocese of Maine.



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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Picturing 'the art of worship'

By Pamela A. Lewis

In December, 2015, the art committee at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Dover, Mass., was in a quandary. Formed in 2002 to develop and present various art exhibitions throughout the year to celebrate and showcase the talents of St. Dunstan's parishioners and partner organizations such as lunch and school programs, the committee had been brainstorming ideas for future exhibits, but nothing was inspiring them.

As St. Dunstan's was approaching its 50th anniversary, committee member Tia Dennis wondered whether directing efforts on "lifting up the church" in some way might be the way to go. In midwinter of that year, Dennis suggested an exhibit that would center on the church's architecture, and she volunteered to take photos. The Art Committee liked the idea, and Dennis, equipped with a point-and-shoot camera, began photographing St. Dunstan's exterior.

Dennis snapped more than 100 photos, but the results were grainy or blurry, and she began to feel that her initial idea had fallen flat. She then moved inside (and switched to a better camera) to photograph the interior of the nave. "Those photos seemed to flow more naturally and organically, and that's when the exhibit idea really began to take shape and direction," Dennis explained.

The result is an exhibit, "The Art of Worship," comprising more than 30 black and white photos Dennis took of St. Dunstan's worship space, furnishings, and liturgical objects, and which is on view in its Fellowship Hall through January 15.

"The Art of Worship" is about the "myriad hidden stories" of St. Dunstan's — stories of those whose hands had crafted the space and stories of parishioners who helped make its creation possible. "We wanted to look at ourselves to remember and celebrate who we are, and to reclaim that by taking a journey into our worship space," noted Dennis.

While "The Art of Worship" showcases Dennis's photography, she readily admits to having no formal training in the genre, and this is her first exhibition. A furniture maker by trade, the Sherborn, Mass. resident is more at ease with timber than with the technicalities of picture taking. She credits her father, an "avid, amateur photographer," whom she listened to and observed in learning how to frame a shot to capture personal moments or nature. Her years of attentiveness have made her more "intentional," as Dennis put it, in framing shots.

With its austere lines and white steeple, St. Dunstan's resembles many New England Protestant churches. Dennis said she loves the church's post and beam truss system of architecture (designed by architect Paul Minor and built by Ted Benson, master craftsman and timber framer), and through her involvement in the exhibit she has come to appreciate the connection between woodworking and photography, as both require attention to detail. "In some ways, this exhibit reflects my love of woodworking and joinery and my desire to capture beautiful design," she said.

St. Dunstan's furnishings and liturgical objects, designed and created by various artisans, reflect strong craftsmanship. Not only are they the subjects in her lens, but they are also the silent yet eloquent narrators that express the idea of worship at St. Dunstan's.

Take the baptismal font, made by Jonathan Clowes, a sculptor and woodworker who resides near Camden, Me., and who was first commissioned by St. Dunstan's



Photos/Tia Dennis

Top, "Baptismal Font"
Right, "Organ Keys"
Below, "Shadow and Light"

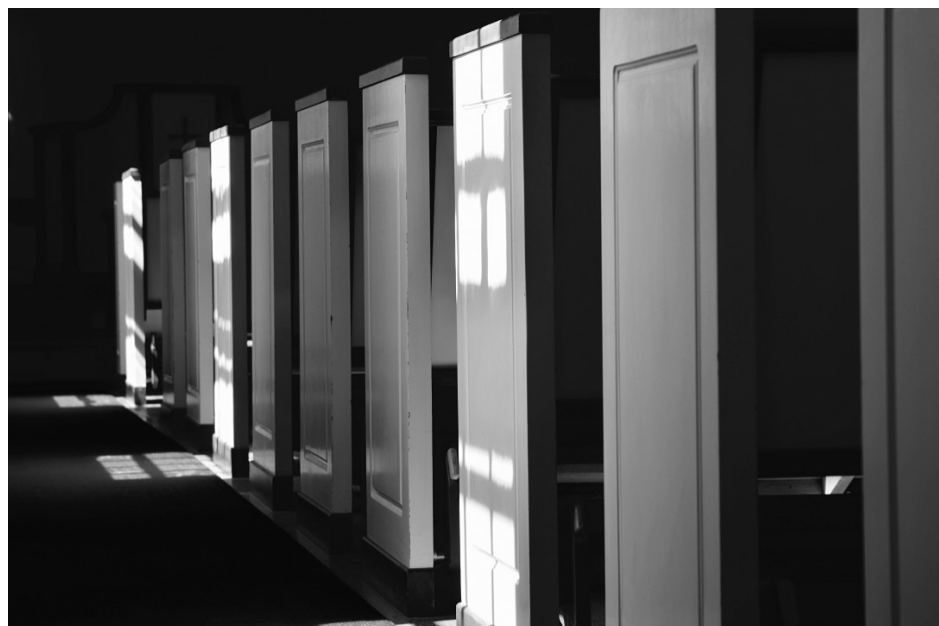
in the early 1990s. He is known for large-scale sculpture installations. Dennis's shot of his baptismal font, its cover surmounted by a slender brass cross, closes in tightly on the object's gently curved mahogany surface, emphasizing its mystery and sacred function.

In one of Dennis's "Light and Shadow" photos, morning sunlight rakes across side aisle pews. Donated by Joy and J.J. Kiser (who had installed pews as a summer job in his home state of North Carolina), the pews were in honor of J.J.'s father.

A member of St. Dunstan's for seven years, Dennis has uncovered its "hidden and visible elements." "It was not until taking photos of the organ (designed and built by recently retired organ maker Fritz Noack in 1989), that I noticed the carved-out circles in its wood keys," she noted.

Dennis's striking view of St. Dunstan's orb chandeliers, designed by the late George Clowes (father of Jonathan), a parishioner and founding member of St. Dunstan's, captures the unique design Clowes had wanted to create. A much-told story is that the lights were delivered to the church a week before Christmas, and parishioners spent hours on the floor counting each chain link to ensure that the chandeliers would hang straight.

Dennis shoots in black and white because it "prompts the viewer to see details in a less familiar way, and becomes an invitation to decipher the image." These images have helped Dennis and her fellow parishioners to return to the "grounding of worship," a journey on



which her mother had set her. "The church's elements are integral to how we experience our faith."

With camera and discerning eye, Tia Dennis has — in the words of one parishioner — "illuminated the sanctuary's harmony and peace, associated with the divine order."

The current exhibition is open to the public during church hours. Please call St. Dunstan's at (508) 785-0879 for more information. ■

Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith. She attends St. Thomas Episcopal Church, New York.

FAITH AND THE ARTS

‘Manchester by the Sea’ explores characters’ pain

By Ken Valenti

What does it take to live with an error with consequences so tragic you can never forgive yourself?

The question underlies “Manchester by the Sea,” writer-director Kenneth Lonergan’s new movie about an uncle called upon to become the guardian of his teenage nephew after the death of his brother, the boy’s father.

It is not obvious at first. For almost the first hour, it is apparent only that Lee Chandler (played by Casey Affleck) is not a particularly happy man. He communicates mostly with short answers, awkward silences and, occasionally, punches. His dead-eyed reaction to the news of his brother’s death is similar to his look when a tenant in the building where he serves as the janitor asks him about a leaky faucet, or when another tenant has confessed to a friend — accidentally within Lee’s earshot — that she is sexually attracted to him.

When he is told of his brother Joe’s wish that he should care for Joe’s son Patrick (Lucas Hedges), Lee does not want the responsibility, especially if it means staying in the New England community of Manchester-By-The-Sea, where Lee has a past that people on the periphery comment about behind his back.

He is uncomfortable in the new role. When Patrick asks him if a girlfriend can stay over, Lee has no idea why his nephew would bother to ask him. “Am I supposed to tell you to use a condom?” he asks.

In flashbacks, he is more lively, joking with his nephew at a younger age and annoying his then-wife Randi (Michelle Williams) So what has changed?

The answer comes when more flashbacks reveal Lee’s trouble with his past — one horrible error with tragic results that casts his current uneasiness in a new light.

The family is Catholic, but not particularly religious (except for Joe’s ex-wife, a recovering alcoholic now engaged to a devout Christian.) And Lee, with his taciturn nature, has no framework to help him work through his wracking feelings.

The writing and direction blend with acting that feels authentic. Affleck, tasked with playing a part that has so much going on below the surface, is so effective you may wonder if he is really acting or if the cameraman simply followed around a sullen man to capture his day-to-day life. Williams is great in her too-few scenes, and heartbreaking in a climactic moment.

In a look back to the aftermath of the tragedy, Lee is confused when the police who question him don’t want to arrest him. It was an accident, they say. Now, years later, those closest to him do not bring up the incident or seem to blame him. Even Randi forgives him.

But none of that seems to lessen his pain.

Another movie might have seen Lee come to a clear reconciliation with his past; a tearful scene in which he



Photo/courtesy ofRoadside Attractions/Amazon Studios

Michelle Williams, left, and Casey Affleck play a formerly-married couple coping with trauma in “Manchester by the Sea.”

learns that he can mourn but continue to live. But some movies are not made for such convenient conclusions.

Some movies are more like real life. ■

Ken Valenti is a New York-based writer.

PBS show ‘Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly’ to end after 20-year run

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

“Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly,” an award-winning weekly public television series, will end early next year after a 20-year run.

The last episode will air on Feb. 24, announced WNET, the parent company of THIRTEEN Productions.

“It has been a great privilege to report the many ways people of faith worship and serve others,” host and executive editor Bob Abernethy said in a statement in a news release dated Dec. 14. “We are deeply grateful to

our thoughtful staff and also to our viewers, many of whom have told us the program consistently affirms the values they most respect.”

The show’s 20 years of broadcasting is unusually long for syndicated series and TV programs in general.

Founded by Abernethy and launched in 1997, it provided national and international news coverage and analysis about religion. It included interviews with newsmakers ranging from the Dalai Lama to former President Jimmy Carter, profiles of religious leaders such as evangelist Billy Graham and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, and surveys about faith after 9/11 and about “nones,” or the unaffiliated.

The news release did not give a reason for why the series was ending.

“WNET is honored to have been the producing station for ‘Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly’ all these years,” said Stephen Segaller, vice president of programming for WNET. “We take great pride in all the awards and accolades the series has deservedly garnered during this time.”

The show won more than 200 industry awards, including all of the Religion News Association’s 2016 honors for television news magazine religion reporting, and made similar RNA sweeps in two previous years. It was also honored with the Wilbur, Gracie Allen and New York Festival awards.

The statement said the Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly website, which won five Webby Awards, will remain available. It provides access to an extensive archive, including transcripts of individual shows and streaming videos. ■



Photo/courtesy Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

On the “Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly” set with Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Convention, from left, Alton Pollard III, dean of Howard University School of Divinity; Kim Lawton, the show’s managing editor; and Bob Abernethy, the show’s host/executive editor, in August 2014.



Photo/Lynn Goswick

A new St. Paul flies over Manhattan

St. Paul’s Chapel in New York, the oldest surviving church building in Manhattan, recently lifted a new version of its patron saint into the alcove in the church’s façade.

Now celebrating its 250th birthday, the church moved the original statue, carved from tulip poplar, indoors as centuries of weather had taken a toll. The new statue, made of a weather-resistant resin, was lifted into place last October.

The commemoration will continue throughout the anniversary year with pop-up exhibits in the chapel featuring artifacts from its past, a music festival, an autumn children’s fair and colonial summer camp, new tours, neighborhood movie nights with a New York theme and historical lectures.

The restoration of the venerable building also included painting the interior with 500 gallons of historically appropriate colors (natural cream, white dove and deep caviar), and cleaning the crystal chandeliers crafted by artisans more than 200 years ago.

To learn more at about St. Paul’s Chapel, which is part of the Trinity Wall Street parish, and the 250th anniversary events, visit www.spc250.com.

— Episcopal Journal

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Why the new 'Star Wars' movie could use some moral clarity

By Charles Camosy
Religion News Service

The headline in Time Magazine referred to "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" as "efficient and gray."

The Huffington Post kicked it up a notch claiming that the entire film "is about gray areas."

"Screen Rant" explained that "Rogue One" is the most "real" of the "Star Wars" movies "because of morally grey areas."

Director Gareth Edwards definitely had moral ambiguity in mind when making the film. The narrative behind his creative choices is, for many, so obviously true that it hardly needs mentioning. It goes something like this:

Those who came before us were naive and simplistic people. They believed in good and evil, light and dark. But today we are sophisticated. We have nuance. Instead of invoking stark concepts that give us easy answers, we have grown more comfortable living in the gray. Unlike those who went before us, we don't mind moral ambiguity.

Edwards uses this narrative when naming the development of "Star Wars":

"When they first made 'Star Wars' in the '70s," said Edwards, "the world may be felt a bit simpler." But "with the internet and global connection," he said, "we know deep down that it's not as simple as that."

Or maybe movies and TV shows are being created with morally gray ideas and characters because that's what makes entertainment companies money. From "Breaking Bad" to "House of Cards" to "Iron Man," audiences love characters for their good and evil.

And though we like to think of ourselves as more sophisticated than folks from "the '70s," in truth this fascination with grayness and ambiguity can be found in the literary works of most societies. George Lucas' "Star Wars" is no exception.

He builds his main story arc around the moral complexity and ambiguity of Anakin Skywalker, his turn to Darth Vader, and the belief of Anakin's wife and child that there is still redemptive good in him.

Han Solo is a shady hero who also drives the film while displaying substantial moral ambiguities. Lando Calrissian is in a similar gray zone, going from Judas at the end of "The Empire Strikes Back" to Rebel Alliance general in "Return of the Jedi." Perhaps the most heroic Jedi of them all, Obi-Wan Kenobi, misleads Luke about his father and refuses to tell him that Princess Leia is his sister. The Rebels kill millions of innocent workers when they destroy the second Death Star battle station.

But while we might be interested in morally gray people, often the very evaluations that pronounce them such require clear moral judgments about ac-



Photo courtesy of Lucasfilm

Donnie Yen, center, plays Chirrut Îmwe in "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story."

tions. Indeed, some actions require the very simple judgments of "light side = good" and "dark side = bad" of George Lucas' original trilogy.

Spoiler alert: In "Rogue One," the first scene with Cassian Andor — who drives much of the film's action as a Rebel intelligence officer — sees him murder one of his informants in cold blood. It is a disturbing look at his character, and it stains him throughout the film.

But judging Cassian's moral ambiguity as a character requires our rejecting moral ambiguity about his action: intentionally killing the innocent. There is no circumstance that justifies such a horrific act, just as there is no circumstance that justifies genocide, torture or slavery.

The original "Star Wars" trilogy was

at pains to condemn all of these actions: the genocide of the people of Alderaan by the first Death Star, the torture of Han by Vader in Cloud City, and the enslavement of Leia by Jabba the Hutt.

So, if "Rogue One" is a story about morally complex characters, it falls within a well-established literary tradition. If, however, the message of the film goes beyond this to overturning previously black/white judgments about certain actions (like killing), then that is something new. And it is very bad.

At a time when war crimes in Aleppo are calling out for clear moral condemnation from the world community, we need to be holding onto our black and white, unambiguous moral judgments with all our strength.

We live in a culture obsessed with the gray of moral relativism. In light of these considerations, "Star Wars" has a moral responsibility to live up to its longtime charge of teaching children that, while people often have various levels of ambiguity, the same cannot be said of certain gravely evil actions that should be always and everywhere condemned.

Reject the dark side. Follow the light. No exceptions. ■

Charles C. Camosy is associate professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University and contributor to "The Ultimate Star Wars and Philosophy: You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned."

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Episcopal JOURNAL
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VOL. 6 NO. 12 | DECEMBER 2016

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Episcopalians extend opposition to Dakota pipeline

ARTS 12
Advent art illuminates sacred text

Wishing you a blessed Advent and a peaceful Christmas
"Holy Family," a painting by the Rev. John Giuliani, depicts Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus as Native Americans. Giuliani, the son of Italian immigrants, has said his intent in depicting Christian saints as native Americans was "to honor them and to acknowledge their original spiritual presence on this land."
Giuliani's work has been exhibited at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, among many venues. His art may be seen at www.Hillscream.com.

Post-election, Episcopalians seek answers
"During moments of transition, during moments of tension, it is important to affirm our core identity and values as followers of Jesus."
— Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

After a contentious U.S. presidential election, Episcopalians sought ways to move forward, but church leaders' opinions differed on the issues of support for the new administration, principles of faith and resistance to injustice. On Nov. 8, Donald J. Trump was elected president of the United States according to the vote in the Electoral College but not according to the popular vote, where Hillary Clinton prevailed.

Trump's campaign was marked by harsh rhetoric aimed at what the candidate saw as the country's problems, including illegal immigration and terrorism, and personal attacks on his opponent and groups such as Mexican immigrants and Muslims. Clinton's messages focused on optimism for the country, but they also attacked Trump's character and compe-

during moments of tension, it is important to affirm our core identity and values as followers of Jesus in the Episcopal Anglican way."
The motto "the Episcopal Church welcomes you" is a "reflection of what we believe Jesus teaches us and at the core of the movement he began in the first century," Curry said. He cited the vows of the church's baptismal

against sexual or gender-based violence: to express solidarity with and honor the in-nous people of the world. We affirm the presence of religious expression and vi-to freedom of religious expression and bro especially our Muslim sisters and brot Curry said.
Moving in a different direction. Ps

FEATURE

Episcopal school offers Spanish-language immersion

By Vikki Myers
Episcopal News Service

“¡Hola!” (“Hello!”), 15 kindergarteners call out as a visitor walks into their classroom — as much in unison as kindergarteners can be. The children are having “circle time,” sitting in a circle on a rug with teacher Betsy Cake.

Cake introduces the visitor, then claps her hands to the rhythm of a song to keep the children’s attention. “Vamos a cantar la canción de hoy, (Let’s sing today’s song)” she says, and she and the children sing “Si usted esta feliz apaluda las fuerte ... (If you’re happy, clap your hands).” Then the children say together “¡Me allegro de verte! (I’m glad to see you!)”

This is the kindergarten Spanish-language immersion class at St. Peter’s Episcopal School in Chattanooga, Tenn.

In 2015, St. Peter’s became the first school in the state to implement a 100-percent Spanish-language immersion program. It is Chattanooga’s first and only elementary school that offers a language immersion track alongside its classic curriculum.

Head of School Meredith Ruffner provides a framework in the school’s mission for why the Spanish-immersion program is important to the school. “Our mission is a love of learning, joy of service and a lively faith. We feel that a global heart and a global mind goes right in with that because we’re wanting to instill in our children a desire to help and serve and interact with people, not just in their community, but all over,” she said.

Ruffner, who became head of school four years ago, had a vision for a Spanish-language immersion program at St. Peter’s, so a team was formed to look into it.

There were questions about whether Chattanooga was ready for a program like this and whether parents would embrace it, but “the more we talked about it, the more impressed we were with how it fit our mission as an Episcopal school. We just felt it was what our school needed,” Ruffner said.

Sarah Steffner, president of the board of trustees at the time, said, “Our team was doing a lot of research and through God and serendipity, a teacher was leaving as Monica Griffin [Spanish-immersion curriculum coordinator] found the school.”

We decided that if we were going to do this, we would need to do it right,” Ruffner said. The team found add.a.lingua, an education consultant company that helps schools implement a second language in the school. Ruffner and Griffin spent several days at the company’s headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to talk with people at the company and tour schools that were already working with the program. They liked add.a.lingua’s philosophy and comprehensive program. St. Peter’s is now partnering with the company.

Two years ago, St. Peter’s began offer-

ing the immersion program to three-year-olds as a pilot program. Steffner said, “It was kind of tricky. Between spring and fall, the whole thing changed.”

It turned out to be a success. After an initial “bump,” students and parents loved it.

“We are fortunate that our board and parent-teacher organization are very supportive of it, but some of the parents initially had qualms about the program,” Ruffner said.

“We found out approximately a month before school started; we had so many questions and fears,” said Brandy Biederman, a St. Peter’s parent. “We had no clue what Spanish immersion was. I was and am very outspoken and immediately asked for meetings to answer our questions. This was our baby girl and we were going to throw her into an unknown setting with unknown people and an unknown language. Had it not have been for Meredith [Ruffner], we wouldn’t have done it. We trust her, always have.” Biederman says she and her husband are now the biggest fans for Spanish immersion at St. Peter’s.

Ruffner said, “There isn’t a large Hispanic population in Chattanooga and the vast majority of students are not connected to Hispanic culture at all — the parents just see the value in learning a second language. We talked a lot with our parents in the community about what the research says about children’s minds, and what is best for them as they grow and develop. Language is at the top of the list.”

The goal is that when the children graduate from fifth grade, they’re completely bilingual — able to read, write, and do math in both English and Spanish. Ruffner said that those skills are transferable, so whatever skills they’re learning in Spanish, they’re transferring to English.

Ruffner said “About midway through the first year, the school started talking with parents about their thoughts for the next year to see if they wanted to go into our regular junior kindergarten 4-year-old class and everybody was saying, ‘We want immersion.’ This year, that class has moved up to kindergarten. Now we have three full classes.”

Teachers are native Spanish speakers and the children quickly learn the most common things they need to know, such as the names of things in the classroom, words for quieting down, “sussuren,” and words for if they need to go the bathroom. In class, they have a normal kindergarten curriculum — including learning numbers, letters and songs. Signs hanging in the kindergarten classroom — abrir la puerta (open the door), and ayudar con el bocatillo (help with the snack) — remind students to be



Photo/courtesy of St. Peter's School

Monica Griffin, Spanish-language immersion curriculum coordinator and preschool lead teacher at St. Peter’s School in Chattanooga, Tenn., has “circle time” with children in immersion kindergarten classroom.

polite and to help their teacher and their classmates.

Most parents and siblings speak English at home, but pick up Spanish from the young children in the immersion classes.

Biederman said, “We only speak what we have learned from them. It’s definitely interesting how much we have picked up and don’t realize. Our grocery app is through Amazon’s Alexa and when I pull it up, most of the items are in Spanish because that’s how we say it for her to order it. I didn’t even realize that until now,” she said.

The Rev. Quinn Parman, whose son is in the program, said in a new video, “We love stories — and you can tell as you’re reading that there’s nothing missed. He gets the stories and he understands them. The fact that he knows Spanish and learns English at home does not in any way hamper our ability to do that — in fact, it probably amplifies what he’s doing in school.”

“The time I notice him growing the most in Spanish is when I see him teaching his sister. I’ll hear them playing and sometimes when I hear them playing restaurant, there’s a couple foods I’ll hear him saying in Spanish as well,” said Parman in the video.

Griffin said, “We have a lot of older siblings in my class. Their parents send me videos all the time about them playing and being on the playground and in the playroom and reading to their younger siblings — it’s adorable to see.”

Biederman said that add.a.lingua and St. Peter’s are very open to meetings and discussions. “I have access to Monica [Griffin], Meredith [Ruffner] and all of the teachers as needed. We have frequent evaluations as well. So parents can ensure that their child’s educational needs and parents’ expectations are supported in the program,” she said.

Biederman voices the hope that other parents also have for their children, “We hope this is a springboard for them to learn even more languages in middle/high school. We also hope this opens up limitless opportunities for their career choices.”

She notes that although some parents prefer the classic curriculum for their children, “We are the biggest fans for Spanish immersion at St. Peter’s,” Biederman

said. “As parents, we are constantly looking for ways to give our children every advantage, St. Peter’s provides just that. By the children learning in another language, our hopes are that they will learn to process complex issues with a greater ease. My two children will leave fifth grade bilingual and fluent. That’s a life altering skill that will provide leverage throughout their life,” she said.

“I feel very proud of my son, that he’s learning a new language and that he’s growing in new ways,” said Rachel Parman said.

Quinn Parman said, “I really hope this gives [my son] a drive to want to connect and make the world a better place.” ■

Vikki Myers is communications director for the Diocese of East Tennessee.

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FEATURE

First Latina dean inspires through leadership, strong faith

By Erica Tricarico
Episcopal News Service

Remembering the sounds of traditional Anglican hymns accompanied with merengue beats transport the Very Rev. Miguelina “Lina” Howell back to the Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic, where her fire for ministry was ignited.

Howell remembers as a child the joy of participating in church and hearing the beautiful worship music. A lifelong Episcopalian, she watched her parents serve as lay leaders in their church and was inspired to get involved too. At 8 years old, she became an acolyte and was an “honorary” member of the church altar guild. Her father was the sexton of their church and together they would arrive early on Sunday mornings to set up the altar.

“A long-lasting impact of my time serving in the Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic was the opportunity to experience the profound sense of joy and commitment of lay leaders as they fully engaged in God’s mission in their communities and the vibrant nature of the ministry of Episcopal schools across the diocese,” said Howell, who last February became the first Hispanic woman called to serve as a cathedral

dean in the Episcopal Church.

Howell, 40, became the 10th dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford, Conn., in February.

A life-altering experience 26 years ago confirmed Howell’s calling to the priesthood. At 16 years old, she attended a youth event in the Dominican Republic and saw a woman celebrating the Eucharist for the first time.

“When I saw the Rev. Margarita Santana, the first female ordained to the priesthood in the Dominican Republic, behind the altar, it was clear to me that serving God’s people as an ordained minister was possible for me as well,” she said.

This moment of discernment shaped everything that followed, from Howell’s decision to study clinical psychology to attending seminary. A few years later, she was appointed to serve as youth ministry coordinator for Province IX, and in 1997, she represented the pre-Lambeth young adult gathering in England. She also received a degree in theology from Centro de Estudios Teologicos in Santo Domingo and her license as a clinical psychologist from Universidad Pedro Henriquez in the Dominican Republic.

Howell was ordained to the diaconate in 2002 and to the priesthood in 2003. She served first in the Dominican Republic. She also was elected twice to fill vacancies

on the Episcopal Church’s Executive Council.

In 2008, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Patterson, N.J., invited her to serve as associate rector. Accepting the call meant leaving behind her country and her home, and making a new life in the United States. She also had to minister in English, which was not her first language. She was also dating her now-husband Daniel Howell, an American, so love also played a role in her move, she said.

“I came to this country with a whole lot of faith, two suitcases and a box of books, trusting God’s will in my life. I experienced a significant amount of inner peace about the decision to explore new territory away from my homeland,” she said.

Her position has inspired other Latinos in the Episcopal Church including the Rev. Anthony Guillén, the Episcopal Church’s officer for Latino and Hispanic ministries.

“Even at this stage, the church (hierarchy) is predominately male ... so for a woman to be a dean of a cathedral is a big thing, and the fact that she is the first



Photo/Amanda Trahan

The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell is the first Latina dean in the Episcopal Church. She was installed as dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford, Conn., in February.

Latina dean of a cathedral, the two things together are a real code of pride for the people from the Dominican Republic who saw her grow up and saw her leadership,” said Guillén.

Christ Church Cathedral invited Howell to serve as vicar in 2013. During that time, the church was between deans and was looking for a dean who could help serve their new Latino community and the parish.

The cathedral was studying how to become a 21st-century cathedral and wanted a dean that could help lead this new vision, said the Rev. Timothy Hodapp, an associate priest and the Diocese of Connecticut’s canon for mission collaboration. Howell’s youth, her ability to communicate strongly in both English and Spanish, her gift of understanding people and bringing them together, and her extensive experience in ministry and strong faith were qualities that made her an excellent candidate for the position. ■

Erica Tricarico is a bilingual multimedia journalist from Cedar Grove, N.J.

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