Episcopal
JOURNAL

MONTHLY EDITION | $3.75 PER COPY VOL. 7 NO. 11 | DECEMBER 2017

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Food and Faith: Episcopalians invoke values in range of anti-hunger efforts

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

In Christianity, food is inseparable from faith. It underlies a wide spectrum of the Bible's teachings and Christian traditions, from individual fasting to Jesus' Last Supper and the celebration of the Eucharist. The faith journey can be seen as a path from hunger to fullness.

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled," Jesus says in Luke 6:21.

But Jesus' followers also were called to give to the poor, providing physical food along with Jesus' spiritual food. Churches and believers long have wrestled with how best to address the problem of hunger. Today, physical hunger remains a persistent scourge around the world, including in countries of great wealth like the United States.

Hope remains, too. Episcopal News Service found it in a homeless-outreach program in Seattle, in a food-truck ministry in Houston and in a soup kitchen in New York. Those and other examples of faith-based solutions to the problem of hunger form the heart of the "Food and Faith" series, in which ENS tells the stories of anti-hunger efforts underway in all corners of the Episcopal Church.

More than 41.2 million Americans and 12 percent of households are deemed food insecure because they lack access to enough food to maintain active and healthy lives, according to Feeding America's most recent "Poverty and Hunger Fact Sheet." More than half of all food-insecure Americans live in households above the poverty line.

"For a lot of people that live below or close to the poverty line, they're left wondering where their next meal is going to come from," said Catherine Davis, chief marketing and communication officer for Feeding America, which distributes food through its member food banks to faith-based and secular food pantries across the country.

The Episcopal Church emphasizes anti-hunger efforts at all levels. Congregations everywhere operate food pantries and meal ministries. Grace Food Pantry in Madison, Wisc., for example, has been distributing food to needy guests for 38 years. Abundant Harvest, a relatively new Episcopal food-truck ministry in the Houston area, is part of a congregation aimed at finding communion around the dinner table.

For ministries like these, the goal is to do more than put food in needy mouths.

"It's a witness to our community and our neighborhood of what it means to live a Christian life," said Sara Bates, coordinator of the Edible Hope Kitchen at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, which serves free breakfast every weekday to hundreds of homeless residents in its Ballard neighborhood.

Photo/Sara Bates/St. Luke's

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, where a daily free breakfast is served to hundreds of people each week, has seen a rise in homelessness in its Ballard neighborhood.

The fight against hunger isn't just local. Money donated to Episcopal Relief & Development supports programs fighting famine overseas in places like South Sudan. Through the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations, churchwide advocacy campaigns seek to influence U.S. policy on hunger relief in ways that reflect Christian values.

In May, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry joined "For Such a Time as This," an ecumenical campaign of prayer, advocacy and fasting, timed to the 21st of each month during the current Congress to highlight the difference government programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP or food stamps, can make in the lives of people struggling with hunger. The 21st is the day of the month when 90 percent of SNAP recipients' benefits run out, according to Bread for the World.

Curry told Episcopal News Service the church was following in Jesus' footsteps by feeding both the body and soul.

"Jesus fed 5,000 people with physical, tangible bread because they were hungry. At the same time, he fed their souls by teaching them the gospel way," Curry said. "Sacraments, the word of God, worship, Bible study, prayer groups feed the soul. Soup kitchens, food pantries, ecumenical and interfaith food shuttles, community gardens feed the body. In these ways, we seek to end hunger … hunger of the body and hunger of the soul."

continued on page 7

©Patricia Resmondo/Courtesy of the artist

A tropical Christmas image

Patricia Resmondo's icon "Let the Coastlands Rejoice" is a reminder that all creation rejoices in the coming of the Lord, according to the 82-year-old Florida Gulf Coast artist, who said she had been "making art" for as long as she could remember. A teacher and writer of icons, mostly in Byzantine style, she has two icons in the current online exhibition of Episcopal Church & Visual Arts.

ANGLICAN DIGEST

Anglican Digest is a roundup of news from churches in the Anglican Communion. The following were reported by the Anglican Communion News Service.

Western Mexico elects bishop

The electoral synod of *la Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico* — the Anglican Church of Mexico (IAM) — has elected Ricardo Joel Gómez Osnaya as the fourth bishop of the Diocese of Western Mexico. He succeeds Lino Rodríguez Amaro, who has retired.

Osnaya

Ricardo currently serves as dean of the Cathedral of San Pablo (St. Paul) and archdeacon of San Luis Potosí, in Central Mexico. He was elected in the first and only round of voting with a large majority and will be consecrated in April.

Before ordination, Ricardo undertook missionary work in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, which he has intensified in San Luis Potosí and other cities in the region. He is part of the leadership team at the Center for Theological Studies of San Andrés. He has represented his diocese in the executive council of IAM and has been a member of the Anglican Consultative Council.

Niqab ban opposed

The Anglican bishops of Montreal and Quebec joined the bishop of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to speak out against a new law that bans the wearing of the niqab — the Islamic face covering — in the province of Quebec from people delivering or receiving a public service. Bill 62 was passed by the Quebec National Assembly last month and is described as "an act to foster adherence to state religious neutrality."

Photo/David Dennis/Flickr

A woman wears a face covering of the type a new law bans in Quebec for people delivering or receiving public services.

"Personnel members of public bodies must demonstrate religious neutrality in the exercise of their functions, being careful to neither favour nor hinder a person because of the person's religious affiliation or nonaffiliation or because of their own religious convictions or beliefs or those of a person in authority," the act's introduction says. "However, this duty does not apply to personnel members of certain bodies while they are providing spiritual care and guidance services, or providing instruction of a religious nature."

"Under the Act, personnel members of public bodies and certain other bodies as well as elected persons must exercise their functions with their face uncovered," it says. "In addition, persons who request a service from such a personnel member or person must have their face uncovered when the service is provided."

Responding to the new law, Bishop Mary Irwin-Gibson of Montreal, Bishop Bruce Myers of Quebec and Bishop Michael Pryse of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Eastern Synod issued a joint statement saying that they "feel compelled to express our deep distress at the manner in which the religious neutrality law passed by the National Assembly implicitly targets another minority religious group in this province."

"Although veiled as a question of identification and security, Bill 62's provisions regarding face coverings will most directly impact a small minority of Muslim women in Quebec, whose freedom to express their religious beliefs is enshrined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights," they said. "For Christians, these human rights are grounded in the dignity accorded each human being by virtue of having been made in the image and likeness of their Creator. The Jan. 29 shooting massacre at Quebec City's Grand Mosque" in which six Muslims were killed "and other acts of violence before and since demonstrate that our Muslim neighbours live in a climate of suspicion and fear that threatens their safety."

"Bill 62 helps foster that climate at a time when we are turning to our governments and public institutions to protect vulnerable minorities in our midst. We recognise and support the desire for Quebec to be a secular society. However, to be secular means to be pluralistic, allowing freedom of belief both in one's private and public life. The provisions of Bill 62, however they are applied, unnecessarily put that fundamental freedom — and potentially people's security — at risk."

They invited political leaders and all Quebecers to join "in trying to foster a safe and welcoming environment for all who make Quebec their home, whatever their culture or religion." ■

Peacebuilding project reduces tensions in Kenya

The Anglican Church of Kenya responded to recurring violence between Kipsigis and Maasai people in the Trans Mara district by launching a peacebuilding project to bring the two sides together. In July, the province's social ministry arm, Anglican Development Services (ADS-Kenya), invited representatives of national and county governments to share ideas on the root causes of the violence among the two communities, and to discuss how to engage in sustainable peacebuilding.

In September, the killing of Ben Meronyi, a Maasai businessman, led to retaliatory killings in which 11 people from the Kipsigis community were murdered. This brought tension and fear in many market centers along the Maasai-Kipsigis border. To reduce tensions, ADS-Kenya and the Transmara Archdeaconry of Kericho Diocese organized several community dialogues to address issues of contention. These include the Nyayo grazing lands and the "no man's land" between the two communities.

Photo/ADS-Kenya

The deputy county commissioner for Transmara East, Florence Njeri, discusses peacebuilding efforts with staff from the Anglican Church of Kenya and ADS-Kenya.

During these meetings, community members shared their concerns with government authorities and the church. Action points generated from the meetings are pursued by all the key stakeholders working in the area.

"In our approach to peacebuilding among the Maasai and Kipsigis of Trans Mara, we seek to emphasise the complementarity and interdependence between the two communities," ADS-Kenya said. "The church has sought to explore how trade and intermarriages can be used as an avenue for intercommunal interaction and sharing of resources.

"The church further seeks to facilitate the building of intercommunal resource sharing and dispute-resolution structures. Recently, it was proposed that the two communities appoint their own peace-building committees to enable the discussion and quick resolution of disputes that arise along the common border.

"These committees comprise … women, men and youth who are chosen or nominated by community members and mandated to spearhead intercommunal discussions on land and boundaries. We believe that this will enable sustainable peacebuilding among the Maasai and Kipsigis of the Trans Mara region." ■

Episcopal JOURNAL

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Subcriptions: 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

From our editorial perch in late November, we can see the end of the year from here and that amorphous period known as "the holidays," which stretches from before Thanksgiving through Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Christmas.

It's always a challenge to navigate the avalanche of kitsch — most of it Christmas-y — to decide whether a particular item or event is sentimental or heartfelt, or even might have something to do with faith.

Even greetings can seem heavy-handed, when every other card is ordering us to experience "JOY" but doesn't spell out the consequences if we beg to decline.

The shadow of violence darkens this Christmas — including the massacre in November at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, and the memory of a mass killing five years ago at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Conn.

It's hard to feel much of that seasonal "joy" when we consider that we seem to be creating a domestic war zone, yet we haven't identified an enemy. Perhaps the comic strip Pogo was right, so many years ago, when one character muttered, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." The phrase echoed naval commander Oliver Hazard Perry, who messaged, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours."

In the midst of darkness, however, comes a miraculous light in the form of a child. Born in extremely humble human circumstances, the child embodies both humankind and God. In the poetic language of the King James Bible, "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

So if the forced gaiety of the season or a depressing environment becomes oppressive, turn toward the light. It wants nothing, has no list of gifts or things to do, shines peaceably on all and seeks out the hope that lies deep in the human soul.

Merry Christmas! ■

NEWS

Virgin Islands still recovering from hurricanes

By Amy Sowder
Episcopal News Service

When Bishop Carl Wright's plane landed on St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, he saw an airport full of frantic travelers. The luggage conveyor belt was jammed with generators, batteries and flashlights.

"We planned to visit two parishes to celebrate Holy Eucharist, but we were barred from both by torrents of water. The water was too deep to get through. Although it was more than a month later, it looked as if the hurricane happened yesterday," said Wright, suffragan bishop for armed services and federal ministries, after his October trip.

Both hurricanes Maria and Irma were Category 5 storms when they devastated the Caribbean two weeks apart. Slamming the islands on Sept. 6, Irma was one of the worst storms to come from the Atlantic in the last century, causing catastrophic wind damage and rising water.

After the outcry that Puerto Rico was being overlooked in favor of the places on the continental United States by the White House, that American territory earned more attention and help.

But what about the U.S. territories of the Virgin Islands, as well as the British Virgin Islands? The Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands covers 14 congregations across both the U.S. and British islands.

"I felt like the diocese, although this is a feeling and not an observation, is a forgotten diocese," Wright said.

Bishop E. Ambrose Gumbs, bishop of the Diocese of the Virgin Islands, picked up Wright at the airport and immediately gave him a tour of the damage on St. Thomas. That island, plus St. John, took the brunt of Irma. Then, on Sept. 20, St. Croix, the largest major American island that was supporting relief efforts for the first two, took the brunt of Maria.

By Oct. 11 — 21 days after Maria and 35 days after Irma — 78 percent of the homes and businesses on the Virgin Islands remained without power, according to Episcopal Relief & Development.

Photo/Bishop Carl Wright

Almost a month after Hurricane Irma, the driveways to St. George's school and church on Tortola, British Virgin Islands, remain flooded.

Wright met with diocesan leaders and learned that all 14 churches sustained damage from the storms. He commended Episcopal Relief & Development and adjusters from Church Insurance for their assessments, money and other resources.

"So much more is needed," Wright said. "These various leaders, more than 20 leaders of the diocese, are all rolling up their sleeves and doing things in their churches and communities with little or no outside assistance. These folks are working hard."

To Wright, it looked like every roof was damaged, although official reports say some were spared. The Federal Emergency Management Agency approved more than $35 million in public assistance grants and more than $8 million for individual Virgin Islanders affected by the hurricanes. Those totals are likely to increase as more requests for help are processed.

Six weeks after Hurricane Maria hit the Virgin Islands, thousands of people still had no power and were stuck with cold and canned food, if they could find it, according to a Nov. 1 report by The Weather Channel. The few grocery stores that had re-opened were accepting cash only.

Because of the damage, school activities were being held in the nave of St. George's Church on the British island of Tortola, which has the largest kindergarten- through sixth-grade school in the diocese.

The rector and a relief coordinator were distributing water, flashlights, beans and fruit to everybody in their community.

At St. George's, school had fully resumed despite extensive damage and power outages. The same was true at All Saints Cathedral School on St. Thomas.

St. Mary's in Virgin Gorda, a British territory, is a small, remote parish that Wright described as "damaged and very stark."

The islanders are working together because they feel there's not enough outside or government help yet, he said. Left to their own devices, they're trying to find their own resources and are cooperating with an admirable sense of community spirit, he said. "In that diocese, none of the parishes are separate from the community. All are an integral part of the community, almost indistinguishable from one another."

When Annette Buchanan, canon and national president of the Union of Black Episcopalians, heard from Wright that the islanders were in dire need of solar flashlights, she wanted to use her organization to help in this specific way. Battery-powered flashlights run out fast, and there's hardly anywhere on the islands to buy new batteries, she learned.

"It's a small thing, but we wanted to give them something they wanted," Buchanan told ENS.

Many UBE members have relatives on the Virgin Islands, and some members are from the territories themselves, so the UBE has had a close relationship with that diocese over the years, she said.

The UBE already had a more general fundraising drive for hurricane relief, which goes directly to Episcopal Relief & Development. But Buchanan is leading a second fundraiser to fund an initial shipment of $1,000 worth of solar flashlights to the Virgin Islands by the end of November. The UBE was coordinating the effort with Wright and Gumbs to ensure the donation was shipped the right way and to the best location.

"We just want to draw to the larger church's attention that this diocese is in such dire straits, that they're still in hurricane-recovery mode," Buchanan said. "We are concerned about them, and there hasn't been much publicity about the Virgin Islands after the hurricanes."

Donations of supplies can go directly to parishes or the diocese with proper communication about specific needs and locations, Wright said. Monetary donations can go to Episcopal Relief & Development, which will place assistance in the proper hands, he said. ■

Photo/Joshua Stevens/NASA

NASA satellite images of the Virgin Islands taken on Aug. 25 and Sept. 10 illustrate the damage done by Hurricane Irma to the vegetation of the islands, turning it brown.

AROUND THE CHURCH

Input sought on triennial budget draft

Episcopalians across the church are invited to review and provide input and comments on the preliminary draft of the 2019-2021 triennium budget.

"In the current and prior triennia, the budgets were built to reflect the Five Marks of Mission," Tess Judge, Executive Council member and chair of Finance for Mission Committee, stated in the overview letter. "The 2019-2021 budget is based on the 'Jesus Movement,' with evangelism, racial reconciliation and justice, and environmental stewardship as priorities."

"It reflects how the staff is organized – by department – rather than spread across Five Marks and other areas, as in the past," she said. "So lines of communication, reporting, collaboration and budget creation are clearer. In the changeover … some sections of the budget were moved, so that it may be hard to make direct comparisons between costs in areas in prior budgets to projected costs in the coming triennium. And comparing percentages can be inaccurate."

Following comments and suggestions, the preliminary draft budget will be prepared for approval by Executive Council at its January meeting. From there, Executive Council will present the draft budget to the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance in February, which will prepare a final budget for approval at General Convention next summer.

The preliminary draft and a link for comments is available at https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/20194. The deadline for providing comments is Jan. 10.

The first two pages summarize projected income, $128,429,734, and projected expenses, $132,921,145, resulting in a deficit of $4,491,411.

Highlights in Income (page 1) include:

• Line 2 - Diocesan Commitments (Assessments required beginning Jan. 1, 2019) In the current trienniumm commitments asked dropped from 18 percent to 15 percent with a $150,000 exemption for each diocese. The 2016-2018 figure is the expected actual commitment (not an assumed full commitment). The 2019-2021 budget shows a gross number, the full 15 percent with $140,000 exemption projected assessment from all dioceses. The red box below is an allowance for those dioceses that might be granted waivers from paying the full amount.

• Line 3 – Income from Unrestricted Assets & Outside Trusts. This represents a 5 percent draw from investments.

• Line 3, Annual Appeal Campaign: Of the $500,000 from the Development Department's new Annual Fund solicitation to fund ministries in the operating budget, $88,000 will cover the costs of annual campaigns.

• Line 4b, Racial Reconciliation: In the current triennium, $2 million was set aside from short-term reserves. It took more than a year for the new program to get up to speed, so the full $2 million will not be spent. The 2019-2021 budget carries over $1 million for this work.

Highlights in Expenses (page 2) include:

• The Expense Categories for the 2019-2021 budget include: Evangelism, Racial Reconciliation & Justice, Creation Care, Ministry of the Presiding Bishop to Church and World, Mission Within the Episcopal Church, Mission Beyond the Episcopal Church, Mission Governance, and Mission Finance, Legal & Operations. They do not perfectly correspond with the Five Marks budget categories.

• Staff: All staff lines include a 3 percent annual raise and estimate 9 percent increases in health insurance costs. The presiding bishop has expressed satisfaction with the staff in place and asks that there be no new hires in the 2019-2021 budget.

• House of Deputies, Line 298: Staff Costs include $900,000 for salary and benefits for the president of the House of Deputies to be sure funds are available should the salary be approved by General Convention.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

ERD launches holiday challenge

Through the end of December, donations to Episcopal Relief & Development will be doubled during the agency's annual Holiday Matching Gift Challenge.

A group of donors will match all donations dollar-for-dollar up to $760,000 until Dec. 31. The challenge will benefit the Global Needs Fund, helping Episcopal Relief & Development work around the world with its local partners in overcoming poverty, hunger, disease and rebuilding after disasters.

"This match is the largest in the history of the organization," said Rob Radtke, agency president. "I'm grateful to our faithful and compassionate friends for their continued support of our critical work with local partners worldwide."

Donations made to any Episcopal Relief & Development fund before year-end are eligible for matching, including contributions online, over the phone (855-312-4325), by mail (P.O. Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058) or through Gifts for Life, the organization's alternative giving catalog. Gifts of stock or from an IRA also are eligible. For new and existing monthly donors, any scheduled contributions will be matched.

— Episcopal Relief & Development

EPF seeks award nominees

Episcopal Peace Fellowship and its Palestine Israel Network seek nominations for their John Nevin Sayre Award and newly established PIN Cotton Fite Award. EPF established the Sayre award in 1979 to honor founding EPF member the Rev. John Nevin Sayre for his lifetime of service waging the "gospel of peace." Sayre was an Episcopal priest, pacifist, missionary, teacher and author who gained notoriety when he challenged President Woodrow Wilson to address the devastating events of World War I. Because of Sayre's efforts, Wilson agreed, recognizing conscientious objection as a legal alternative to military service.

The Sayre Award is conferred every three years at General Convention for courageous witness in the cause of peace and justice. Recipients have dedicated their life's work to courageously promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence in the face of cultural opposition. Past recipients include Rev. Naim Ateek, Madeline Trichel, Mary Miller, Louis Crew, Newland Smith, and the late former Presiding Bishop Ed Browning and his wife Patty.

The PIN Cotton Fite Award is named after the Rev. Cotton Fite, who died Aug.15. He was a founding member of EPF's Palestine Israel Network, served as its initial convener and was deeply invested in the Palestinian cause. An Episcopal priest and clinical psychologist, Cotton was an outspoken advocate for justice and peace for Palestinians. Beginning this summer, the award will be conferred every three years at General Convention to an Episcopalian passionately working for a just resolution in Palestine/Israel.

The awards will be presented at the EPF/PIN General Convention reception at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, on the evening of Friday, July 6. The Nominations for both awards should be e-mailed to EPF Executive Director the Rev. Allison Liles at **epf@epfnational.org** by Dec. 15 and include ways in which the nominee has worked for peace and justice.

— Episcopal Peace Fellowship

EPISCOPAL LIVES

Arizona bishop to retire

Smith

The Rt. Rev. Kirk S. Smith, fifth bishop of the Diocese of Arizona, has announced his retirement.

"By the time I retire I will be almost 68 years old. It is time for the diocese to move on to a new mission with younger leadership," Smith said in a letter sent to all clergy and congregations in the diocese. "It is also time for me to enjoy some new adventures before I get too old to do so!"

Smith's successor will be elected during the Oct. 19-20, 2018, diocesan convention and, after receiving the required consents from the wider church, be consecrated on March 9, 2019.

After retiring, Smith will spend the fall 2019 semester as visiting professor at General Theological Seminary in New York.

— Diocese of Arizona

Preaching Foundation head named

Wild

The Episcopal Preaching Foundation has appointed Peter D. Wild as executive director. Wild said he saw his most important task to be raising the profile and impact of the foundation in service to founder Gary Shilling's vision of placing a powerful preacher in every Episcopal pulpit.

Wild helped to build Trinity Church Wall Street's ecumenical outreach magazine Spirituality & Health into a national presence, later overseeing its transition to the private sector. In his earlier career at the BBDO advertising agency, he led teams building brands for Campbell's Soup and GE. As an entrepreneur, he co-created award-winning TV and video educational programming.

— Episcopal Preaching Foundation

First SW Florida bishop to ordain women dies

The Rt. Rev. Rogers Sanders Harris, bishop of Southwest Florida from 1989 to 1997, died Nov. 15, in South Carolina.

Harris

His predecessor, Bishop Emerson Paul Haynes, had died while in office in 1988.

"He just came at a very difficult time," said Assisting Bishop Barry Howe, dean of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter while Harris was bishop. The issues of women's ordination were left unresolved, and formal plans to elect a coadjutor bishop were never completed, he recalled. Important decisions were deferred as the standing committee instead became the ecclesiastical authority and several retired bishops assisted were never actual administrators, he said.

Harris was invested as diocesan bishop in 1989, when the diocese was one of seven in the Episcopal Church not ordaining women. He became the first bishop to allow and ordain female priests in the diocese.

A native of South Carolina, Harris served in the Marines during the Korean War before being ordained a deacon in 1957 and priest in 1958. He was consecrated bishop in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina in 1985and served as suffragan there until 1989.

— Diocese of Southwest Florida

AROUND THE CHURCH

Evangelism grants available

Office of Public Affairs

The application process is open for the new Episcopal Evangelism Grants Program, designed to fund local and regional evangelism efforts in the Episcopal Church.

"This program will encourage our whole church to share resources, catalyze imagination and ultimately cultivate a network of evangelists who can learn from each other and connect with each other," said the Rev. Canon Susan Brown Snook, chair of the Episcopal Evangelism Grants Committee and the Executive Council Committee on Local Mission and Ministry.

The grants program is coordinated by the Local Mission and Ministry Committee in collaboration with the Episcopal Church's Evangelism Initiatives Team.

"Evangelism isn't some scary practice only 'other' Christians do," said the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, presiding bishop's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care, and a member of the grants committee. "Evangelism is the heart of Christian life, and we hope this program will light a fire and connect Episcopalians who are creating unique, authentically Episcopal ways of seeking, naming and celebrating Jesus' loving presence everywhere."

The committee seeks proposals focused on several goals:

• To create and spread resources that equip Episcopalians and churches to become evangelists and storytellers in daily life.

• To create opportunities for people who are not part of a faith community to build their own loving, liberating, life-giving relationships with God in Christ.

• To aim for lasting, broad impact.

• To employ innovation and creativity.

• To promote churchwide learning, understanding and practical application.

Episcopal institutions (congregations, dioceses, provinces, schools, monastic communities, Episcopal organizations and other Episcopal-affiliated entities) are eligible to receive these funds. Regional collaborative partnerships with non-Episcopal entities are welcome, but an Episcopal entity must serve as the project leader, active manager and reporting agent. Those associated with a seminary or formation program are encouraged to explore funding through the Episcopal Evangelism Society.

Grants are available for up to $2,000 for an individual congregation and up to $8,000 for multi-church, diocesan and regional collaborations. Groups receiving funding are expected to make a significant financial contribution toward the project, as well.

The grants committee will review proposals and make recommendations to Executive Council at its January 2018 meeting. Distribution will occur within four weeks of notification and completion of requisite forms.

Application deadline is Dec. 15 at 8 p.m. Eastern time.

For more information, contact Kayla Massey at kmassey@episcopalchurch.org or 212-716-6022. ■

Grants available for young adult and campus ministries

Office of Public Affairs

It's time to start deciding whether to apply for 2018 Young Adult and Campus Ministry grants, which provide funding for dioceses, congregations and community college/tribal college/university campuses for an Episcopal ministry (or ecumenical ministry with an Episcopal presence).

The online application will open on Jan. 2. However, information is now available, and a webinar has been slated to assist in the application process.

"We hope this process is an invitation for communities to consider how young adult and campus ministry in the Episcopal Church can minister with young adults both on and off college campuses, including community colleges and tribal college campuses, nontraditional degree programs, in the military and those who are not in college," said the Rev. Shannon Kelly, Episcopal Church Officer for Young Adult and Campus Ministry. "This process is designed to help discern where and how God is calling your community to serve young adults and whether now is the right time to apply for a grant."

The grants are for the 2018-19 academic year. A total of $138,000 is available for the 2018-2019 cycle, with $400,000 available for the triennium.

There are four categories of grants:

• Leadership grants: to establish a new, restore a dormant or reenergize a current campus ministry. Grants will range from $20,000-$30,000 and can be used over two years.

• Campus ministry grants: to provide seed money to assist in starting new, innovative campus ministries or enhancing a current ministry. Grants will range from $3,000-$5,000.

• Young adult ministry grants: to provide seed money to assist startng new, innovative young adult ministries or enhancing a current ministry. Grants range from $3,000-$5,000.

• Project grants: to provide money for a one-time project that will enhance and have an impact on the campus or young adult ministry. Grants range from $100-$1,000.

Application deadline is Feb. 2.

The applications will be reviewed by a team that will include provincial campus ministry coordinators, leaders in ministry with young adults, an Executive Council member and Episcopal Church staff members. Following review and recommendations, the 2018 Young Adult and Campus Ministry grants will be approved by the Executive Committee of Executive Council.

A one-hour webinar to discuss the grants process and answer any questions will be held Dec. 7 at 4 p.m. Eastern time.

Up to 95 participants may register for the webinar at **www.episcopalchurch.org**.

For more information, contact Kelly at skelly@episcopalchurch.org or Valerie Harris, formation associate at vharris@episcopalchurch.org. ■

Peace fellowship calls for action on guns

In the wake of the Nov. 5 shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, Episcopal Peace Fellowship called upon its members to demand state and federal legislators "stand up to the gun lobby and vote to make this country a safer place to live."

Thoughts and prayers are not enough; the country's leaders must find the courage to take action, the group said in a news release**.** "Three of the five worst mass shootings in modern U.S. history occurred during the last year, with two in the last month. America's gun violence crisis is neither normal nor inevitable." According to The American Journal of Medicine, Americans are 25 times more likely to be killed by a gun than people in other developed nations, it said.

"We cannot keep living this way," the fellowship said. Solutions that can reduce gun violence and save lives include policies like universal background checks and prohibiting dangerous people from accessing guns, it said.

"We cannot continue to blame mental illness for these massacres," said EPF Executive Director Rev. Allison Liles.

The release concluded, "The Sutherland Springs shooter was court martialed in 2012 for two counts of assault on his spouse and assault on their child and two years later received a 'bad conduct' discharge from the military. Despite this documented history of domestic abuse, he legally purchased an assault rifle. It is far too easy for dangerous people in our country to obtain weapons that have no place in civilian life." ■

NEWS

Food and Faith: Episcopal food pantries part of nationwide network

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Poverty and hunger are all too easy to overlook in Madison, Wisconsin's capital city, where public discourse is dominated by the parallel and relatively affluent spheres of state government and the state's flagship public university.

But wander east from the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus or head southwest down the steps of the Capitol, and you'll find at Grace Episcopal Church a ministry of nourishment that Willetta Randle, for one, relies on to put dinner on the table for her two young children.

The volunteers at Grace Food Pantry are friendly and helpful, Randle said while picking up bags of food on a summer afternoon. She visits "once in a while," when she needs help filling her cabinets and refrigerator with food. "It comes in handy, especially when you're on a tight budget," she said.

Despite the city's median household income of $55,000, tight budgets are common in Madison. Census data show 19 percent of residents live below the poverty level, and dozens of food pantries across Dane County help provide for some of their most basic needs. Many of the pantries are part of a national network of faith-based and community partners with a shared goal: to make sure no one goes hungry — in the country, in Wisconsin, in Madison or in the neighborhood around Capitol Square that Grace Episcopal calls home.

Congregations across the country feed the hungry through food pantries of all sizes, making this one of the most common and visible outreach ministries of the Episcopal Church and other faith communities in the United States.

"The way the Episcopal Church wants to approach people in our country who are poor is not … with a sense of helping those who are other than us," said the Rev. Melanie Mullen, the Episcopal Church's director of reconciliation, justice and creation care. Building "a full community of change" means seeing our neighbors as like us — and, sometimes, in need of help, she said."We can have confidence to enter this arena boldly and talk about what's right and what's wrong and the fact that no one should be hungry among us."

Congregations' food ministries, no matter the denomination, are on the front lines of a multilayered response to food insecurity in America. The federal government defines food insecurity as lack of access to enough food to maintain an active and healthy life. Nationally, 41.2 million people, including 12.9 million children, were said to be food insecure in 2016, according to the nonprofit Feeding America.

Episcopal News Service visited Madison's Grace Episcopal Church in August to see how one successful food pantry works and how it collaborates with other institutions working on the issue at all levels.

Feeding America works at the national level to support its 200 affiliated regional food banks, which form the backbone of local efforts. Those affiliates, like Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, collect large amounts of food and distribute it to where it is most needed.

That includes food pantries like the one at Grace Episcopal Church in Madison.

Nearly 58,000 of the 510,000 residents of the city and surrounding Dane County, or 11.3 percent, are food insecure, according to the most recent data kept by Feeding America. Grace Food Pantry was created in 1979 to serve those residents. Now, 38 years later, it operates as an independent nonprofit with a paid coordinator.

The Episcopal Church's Asset Map, which is still under development, shows more than 300 congregations offering food pantries, meal programs or both. Since the map's participation rate so far is at about 20 percent, the actual number of feeding ministries likely is much greater.

Pantry sizes range widely. Grace Food Pantry is open four days a week and serves 450 to 950 people a month. In a typical month, it distributes about 10,000 pounds of food. The pantry operates on a $22,000 annual budget largely funded by the congregation.

"It's been a core part of our work and our ministry, and it receives a lot of financial support from the members of the church," said the Rev. Jonathan Grieser, Grace's rector. "It's part of the gospel mission to feed the hungry."

Grace Food Pantry coordinator Vikki Enright, right, helps volunteers Audrey Shomos and Jim Murphy as they fill grocery bags with food for the pantry's guests in Madison, Wisc.

The fruits (and vegetables) of that gospel mission awaited Randle, 35, and the handful of other guests who were first in line when the food pantry opened at 1 p.m. on a Tuesday in August. A handwritten list was stuck to a wall next to the counter: zucchini, tomatoes, cucumbers, star fruit, green beans, broccoli, onions, rutabaga, plumbs, kiwi, peaches, cauliflower.

That was only a partial list. Each guest who meets income qualifications can get a weekly allotment of food in amounts that vary with the size of the household. Randle received some eggs along with her produce. Meat also is included, and the variety of food can change week to week.

Photos/David Paulsen/Episcopal News Service

Second Harvest is one of 200 food banks across the country affiliated with Feeding America, which has made "Solve Hunger" one of its defining goals. The food banks partner with food pantries like the one run by Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, Wisc.

"You don't get the same thing all the time," Raymond Scott, a 67-year-old Air Force veteran, said as he waited his turn, his suitcase ready to be filled with food from the pantry.

The source for much of the pantry's food is a large warehouse seven miles away in the southeast corner of Madison.

Second Harvest's facility on Dairy Drive boasts some impressive numbers. At 47,000 square feet, the warehouse houses offices, sorting and packing rooms, three coolers, several loading docks and row after row of stock shelves that typically hold about 1 million pounds of food, with a capacity for up to 1.7 million pounds.

Hundreds of people volunteer there each month, and a staff of eight drivers steer the agency's six semi-tractor trailer trucks and three straight trucks across 16 counties in southwest Wisconsin, delivering enough food in 2016 for 14.3 million meals.

Feeding America assigns Second Harvest and other member food banks to serve distinct regions that include every county in the United States without overlapping. The food banks collect food and distribute it across their regions, over and over. Often the Feeding America affiliate is the only food bank serving its communities, though some regions are served by additional food banks unaffiliated with Feeding America.

As they feed the hungry, these agencies also function like laboratories for new anti-hunger initiatives.

"There's no magic formula how to run your food bank. Everyone offers different programs and different ways to attack this problem," Second Harvest Executive Director Dan Stein said. "We all are each other's best cheerleaders. We freely share each other's best practices. We share things that were unsuccessful, so we don't waste resources."

Stein's agency, for example, has found success working directly with farmers to grow crops that can be distributed by Second Harvest's partner food pantries. In addition, Second Harvest sends its trucks more than 20 times a month to distribute food to people in places not already served by food pantries. It also has developed partnerships with health-care providers and schools to promote nutrition.

Pantries like the one at Grace Episcopal, though, are still the indispensable "feet on the streets" in the communities Second Harvest serves, Stein said. They know their clients' needs, he said.

The pantries can place orders online, paying Second Harvest a fee for the food. Certain items are offered to the pantries at a reduced rate or for free. Then the food bank's transportation supervisor dispatches drivers to make the requested deliveries.

Being part of a large network also offers economies of scale. Nationally, Feeding America solicits large corporate donations and develops relationships with national retailers like Walmart, Kroger and Target to donate their excess food to the regional food banks. Feeding America also is active on public policy, supporting federal programs that help feed low-income Americans, such the program commonly known as food stamps. The Episcopal Church shares those concerns and advocates for those programs through its Office of Government Relations.

Feeding America traces the organization's history to what it credits as the first food pantry, started in 1967 by a Roman Catholic church in Phoenix, Ariz. In a domino effect, churches around the country began forming their own pantries, and, in 1979, the national organization was created to leverage the coordinated work of member pantries. Many, but not all, of the food pantries run by Episcopal churches are affiliated with Feeding America.

"Solve hunger" is the mantra of today's Feeding America."I can think of nothing better than a society where we have a hunger-free America," Catherine Davis, Feeding America's chief marketing and communication officer, said in a phone interview. "And that's actually our mission, to help create a hunger-free America. But the majority of our work goes to feeding people."

That work continues seemingly without end. Hunger is better understood as a chronic social problem rather than a sudden individual emergency, Davis said. There always will be people seeking food assistance who are driven by

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NEWS

HUNGER continued from page 1

Biblical roots

Jesus also alludes to this duality in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled," he says in Matthew 5:1-12.

The Greek word for righteousness was the same as the word for justice, said the Rev. Jane Patterson, associate professor of New Testament at Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas.

How the ancient world understood hunger and fasting, though, was different from how we understand it today, she said. "Most people in the ancient world were hungry most of the time," and the prophets made the moral case for feeding the hungry, Patterson said.

The idea of Jesus as the "good shepherd" has roots in Ezekiel 34, she said. God asks the shepherds why they feed themselves but don't care for the flock. God pledges to tend to his sheep, the Israelites, and "provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations."

References to abundance and scarcity continue through the New Testament. The words "hunger" and "hungry" are found 19 times in the Gospels. "Eat" appears several dozen more times. In Mark 11:12-14, Jesus is hungry but finds no figs on a fig tree, so he condemns the tree to wither. The prodigal son in Luke 15 is so hungry he covets the pigs' food, "but no one gave him anything." And in Matthew 6:25, Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat

Photo/Sara Bates/St. Luke's

Volunteers Clare Manthey and John Mitchell prepare to serve St. Luke's Episcopal Church's daily free breakfast through the Edible Hope Kitchen ministry in Seattle.

or drink. … Is not life more than food?"

For the disciples, Jesus shared his Last Supper in a time of uncertainty and with a great injustice about to happen, Patterson said. It is recounted today before every Eucharist because of how Jesus joined the meal to his coming sacrifice, offering himself as bread and wine, she said.

"Food is so basic to life," but spiritual needs are just as essential, Patterson said, noting that there often is little distinction between the two in the Bible. "People who are hungry need real food, and they also need spiritual sustenance."

One of the best-known Gospel stories involving food is the one cited by Curry, the feeding of the 5,000 with just five loaves of bread and two fish, as recounted in all four Gospels. That miracle is followed by Jesus' teaching about "the bread of life."

"Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty," he says in John 6:35.

Jesus' disciples "needed to be taught as much as they needed the bread," Patterson said. She also emphasizes the communal nature of the miracle. Jesus is not said to have multiplied the loaves and fish. The miracle is that all who gathered are fed from what little food was available, and no one lacks food for giving to those in need, she said. "In God's economy, it's never zero sum."

Giving much, lacking nothing

The Rev. Melanie Mullen, the Episcopal Church's director of reconciliation, justice and creation care, looks to Proverbs 28 for inspiration in the fight against hunger: "Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing."

Mullen oversees Jubilee Ministries and the United Thank Offering (UTO), two programs in which the Episcopal Church provides substantial financial support for antipoverty efforts. Jubilee Ministries focuses specifically on poverty through its network of 600 Jubilee Centers, which provide a range of services, including food, shelter and health care.

UTO collects donations from individuals across the Episcopal Church and distributes the money to a wide variety of ministries, many of them feeding programs.

More than $1.2 million in UTO grants was awarded this year. Recipients included a farm run by the Diocese of Ohio, a church garden in Connecticut and food ministries in central California. Food ministries regularly benefit from UTO grants, such as the $12,500 given in 2016 to support this garden at St. James Episcopal Church in Kent, Wash.

The Episcopal Church can lead from a position of moral clarity based on Jesus' teachings, Mullen said. "When we help the poor we're not just doing charity work, we're living as Jesus did."

The Episcopal Church, through the Anglican Communion, also can leverage a worldwide network of believers willing to give money to support strangers who need help putting meals on the table. Episcopal Relief & Development plays a leading role in those efforts on behalf of the Episcopal Church.

Alleviating hunger is a core area of Episcopal Relief & Development's work, with an emphasis on community-based programs. "These locally developed programs address the specific context of hunger and have a wider impact on the health and economic well-being of the community," the agency's website says. "Working with church partners and local organizations, we empower people to live healthier and more productive lives."

Episcopal Relief & Development spent $6.9 million on food security in 2015 and nearly $4 million in 2016, according to its annual reports.

At the local level, one can find may examples of Episcopalians working in their communities to help neighbors put food on the table.

Photo/Sara Bates/St. Luke's

Guests and volunteers pray together during one of the free breakfasts offered by St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, one of a range of anti-hunger ministries involving the Episcopal Church at all levels.

The food ministry at St. Luke's in Seattle started about 30 years ago as a weekly community lunch, launched by the church's Bible study group. More recently, it also has helped save the congregation, which was struggling after a major split over the ordination of gay and lesbian people, said the program's coordinator

In 2011, the church lost an estimated 80 percent of its members in the split, leaving attendance at worship services as low as a dozen people some Sundays, Bates said. Among those who stayed were the older women who hosted the church's food ministry, and they were determined to keep it going.

By that time, the meal had become a breakfast served five days a week, as the group noticed more and more homeless people in the neighborhood but with no feeding programs in the morning, Bates said. As the meals became more and more popular, they took on the name Edible Hope Kitchen a couple years ago, based on the suggestion of one of their regular guests.

"He said, 'You guys don't just serve food here. You serve edible hope,'" Bates recalled.

She began working at the church as an intern in 2015, soon after a new vicar arrived and began injecting new life into the congregation. Bates, 33, now works 20 hours a week as the church's paid coordinator of Edible Hope Kitchen, partly thanks to the $22,000 UTO grant St. Luke's received this year.

St. Luke's gets most of its food from donations or at a reduced cost from the Feeding America-affiliated food bank in Seattle. The UTO grant will help the church upgrade equipment in its kitchen. Buying a new bread slicer, for example, is a big improvement because Edible Hope offers unlimited slices of toast from loaves that often are not precut, Bates said.

The goal is to be able to feed up to 250 people from 7 to 10 a.m. each weekday by this winter. That means a lot of toast. The church also goes through at least six dozen eggs a day, sometimes as many as 14 dozen. Four to 10 volunteers prep the meals the night before, and about a dozen people help each morning by setting up the meal, serving it and then cleaning up. ■

CHRISTMAS GIVING

What are we really anticipating at Christmas?

By Elsa Worth

From number 1 to 24, each window on the Advent calendar brings Christmas closer. I remember eagerly anticipating Christmas when I was little. It was a truly magical holiday.

I loved the electric candles in my bedroom windows, which cast such a special soft light as I fell asleep in the weeks heading up to Christmas. I loved the many wooden Christmas horses and trolls that began appearing all around the house. I loved the smell of balsam; of my mom's paperwhite narcissus bulbs that inevitably came into bloom right about this time; of Christmas cookies baking; and ofthe delicious Swedish rye bread, which would be eaten smeared with butter and eaten with a chunk of cheese.

And, of course, I loved the Christmas tree, all lit up with tiny white lights. I'd sit and gaze at it in the dark room, squinting my eyes to watch the lights go in and out of soft focus. I remember how often I'd say, "I can't *wait* until Christmas!" The feelings of anticipation and expectation were so, so strong, it seemed like it took forever for Christmas to arrive.

These days, more often than not, I find myself wondering how Christmas got here so fast. And instead of anticipation, I sometimes fall prey to an anxious sense of dread that I still have so much left to do.

What is it about adulthood that can turn a magical holiday into just another pile of looming chores in an overflowing in-box? How did the gift that is Christmas become overshadowed by burdensome should's and have-to's? When did I stop perceiving Christmas as an exciting movement of the spirit and start feeling the weight of holding it up as an institution? Is there some way to reclaim the magical gift of anticipation at this time of year?

While gifts are a big part of a child's excitement about Christmas, the total-body, tail-wagging-puppy excitement that came over me at this time of year as a little girl was about much more than the presents. I anticipated renewing connections with family, friends and neighbors as we enjoyed a big smorgasbord at our house every Christmas Eve.

I knew everyone would comment on my mom's delicious ham, beans and potato salad and that we'd get to taste once again the foods that only showed up once a year (like pickled herring). I knew that we'd sing carols around the piano and that my rather tone-deaf Uncle Roy would be singing the loudest of all. I knew one young reader in the family would get to read "The Night Before Christmas" out loud to the whole gathering before we'd all bundle up and head to church in the dark to hold little burning candles while we sang "Silent Night."

I knew I'd be the first to get up and go downstairs on Christmas morning to check that Santa had eaten his cookies and milk. I'd deliver the full stockings to my parents' bed, where they'd pretend to be excited and happy to have been awakened at 5 a.m. I knew my parents and I would spend a relaxed Christmas Day together, building a fire in the fireplace, playing board games, watching football and eating the smorgasbord leftovers that had been laid out again for the day.

Christmas was, for me, not just any one of these things. It was all of them together. It was a package of love and togetherness and church and music. And it all happened each year like clockwork. I could count on it. And, Lord, don't we all love — and need — things we can count on.

Looking back, I can see now that my parents put a boatload of work into Christmas each year. That smorgasbord. The baking. The presents. The window candles, the tree, the wreaths, the decorations.

I have to admit that, despite my holiday stress, I don't do nearly as much. Then again, my mom was not a full-time priest. In my own family, church has taken far more of a central role in our Christmas rituals, and our traditions at home are relatively simple. For example, we always have a quick-to-cook ravioli dinner on Christmas.

But I've come to realize that it's not what we do that matters. It's that we are creating and enjoying family rituals together. My big anticipation each year always was — and still is — knowing that the light of love will be made manifest once again among the people I love at Christmas.

The Grinch was surprised that Christmas came to the people of Whoville without ribbons or tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. The Whos knew what counted most was gratefully being together.

When we make time and room to express our love for God and our love for each other, the true light is manifested among us. Whether our Christmas celebrations are traditional or depart from tradition by choice or by circumstance, we can treasure and joyfully put our energy toward the priorities that matter most.

Not everyone grew up with the rich Christmas traditions that my family had. And I also know all too well that people are suffering all kinds of difficulties this and every Christmas. Yet I trust that God's light, the light that enlightens the world, is still coming into the world, especially for those who need it most. Hopefully those of us with plenty to share will find new ways to share it with others as part of our own evolving Christmas rituals.

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CHRISTMAS GIVING

How genuinely to keep Christ in Christmas

By George Clifford

Few people today know that the Nazis tried to remove Christ from Christmas.

For the perfect Nazi Christmas, you had to hang glittering swastikas and toy grenades from the pine tree in the living room and, in your freshly pressed uniform, belt out carols urging German women to make babies for the Führer rather than worship the Jewish Baby Jesus. Then came the moment to light the pagan candleholders — handmade by laborers at Dachau, wrote journalist Roger Boyes in The Times of London.

More surprisingly, significant manifestations of the Nazi efforts to remove Christ from Christmas remained embedded in German culture throughout much of the latter half of the 20th century. Germans continued to sing carols and hymns, revised by the Nazis to excise references to Jesus and the Christian story, often unaware of how the Nazis had altered the lyrics. For example, "Unto Us a Time Has Come" became a hymn of praise about snowy fields instead of lauding God's gift of the Christ-child.

Unlike what happened in Germany with Hitler's propagandists centrally directing the effort to transform Christmas from a celebration of Jesus' birth into adulation of the Fuhrer and the Third Reich, today's growing disconnection between Christ and Christmas is more insidious and operates without any central authority.

Unfortunately, two strawmen are often lightning rods for Christian efforts to keep Christ at the heart of Christmas. These strawmen are irrelevant distractions.

First, the growing disconnect between Christ and Christmas has nothing to do with removing Christian symbols, including Christmas decorations and Nativity scenes, from public property. Using state resources to promote a particular religion in a secular, multi-cultural democracy inappropriately demeans non-Christians and their freedom to practice their own (or no) religion. In short, Christian displays on public property reflect a lack of love for our non-Christian neighbor. Christian displays belong on Christian-owned or leased property.

Second, complaints about substituting the now seemingly ubiquitous Xmas for Christmas reflect an inappropriate desire to control the speech of others and a lack of understanding of Christian history. The Greek letter chi, written in Greek as X, was one of the first Christian symbols. Rightly interpreted, Xmas denotes Christ's mass, a Eucharistic thanksgiving or season of commemoration for God's gift of the Christ child, which is what the word Christmas itself means.

The real threat to keeping Christ in Christmas in 21st-century developed countries is the commercialization of the holiday, transforming a spiritual event into a season generally filled with widely extravagant expectations of partying, decorations and unaffordable gift giving. This is a battle that Christians fought once before and won.

As John Buchanan, the editor of the Christian Century, has observed, "One of the most memorable sermons I ever heard — one of the very few I actually remember — was a Christmas Day sermon preached by Charles Leber. At the time, he and Ulysses Blake were co-pastors of First Presbyterian Church on Chicago's South Side. Leber's sermon was title 'Another Roman Holiday.'

"He explained that the early church chose Dec. 25 to celebrate Jesus' birth even though everyone knew the birth had happened sometime in the spring. Dec. 25 was the beginning of the Romans' year-end holiday, which Leber said was quite a bash: seven straight days of eating, drinking and reveling. The Christians did not participate in these revels. They decided to draw attention to themselves by rejecting the celebration. And so, to provide an alternative and to help them resist the sensual temptations of the Roman holiday, they came up with Christmas."

Christians still constitute a sizable and influential percentage of the U.S. population and a sufficiently substantial minority of 10 percent or more to be able to exert considerable influence in most other developed nations. We need not lose the current battle to keep Christ in Christmas.

To keep Christ in Christmas, live into the story of Christmas, which is a synopsis of the gospel, by intentionally cultivating practices such as these:

Becoming spiritual leaven instead of becoming co-opted by the holiday's secular, commercial ethos.

Giving alternative gifts congruent with Jesus' love, e.g., a gift of a goat to a hungry family in the name of the person to whom one wishes to give a gift.

Focusing, as did Jesus, on relationships and people instead of things and fleeting pleasures.

Developing countercultural Christmas observances that tell the story of the birth of the Christ child and that invite people to explore that story's meaning in ways appropriate to a biblically illiterate society.

Whether we in the 21st century succeed in keeping Christ in Christmas may well hinge upon our answer to this poignant and memorable question that Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan have posed in "The First Christmas":

"Christmas is not about tinsel and mistletoe or even ornaments and presents, but about what means will we use toward the end of a peace from heaven upon our earth. Or is 'peace on earth' but a Christmas ornament taken each year from attic or basement and returned there as soon as possible?" ■

*The Rev. George Clifford, a priest in the Diocese of Hawaii, served as a Navy chaplain for 24 years, has taught ethics and the philosophy of religion, and now blogs at Ethical Musings (**http://blog.ethicalmusings.com/**). This column originally appeared online at The Episcopal Café (**www.episcopalcafe.com**) and is reprinted with permission.*

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So I'm working on discerning new ways to keep that long to-do list of "shoulds" steal my anticipation this year. At Christmas, as in church, simple is good. If you find you've gotten a little lost in tasks and have forgotten the real reason you're doing them, I give you full permission to take a look at your to-do list right now and just draw a line right through anything that doesn't directly support more time and room in your life for God and your loved ones.

Perhaps by letting go of a few of the "heavier lifts" you will discover new room and energy to add a few new traditions to bring a renewed sense of joy and anticipation into your holiday preparations. I'm pretty sure that focusing on the true light will help us rediscover a more child-like sense of anticipation and will make the Christmas season shine more brightly for all. ■

The Rev. Elsa Worth is rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Keene, N.H. This column first appeared on the church's website and is reprinted with permission.

COMMENTARY

Why the ecumenical movement is a historical event on par with the Reformation

By Thomas Reese
Religion News Service

One hundred years ago, Catholics were not interested in celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, except to remember how a bunch of reformers led people astray.

How times have changed!

This year, Catholics, led by Pope Francis, are celebrating the Reformation with their fellow Christians.

However, it is important that we not simply look at it through rosy glasses. The division of Christianity led to warfare and bloodshed on a par with the conflicts between the Sunnis and Shiites in the Muslim community. It was not pretty. We Christians cannot look down our noses at Muslims as if we have not also killed our brothers and sisters.

Although the fighting and bloodshed eventually tapered off, antagonism and prejudice between Catholics and Protestants (and among Protestants) lasted well into the 20th century.

It was not until the 20th century that progressive Protestant churches initiated the ecumenical movement. Conservative Protestants and Catholics held back, seeing ecumenism as giving in to relativism.

Two world wars fostered ecumenism in foxholes where soldiers of different faiths got to know and respect each other. The wars also made the churches realize they needed to put aside their squabbles to work for peace.

To Catholics growing up in the 1950s, Protestants were heretics outside the true church, although Protestants might be forgiven for their "ignorance." In school and at home, Catholics heard stories of prejudice and discrimination from the WASP establishment.

We were reminded that the three groups most hated by the KKK were blacks, Jews and Catholics. Our American history books had photos of signs saying "Irish need not apply."

The 1960 election proved that anti-Catholicism was still alive and flourishing. In polling, John Kennedy's religion was singled out as an extremely important variable in the election.

Ecumenism was still a dirty word until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), whose document on ecumenism allowed Catholics to jump in with both feet. And jump we did. Catholics are now dialoguing with everybody, especially in the United States, where there are so many religious groups. Likewise, the Vatican is engaged in dialogues with almost every religion of any significant size. Leaders in the Catholic ecumenical movement included German Cardinals Augustin Bea and Walter Kasper.

When it was time in the early 1970s for me to study theology before ordination as a Catholic priest, I did it at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley in California. The school is part of the Graduate Theological Union, an ecumenical consortium of Protestant and Catholic schools.

This would have been unthinkable prior to the Second Vatican Council.

I remember taking a course in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation taught by two professors, one a Jesuit and the other Lutheran, where we read Luther and Calvin and decrees from the Council of Trent.

I truly felt I understood Luther better than my Lutheran classmates because Luther and I had grown up in the same church. The Lutheran students, on the other hand, had no experience of what he was railing against.

So, as we celebrate the Reformation, let's remember also to celebrate the ecumenical movement that did so much during the last century to heal the divisions among Christians. It is a historical event on a par with the Reformation itself.

Photo/Emily McFarlan Mille/RNSr

A statue of Martin Luther in Eisenach, Germany, in June 2017.

> **"I think Luther could be comfortable in the Catholic Church of today."**

Photo/courtesy of Osservatore Romano via Reuters

Pope Francis, left, embraces General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation the Rev. Martin Junge during an ecumenical Mass in the cathedral in Lund, Sweden, on Oct. 31, 2016.

That's not to say that there have not been bumps along the way.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had a way of using words that could throw a monkey wrench into dialogue. He once said that only the Catholic and Orthodox churches were true churches because only they had legitimate bishops. Protestants were simply Christian communities. The problem was that he defined the word "church" by himself without dialoguing with anyone else.

Another challenge to the ecumenical movement is that it involves churches that are not static.

I think Luther could be comfortable in the Catholic Church of today.

Vatican II accepted many of the reformers' reforms. The Mass is in the vernacular; the laity can now drink from the cup; we are not selling indulgences; married Protestant ministers have been ordained as Catholic priests (and Francis is open to married priests); the theological dispute over faith and works has been resolved; the Catholic Church encourages the laity to read the Scriptures; and the concept of collegiality is tempering the absolute monarchical model of the papacy.

It might take time and dialogue, but I think it would be possible to reconcile Luther with today's Catholic Church.

Cardinal Kasper pointed out that the Catholic Church is no longer in dialogue with Luther but with his descendants, who have continued to evolve. Now we have other issues dividing the churches, like women priests, gay marriage, abortion, etc. These were not issues for Luther.

Ecumenism is not just about theological dialogue over matters of doctrine. There is also the ecumenism of friendship, prayer and social action.

Ecumenical friendship at work and in neighborhoods and among families has taken us way beyond the uncomfortable tolerance of the past. "Let them know that we are Christians by our love," not by our fights.

Praying together, exchanging pulpits and sharing the Scriptures are also signs of progress, but the work is not finished.

The ecumenism of social action has also progressed significantly as members of different churches work together to change the world.

What might be next steps in the path toward unity?

1. Churches (especially the Catholic Church) must recognize the important role of ecumenical marriages in the movement toward unity.

Spouses in such marriages should be welcomed at the Lord's table in the churches of both spouses as examples of the unity that is possible.

2. The unity that comes from sharing in the same baptism should trump most disagreements.

For too long, the Catholic Church has demanded agreement on how we explain the faith rather than a unity in the faith.

3. The Catholic Church has to return to seeing itself as the "big tent" that is inclusive rather than as an exclusive club for the cognoscente.

The Catholic Church moves slowly, but its goal must always be to be more inclusive, more "catholic" in the sense of universal.

Protestant churches, on the other hand, are the entrepreneurial engines of Christianity, where new ideas are tried and incorporated into Catholicism if they succeed and discarded if they fail. In the past, this role was performed by religious orders, but their role in the church is declining.

We see the Reformation very differently today than we did 100 years ago. How will we see it in another 100 years? My hope is that ecumenism continues to progress so that, at the next anniversary, we will truly know and experience our oneness in Christ. ■

COMMENTARY

Christian unity has been achieved

By David W. T. Brattston

There is no further need for efforts toward Christian unity. The major churches have already attained a sufficient degree of harmony and mutual acceptance to fulfill Jesus's call for unity among Christians in John 10.16 and in his oft-cited prayer in John 17.

Look at mainline denominations, such as the Episcopal Church. It has intercommunion agreements, fellowship and joint ventures with other church bodies, and cooperation in local, national and world councils of churches. Any disunity is largely illusory, with the differences being only in nonessentials that other major church bodies are willing to tolerate.

What solidifies denominational separation in place are the specific rules of trust funds for seminaries and local meeting places, incorporation requirements about confessions of faith and the secular rules regarding corporate status and property-holding arrangements, some of which date back centuries ago. In short, it is ownership of material possessions that keeps us from coming together more closely, which were not a consideration before Christianity was legalized in the fourth century.

I looked for the meaning of Christian unity as contemplated in the Scriptures and in the writings of Christians so early they could recall what the Jesus and his first disciples actually did. I aimed to ascertain the meaning of such unity in the practice of the apostles and their first successors and how "unity" was understood in the next few overlapping generations.

Examining Christian sources to the middle of the third century A.D., I discovered that "unity" meant attitudes, qualities of character or modes of relating to people with whom one is in personal contact. In the biblical sense, it is a pattern of conducting one-to-one interpersonal relations among Christians that fosters peace, love and harmony at the neighborhood level.

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 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 with who come into frequent contact, and which fosters Christian peace, love and harmony at the neighborhood level.

The Scriptures and church fathers never mentioned merger of organizations or bureaucracies.

The results of my research contradicted allegations that the Christian churches today are too fragmented to fulfill Christ's will. Indeed, there already is — or easily could be at a moment's notice — Christian unity among major denominations, especially at the local and person-to-person level, in the sense that it was understood by Christ's first followers.

If we substitute the phrase "Christian unity" in its biblical sense for the "organizational unity" or "structural unity" that many church members mistake it for, believers of every denomination can practice John 17 now, in their daily lives. Even when we narrow down the meaning of Christian unity to structural or bureaucratic arrangements, there is no longer any sense to regard disunity as a problem, for there exist far too many avenues for churches to cooperate with each other, such as intercommunion agreements, open Communion, unhindered mutual acceptance, joint ventures with other church bodies and cooperation in local, national and world councils of churches.

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Becoming C.S. Lewis

By Retta Blaney

A woman in her early 20s came up to Max McLean after a performance of his latest one-man play, "C.S. Lewis Onstage: The Most Reluctant Convert," and said she could not possibly be a Christian.

Sensing her anxiety, McLean told her, "God has you in his net, and he's not going to let you go." Her response surprised him: "What should I do?" He recommended that she read the Gospel of John, and he gave her his card, and they arranged a time to talk further.

Such is the intensity of the story McLean has written. One production took place last spring off-Broadway in New York. "People [make] associations that get in the way, and they can't get past them. Theater and art have a way of breaking through stigmas," he said, quoting Lewis's notion of "stealing past the watchful dragons."

"His conversion is a roadmap for people who have given up."

Lewis has been important to McLean's life since he, too, was in his early 20s. He grew up Roman Catholic in a military family. First Communion and confirmation were meaningful to him, but as a teenager he stopped attending church and "fell into atheism, more by anger than anything else."

He experimented with Eastern religions in college, in keeping with the trend of the 1970s. Then he met the woman who would become his wife. She took him to church and introduced him to other Christians, one of whom described Jesus as having been a historical person just like George Washington. This triggered in McLean a sense that Jesus was something more than the "fairy-tale character" he had grown up imagining.

Photo/Jeremy Daniel

Playwright and actor Max McLean on C.S. Lewis: "His conversion is a roadmap for people who have given up."

The first thing he did was read the Gospel of John. His second choice was Lewis' "Surprised by Joy," which he described as "over my head," followed by "The Screwtape Letters," which he "got immediately."

McLean continues to respect the way Lewis opens his readers to the supernatural world, something he thinks the modern church, in its desire to simplify and demystify, misses.

"Lewis is my spiritual guide," McLean said in a telephone interview. "He helps me understand reality in a way I wouldn't see or understand. He believed so strongly in how the supernatural world interacts with ours. He triggers my imagination in a way almost no other writer does."

Deciding to portray that spiritual guide onstage was a natural progression for the actor and playwright. He had previously adapted and performed "The Screwtape Letters" and "The Great Divorce" for the stage. In doing so, he read extensively among works by and about Lewis.

"In 2011, the idea came to me to attempt to tell his own story," McLean said. He spent two or three months working on a first draft, then put it away for about four years. Then he began working on it through "a hefty development process" that included labs and workshops before the show premiered in April 2016 in Washington, D.C. It then played Chicago and had a brief Midwestern tour before the New York show.

About 90 percent of the 80-minute script consists of Lewis's words.

"I'm not as smart as he was," McLean says. "My confidence comes from knowing what an extraordinary writer he was."

The play, performed without an intermission, is set in Lewis's study at Magdalen College, Oxford, England, in 1950 and tells the story of his life, from the time of his mother's death from cancer when he was 10, through his estranged relationship with his father, his fighting in World War I, his avowed atheism and his conversion to Christianity.

"Conversion stories are inherently dramatic," McLean says. "It's something you fight against. The tension is almost like an invasion. In Christian language, we're all rebels. The Incarnation is a kind of invasion, taking back enemy territory."

He said the play's title helps attract more than just Lewis fans because it is intriguing. "*Convert* means to change, and *reluctant* means to avoid. That was the guiding principle to the piece." He said he needed to set up why Lewis was an atheist: his mother's death, his relationship with his father and his being wounded in the war.

"That gave him an extremely pessimistic view of reality. To turn from that was very challenging." McLean identified the fulcrum of the play as the tension between atheism and theism. "Once I knew how I wanted to go, I knew what to take out and what to put in."

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A renowned scholar's experience of love, loss and faith

Review by Pamela A. Lewis

C.S. Lewis, the Belfast-born British figure of letters, was one man engaged in myriad activities: celebrated Oxford scholar and Christian apologist, who penned such classics as "Mere Christianity," "The Screwtape Letters" and "The Problem of Pain"; imaginative author of the beloved children's classic series "The Chronicles of Narnia"; literary critic; essayist; lay theologian; broadcaster. But in "Shadowlands," by William Nicholson, now onstage at the Fellowship for Performing Arts in New York, Lewis is simply a human being who must grapple with the play's central question: Why does a benevolent God allow people to suffer?

When we first meet Lewis (known as "Jack" to his friends, and portrayed by Daniel Gerroll), he is delivering one of his highly polished and cerebral lectures on the nature of God. "God," he argues, "does not want us to be happy." "Pain is God's megaphone to wake us up to suffering." "Suffering releases us from the toils of this world."

Looking every bit the middle-aged Oxford don in three-piece tweed suit and sensible shoes, Lewis proclaims the beliefs of the confident apologist he became after abandoning atheism and converting to Christianity.

However, Lewis's predictable and sedate life lacks something that not even he discerns or acknowledges, although others close to him do. His brother, Warnie (played by John C. Vennema), observes that "Jack plays safe." He is a better spectator than liver of life.

This comfortable routine is soon changed by the arrival of Joy Gresham (Robin Abramson), whose first appearance is in the form of a long airmail envelope containing her letter to Lewis expressing admiration of his work. Born Joy Davidman, she is an American writer of Jewish heritage, a former Communist and, like Lewis, a convert from atheism to Christianity.

What begins as an epistolary relationship soon assumes a more personal shape when Gresham and her 8-year-old son Douglas visit Oxford and meet Lewis. While welcomed by the more emotionally reserved Lewis, Gresham's outspokenness does not go over well with his claret-sipping male friends such as Christopher Riley (played with delicious condescension by Sean Gormley), who sniffs, "Women are more interesting in theory than in practice."

"Shadowlands"

Through Jan. 7, 2018 at the Acorn Theatre, New York
www.fpatheatre.com
Running time: 2 hours 20 minutes
(with a 15-minute intermission)

Photo/courtesy Fellowship for Performing Arts

Robin Abramson and Daniel Gerroll in "Shadowlands."

We soon learn — again via letter — that Gresham's husband is divorcing her, giving her the freedom to not only begin a new life, but also inject Lewis's with a different kind of energy. Despite their cultural and emotional differences, they are intellectual equals, and Gresham often succeeds in puncturing the seemingly impenetrable superiority of Lewis' mind.

Lewis and Gresham move from friendship to deep love. Somehow, they marry, despite the Church of England's unyielding laws against divorced people remarrying. Just when Lewis begins to let go, as he had to do when he learned to dive into a pool during the summer he became a Christian, life drags in its pain, and the couple must confront and endure it. Through beautiful staging references to "The Magician's Nephew," one of Lewis's "Narnia" tales, Douglas (played by Jack McCarthy and Jacob Morrell at alternate performances) assists his mother as she faces a crisis.

Readers familiar with Lewis's "A Grief Observed," on which "Shadowlands" is based, will be pleased with the play's respectful faithfulness to the text. The 199-seat off-Broadway Acorn Theatre is suited to the work's intimate narrative and small cast. While the scenic designs by Kelly James Tighe suggest a limited budget, they communicate the period (early 1950s) and do not compete with the actors for our attention.

Christa Scott-Reed has directed a strong ensemble, with a few actors dou-

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Celebrating Christ's birth with crèches from around the world

By Jerry Hames

As many have for the past 26 years, thousands of people will take part in a cherished Christmas tradition when they view a display of nativity scenes from Washington National Cathedral's extensive crèche collection.

"We will have between 80 and 100 sets out this year," said Lori Amos, the cathedral's crèche director, days before the collection was placed on public view Nov. 20. "We're still in progress, and decisions are being made as we speak."

Photos/Danielle E. Thomas/Washington National Cathedral

The cathedral's crèche director, Lori Amos, adjusts figures in a nativity set so that it reflects the customs of the country where it was made.

Many people come to the cathedral specifically to see the crèche exhibit, while others happen upon it during a tour or while attending a service or event. "Our goal is that, whether they look at everything we've displayed or simply stop to glimpse one set, that they'll find something that blesses them," she said.

Lori and her husband Chip are solely responsible for setting up the crèche exhibit each year. "He serves as my technical director and works on lighting, moving the crèches and supplies out of storage and into our workroom, formatting and printing labels, photography and major construction projects, while I unpack, set up and decorate each set and write the labels," she said.

The crèches are displayed in two areas in the cathedral's crypt — the first room in the north crypt aisle, just west of Bethlehem Chapel -- and the Visitors' Lounge, just outside the Museum Shop entrance.

"The advantage of these locations is that they give an untold number of people the opportunity to view the collection throughout the holiday season," Amos said.

Each nativity is "set dressed" to emphasize its particular attributes, as well as to suggest the culture in which it was created. "Our goal is never to set a crèche the same way twice," she said, "as we have visitors who have come every year to see those sets many times in a new way."

The late Beulah Sommer's collection of more than 600 nativity sets — first loaned to the cathedral for eight years, then donated in 1998 — forms the core of the cathedral's collection. About 100 more sets have come into the collection since then.

All nativity scenes are displayed in a three-year rotation so that as many as possible can be viewed. The sets vary dramatically in size and height. This year, the smallest set is a tiny resin nativity built on the head of a pin, while the largest is about 11 inches tall: a carved wooden Holy Family from Finland that includes one black sheep among the animals.

This year's exhibit contains crèches made of wood, leather, stone, pottery, stained glass, cast iron, lignite coal, a mixture of mud and animal dung, and even ash from the explosion of Mount St. Helens.

In an international city such as Washington, Amos said, it is gratifying to see visitors' reactions when they see a small representation of their home country or heritage represented in the cathedral's collection. "Our goal is for everyone to stop, look, learn and be blessed by these incredibly varied representations of Christ's birth," she said. "It is perhaps even more gratifying when people literally see this great story of God's love in a new way and are moved again by a story they know so well."

The cathedral's visitors' book is filled with comments from adults and many children responding to the question: "Which is your favorite crèche and why?"

"We have received answers that are funny, moving, profound, passionate and silly, which is why we do this exhibit every year," Amos said. "We want people to engage with the story of Christ's birth, to feel its wonder and power, to see themselves represented at the manger, to see this ancient, great story in a new light and, most importantly, to feel included in the great mystery of God's love." ■

The exhibit can be seen through Jan. 16. It is open to the public whenever the cathedral's crypt level is open, usually during general visiting hours. Due to the busy holiday schedule, visitors are encouraged to visit the website, ***cathedral.org****, to check on availability.*

A serene pottery nativity set made in Maryland reflects the artist's Asian heritage.

A bright and joyous "pesebre" from Brazil comes complete with a gray "cave," topped with a sparkling silver Star of Bethlehem.

BECOMING continued from page 12

With the help of a three-piece suit, pipe and a wig of thinning, combed-back hair, McLean transforms into Lewis and tells his story to the audience. In preparation for the "forest of words to navigate," he listened to three audio clips he found online. In one, Lewis sounds "almost Alfred Hitchcockish." In the others, he is more relaxed. "He was Irish but he took on an Oxford don pronunciation that was very erudite and educated."

In preparing for and portraying Lewis, McLean says the "number-one thing" he has learned was about the author's "generosity of spirit."

"He was a strange mixture of being incredibly self-reflective and not taking himself too seriously. He had self-deprecating humor. His basic nature was to be very proud and arrogant, and he buried that.

"I feel like I know him. I feel like he's my buddy. With so many writers, you get to the bottom of them quickly. You don't get to the bottom of Lewis."

McLean attributes this to deep insight.

"He read everything from the Greeks to the moderns, and he could remember everything. He was a chronicler of literature who was able to see how the Christian view of the world best absorbed all the worldviews he read." ■

Retta Blaney is an award-winning journalist and author of "Working on the Inside: The Spiritual Life Through the Eyes of Actors."

This story originally was published in The Living Church and is reprinted with permission.

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bling and tripling up on roles. Gerroll as C.S. Lewis exudes kindness and the lack of worldliness that must have attracted Gresham. Robin Abramson (making her New York debut) gives her stylishly dressed Gresham a no-nonsense New York brashness, topped off with the hint of a Lower East Side inflection that contrasts with Gerroll's softer manners and plummy accent. Vennema is especially sympathetic as the slightly stuffy but endearing Warnie Lewis. McCarthy is a sweetly obedient Douglas.

The Fellowship for Performing Arts produces theater from a Christian perspective, directed to diverse audiences, and has produced plays based on several of Lewis' works. It also stages plays in Tulsa, Okla.; Columbus, Ohio; Nashville, Tenn.; Kansas City, Mo.; New Orleans; Jacksonville, Fla.; and Houston.

Despite the play's solemn notes, there are humorous moments that push aside the clouds. "Do you *ever* turn the heat on in here?" Gresham asks Lewis with mock seriousness soon after moving into his home.

Although the question of why a benevolent God permits people to suffer, which preoccupied Lewis and dominated so much of his theological writings, looms over the play, there is prayer ("Prayer changes me, not God," says Lewis) and the persistence of love, which make it possible to live with pain in this shadowed world. ■

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

BOOK REVIEW

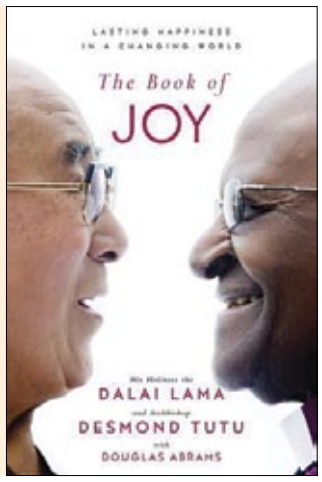
Spiritual leaders bring joy to the world

Review by Sharon Hausman

The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World

By the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams

Avery
384 pages, $18.20



Two things surprised me when now-retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a Godly and outspoken activist against the still-reigning evils of apartheid in his South Africa homeland, visited my New Jersey church in the late 1980s. First, his physical height was much shorter than his moral stature had led me to assume. Second, despite the seriousness of his message and cause, the Nobel Prize winner exuded joy and a sense of mischief. I vividly remember him hopping sideways, grinning widely, to stand beside our choir children when someone aimed a camera at him so the photo would include the youngsters. Hardships did not harden this man, then or now.

The Dalai Lama likewise exhibits a sense of peace and contentment that belies his years in exile. "The Book of Joy" explores how these two religious leaders remain so joyful despite the challenges and sadnesses of their lives — and how we, too, can live lives of joy.

The book records a series of dialogues moderated by Douglas Abrams between the two friends during a weeklong visit Tutu made to the Dalai Lama's home in India to celebrate the latter's 80th birthday in April 2015. Their interactions are in turn gracious, respectful, thoughtful, playful, poignant and, yes, joyous.

"Lasting happiness cannot be found in pursuit of any goal or achievement," the two spiritual leaders write in their introduction. "It resides only in the human mind and heart, and it is here that we hope you will find it. … We are sharing what two friends, from very different worlds, have witnessed and learned in our long lives. We hope you will discover whether what is included here is true by applying it in your own life."

The book includes scientific research findings about happiness, discussions of the leaders' different theological outlooks, descriptions of their spiritual practices and stories from their lives. Chapters explore their beliefs and advice concerning the obstacles to joy (fear, stress and anxiety; frustration and anger; sadness and grief; despair; loneliness; envy; suffering and adversity; illness and fear of death) and the "eight pillars of joy" (perspective, humility, humor, acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, generosity). It concludes with a selection of "joy practices."

During the so-called season of joy, when so much and so many around the world struggle to cope with pain and hardship at many levels, this book provides wisdom, inspiration and an entertaining glimpse into the friendship of two men who tease each other like schoolboys and call each other a "mischievous spiritual brother." It would make a lovely Christmas gift, to yourself or a loved one, to sustain and guide you into the new year. ■

BRATTSTON continued from page 11

True, some church leaders allege that disunity remains, but this may be a mere public-relations gesture by some of them. They usually mention it as if it were the only sin of which they are guilty and hasten to add that they are working hard to overcome it.

In the last hundred years, the tireless efforts of many leaders of major churches and the goodwill of local laity towards their counterparts in other communions have achieved a real, viable and practical unity through many branches of Christianity, which answers Christ's prayer. We should pray that this good work continues and expands, especially through us in our own local setting. ■

David W. T. Brattston is the author of the four-volume Traditional Christian Ethics. His articles on early and contemporary Christianity have been published by multiple denominations. He lives in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada.

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unforeseen circumstances — a lost job, a car repair, a medical bill. At the same time, most of the people who visit food pantries have steady jobs. Those jobs just don't pay enough to make ends meet.

"If the cure for hunger is food — I know it's not that simple — then the cure exists," Stein said, "because as much as 40 percent of the food grown in this county never makes it to our tables. It's thrown away." Getting food to those who need it, then, becomes a logistical and financial challenge.

Curing poverty is a more complex challenge, he said, and other organizations are working on different facets of the problem. Helping people find good-paying jobs is "the best battle against hunger and poverty," Stein said, while food banks' primary focus is eliminating the gap between the meals Americans have and the meals they need. ■

NEWS

Churches look to tighten security after Texas shooting

By Emily McFarlan Miller
Religion News Service

In 2007, a gunman opened fire outside New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., just as its midday service had dismissed. His bullets hit several members of the same family as they left, wounding David Works and killing his two teenage daughters, Rachel and Stephanie.

More than 600 people were on the church campus when Matthew Murray — a 24-year-old man armed with an assault rifle, two pistols and enough ammunition to kill 100 people — made his way inside the building, Pastor Brady Boyd recalled.

"I know there's a great theological debate about what Jesus would do," he told RNS. "I just know firsthand for me, on the day the shooting happened on our campus, we lost two very good, sweet, young teenage girls, and that was awful and horrific, but we could have very well lost 100 people that day."

Boyd said he believed that didn't happen because Murray ran into Jeanne Assam, a former police officer and member of the church security team who was legally carrying a pistol. Assam returned fire, ending the attack that had started 12 hours earlier, when the gunman had shot and killed several others at a nearby mission center.

The memories of that day came flooding back for Boyd when he learned of the mass shooting on Nov. 5 that left 26 people dead and tens more wounded at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, described as the deadliest attack on a church in modern American history.

Boyd said he had just moderated a discussion with Kay Warren of California's Saddleback Church about mental health during the weekend's services. He was showing Warren the church's memorial — a space for healing and reflection that includes a park bench and two spruce trees — when someone approached with the news from Texas.

"We stopped and mourned and were so sad … to hear the news. It was devastating to us. It brings back a lot of painful memories for us," he said.

Reflecting on the attack on his church 10 years ago in a blog post the next morning, the pastor wrote, "The sad reality is that every church should have a strategy to protect its members when they gather."

Across the country, many churches and other places of worship are considering security measures as mass shootings have become a tragically familiar narrative in the United States. In the last five years, gunmen have taken lives not only at churches such as New Life, First Baptist and Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., but also at a mosque, Jewish center and Sikh temple.

After the most recent church shooting, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton suggested on Fox News that churchgoers carry concealed weapons.

He was echoed by Rev. Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Church of Dallas, also on Fox News, who insisted that if a gunman opened fire at his church, "they may get one shot off or two shots off, but that's it, and that's the last thing they'll ever do in this life." That's because as many as half his church members carry concealed weapons into church with them on a given Sunday, Jeffress estimated.

"This is the world we're living in. We need to do everything we can to keep our parishioners safe," he said.

Also in the Lone Star State, the Rev. Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, tweeted that his church was planning security training for church leaders.

In Texas, a licensed gun owner can take a gun to church unless the church has said otherwise, according to the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action.

But gun laws vary from state to state, as does guidance on guns in churches from denomination to denomination and church to church.

Photo/KSAT via AP

Emergency personnel respond to a fatal shooting at a Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, on Nov. 5.

Firearms in churches

Each of the states in green allows concealed handguns on church property, but most only with a church official's consent. In some states, churches must post noticeable signage outside to prohibit handguns on their properties.

And few Americans were in favor of guns in churches in a 2012 PRRI survey: More than three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) said concealed weapons should not be allowed in houses of worship.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations has compiled resources about mosque safety, and the Sikh Coalition recently launched a security initiative. In the past few years, the Anti-Defamation League, founded to combat anti-Semitism and other bigotries, has been sharing what it has learned with other religious and community groups, said Elise Jarvis, the ADL's associate director, law enforcement outreach and communal security.

"Unfortunately, the reality of the Jewish community is we are targets," Jarvis said. "It's something we've been dealing with for decades."

Jarvis suggested places of worship build relationships with law enforcement so their first call to police isn't a 911 call, and officers understand the community. She also suggested they pay close attention to who attends their services and other events — something that can be as simple as greeting people at the door — and having plans in place for different emergencies.

Boyd, the pastor at New Life, said he knew not all were comfortable with the idea of guns in church. Most crimes can be deterred by a uniformed police presence — hiring an off-duty police officer or recruiting a volunteer officer who attends the church, he said.

Quickly after the shooting on its campus, Boyd said, New Life decided to talk openly about what had happened, something he encourages for other churches facing tragedy, like in Sutherland Springs. The church brought in counselors to talk with church members. Even a decade later, he says, he talks about it from the pulpit.

It's going to take a long time for members of First Baptist Church to feel "normal" again, he said.

But, he added, "our faith tells us when the enemy means us harm, our God can turn it for good, and so we've seen that happen at New Life." ■

NEWS

Harriet Tubman's Canadian church seeks help for repairs

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

A century and a half ago, a new Canadian church gave fleeing slaves a place to worship. Now the sanctuary that welcomed Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman and other escapees needs help itself.

Photo/courtesy Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church

The church Harriet Tubman attended when she lived in St. Catharines, Ontario.

The dwindling membership of Salem Chapel, a British Methodist Episcopal church just north of Niagara Falls, has started a crowdsourcing campaign in hopes of raising C$100,000 (about US$79,000).

The congregation wants to shore up the building, which is in an area where heavy traffic has contributed to its shifting foundation.

Dedicated in 1855 by runaway slaves and free blacks, the church needs cable wires to secure the log frame of the building ahead of expected nearby construction and wants to replace parts of the building that are deteriorating or damaged.

Salem Chapel is in St. Catharines, Ontario, a spot known as an end point of the Underground Railroad, the multipronged clandestine route through which slaves escaped to freedom. Some of the people Tubman helped escape became members of the church.

Rochelle Bush, one of the 11 remaining members who launched the campaign, is the great-great-great-granddaughter of the Rev. James Harper, who was the minister in charge of the congregation when Tubman attended and when it changed its affiliation from the African Methodist Episcopal Church to BME.

"We became British Methodist Episcopal in 1856 because nobody wanted to go back for conference [in the United States] because of the fugitive slave laws," Bush said, adding that about 10 churches in Ontario remain British Methodist Episcopal and consider the AME Church their parent organization.

After the Civil War, the church, which began with 195 members, began to dwindle as members returned across the border, decreasing to about 40 in 1970. Most of its members now are age 80 and older.

The congregation, which continues to meet for worship each Sunday with a pastor and a pianist, has been sustained by tourists, who increased from about 2,500 annually to 4,000 this year, Bush said. Visitors pay a $5 admission to learn about "the who's who in the abolitionist movement" — including Frederick Douglass and John Brown — who have visited the church.

"That's what helps us keep the church doors open, and it pays the bills throughout the winter season," she said.

But now, the church's members say they need more assistance to keep their building available for future generations.

"[W]e want to ensure that it continues to serve as a religious institution and because it is an important treasure in North American history," they said. ■

Diocese of Los Angeles announces plan for resuming use of disputed church property

Episcopal News Service

The Diocese of Los Angeles released a statement Nov. 9 outlining a plan for future use of a disputed church property in Newport Beach, Calif., including the eventual resumption of worship services there by the St. James the Great congregation.

The property has been at the heart of disciplinary proceedings this year against Los Angeles Bishop J. Jon Bruno for his attempts to sell the church. Members of St. James the Great have been forced to worship in a civic center community room while the property remains in dispute.

The disciplinary hearing panel found Bruno guilty of the St. James complainants' allegations and said he should be suspended from ordained ministry for three years because of misconduct. Bruno has appealed.

Los Angeles Coadjutor Bishop John Taylor and the Rev. Rachel Anne Nyback, president of the diocese's standing committee, said in October that the diocese would help St. James the Great regain mission status, but such efforts did not include the immediate return of the congregation's pastor, the Rev. Cindy Evans Voorhees.

The statement released Nov. 9, signed by Taylor, Nyback and Voorhees, said that after St. James the Great regains mission status, it will be invited to resume use of the church, and Taylor will name Voorhees vicar. The diocese also plans to use part of the facility for its Redeemer Center for Diocesan Ministries. ■