

Episcopal JOURNAL

MONTHLY EDITION | \$3.75 PER COPY

VOL. 9 NO. 3 | MARCH 2019



NEWS Virginia bishop comments upon political scandals



FEATURE New York church seeks bail reform



ARTS Book explores Lenten focus on the senses

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Pittsburgh priest revives the parish that raised him

By Michelle Hiskey
Episcopal News Service

When the Rev. Kris Opat returned to St. David's Episcopal Church in suburban Pittsburgh in 2012, only 20 people were there to start over as a congregation. The sanctuary, which seats 300, made the group look even smaller. The building's previous occupants, part of the Anglican Church in North America, had just decamped.

Ordained for only three years at that point, Opat had never been a priest-in-charge.

Today, St. David's is a parish with almost 300 members — mostly busy young families who have no previous Episcopal ties. Opat, now 38, is a trained engineer with dreadlocks who grew up in the congregation.

Opat's entire career as a priest has unfolded amid the rancor and litigation in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and weathering that conflict has influenced his welcoming, no-nonsense approach to ministry.

"The split in 2008 was terrible, but since then some wonderful things have happened," said the Rev. Lou Hays, a retired priest

who served in the diocese and mentored Opat. "St. David's is the top of the list."

'What is going on?'

About six months into the revival of St. David's, Opat got a phone call from a curious neighbor: "Did something change at that church?" The question was posed so often that St. David's posted a brief history on its website, acknowledging the off-putting nature of the confusing changes the church had gone through since October 2008 when the diocesan convention agreed to follow then-Bishop Robert Duncan in his attempt to take the diocese out of the Episcopal Church but retain all the assets that were held by the diocese.

As the wrangling continued, the sign out front of St. David's went from saying "Episcopal" to "Anglican," and even the name of the church had changed at one point from St. David's to Church of the Redeemer as about 90 percent of the congregation tried to dissolve St. David's and form a new parish in what became the Anglican Church in North America, or ACNA. On May 27, 2012, Pentecost Sunday, Episcopal worship returned to St. David's and



Photo/Elena Tajem via Wikimedia Commons

Ash Wednesday outdoors

The Rev. Andrew Sherman, right, and the Rev. Craig Burlington of St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Boca Raton, Fla., distribute "ashes to go" in Mizner Park on Ash Wednesday 2017. Many churches offer ashes at train stations, on sidewalks and in other locations outside the church as well as in traditional worship services on Ash Wednesday, which in 2019 falls on March 6.

the parish resumed the use of its legal name, St. David's Episcopal Church.

Opat was very familiar with how the neighbors thought. His parents still live in his childhood home, seven minutes away. His mother was one of the faithful remnants of St. David's, along with a half-dozen other relatives.

As a middle schooler, Opat had felt at home at St. David's, "which was evangelical then, almost Pentecostal," he said. "Our youth group would play games and go to the pizza shop. In that evangelical model, I gave my life to the Lord

then, which I have a broader view of now."

Opat needed a broad view as a priest facing a broken congregation of St. David's size that also had a burdensome mortgage.

A turnaround starts

"I felt hopeless," recalled Jen Yoon, perhaps the most invested remaining member at St. David's. She directed its preschool (St. David's Christian Early Learning Center) and its children's ministries. "We had so few people, and it was going to take so much."

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Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS

Donnell Guynn, a member of St. Luke's in the Meadow Episcopal Church in Fort Worth, Texas, offers hot sausage biscuits to a mother and her children during a recent Coffee on the Corner morning.

Texas church serves 'Coffee on the Corner'

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

When you look out the window of your church and see kids and their parents walking past every morning on their way to neighborhood schools and a school bus stop, what comes to mind?

"We figured that there might be needs that we might be able to plug into," said the Rev. Karen

Calafat, rector of St. Luke's in the Meadow Episcopal Church in Fort Worth, Texas. She and some parishioners had some ideas, but they didn't know whether those ideas would be helpful. "We were just looking for a way to connect, find out what their needs are and see if there was any way we could partner with them," Calafat said.

That's when their discovery that middle school students needed college logo T-shirts led

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CONVERSATIONS

What can we tell our children in today's world?

Editor's note: This speech was delivered in January 2018 on Founders' Day at St. Catherine's Episcopal School. It is reprinted here, with permission, because the issues Andrea Byrd addresses concerning racism and raising children still resonate. Byrd is an alumna (class of 2006) and assistant to the dean at St. Catherine's, a girls' school in Richmond, Va., founded in 1890. The first black student was admitted to St. Catherine's in 1968.



By Andrea Byrd

LAST AUGUST [2017], just before the school year began, white supremacists held a rally about an hour away from us in Charlottesville, Va. On that Saturday morning, I was spending time with one of my St. Catherine's classmates in Boston when I received an alert on my phone regarding the Charlottesville rally. Later, I learned that there were several injuries and three deaths: a young woman named Heather Heyer and two state troopers — Lieutenant Jay Cullen and Trooper-Pilot Berke Bates.

In those first hours, I thought of my father, who was in college during the civil rights era. I wondered if, for him, it reopened wounds of growing up in the Jim Crow south of North Carolina. I wondered why, 50 years later, I was sharing a similar experience.

I worried about the possibility of another rally in Richmond. For the first time in my life, I thought about what I would do if white nationalists or the Klan were to march or congregate near my apartment. These were not the men of my father's era: men clothed in white sheets. These men were armed with bulletproof vests and AR-15's.

I also thought of our students at St. Catherine's. First, I hoped that none of them were near the violence that erupted

that morning. Then I wondered how I could support them once school began.

Our girls are growing up in a politically turbulent time. We can't and shouldn't ignore what is going on outside our school walls. These current events are going to shape and influence our students for the rest of their lives.

One thing that we as educators have the ability to do is make sure St. Catherine's remains a place where our girls feel comfortable. That no matter what is going on outside of this campus, our girls will feel like St. Catherine's is their second home. That when our girls see violent and unsettling events happening around them, they know they can trust us to help them reflect on a good, moral and just life.

But for all the external turbulence our girls are witness to, there are also internal struggles. How do we support our girls when it seems that many are stressed, sleep deprived, over-caffeinated and over-medicated? Our girls spend hours of screen time on apps like Snapchat and Instagram. How do you explain to a teenage girl that being popular on Instagram is the equivalent of being rich in the game Monopoly?

Simply, we must support our girls through our actions. Show our girls that we truly care for their well-being. Keep our classrooms and offices open so that students feel comfortable in approaching teachers and staff with problems both at school and home. We owe our girls that much. At this particular age, our girls just need a listening ear, especially when they don't always feel comfortable speaking to their parents.

In 2018, how would "Miss Jennie" [school founder Virginia Randolph Ellett] want us to support our girls? Miss Jennie founded St. Catherine's during another tumultuous time in Richmond. While the city was being rebuilt physically, Miss Jennie saw the need to edu-

How do you explain to a teenage girl that being popular on Instagram is the equivalent of being rich in the game Monopoly?

cate women of intellectual and spiritual strength. She looked ahead and realized that, despite the current circumstances, women's education was important.

Better yet, she knew her worth. At 33 years old, Miss Jennie knew that women were capable of learning and eventually attending college. She truly was a revolutionary in her time. Miss Jennie also knew that educating women included more than just studying from books. Educating the mind, body and spirit was critical to the success of young women.

In researching more about Miss Jennie's life, I thought of Sarah in the Old Testament. Sarah was the wife of Abraham, who was unable to have children. God spoke to Sarah, reminding her to be patient and to have faith that one day she would bear a child. At 90 years old, she bore a son named Isaac.

While Miss Jennie did not marry or have children of her own, she has thousands of "daughters" throughout Virginia, the country and the world. Her faith and determination have allowed many decades of women to receive a well-rounded education. I am one of them. Miss Jennie understood that doing what is right requires the will to be faithful, not the will to be popular.

I'm sure Miss Jennie looked to Scriptures in the Bible such as Proverbs 31:25: "She is clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs without fear of the future." And Psalm 46:5: "God is within her, she will not fall."

It may have seemed unlikely in 1890 that I would be one of Miss Jennie's daughters. I was raised in rural North Carolina and arrived at St. Catherine's as a boarder in the ninth grade. My family's history in Richmond goes back to 1743, when one of my ancestors was sold as a slave in downtown Richmond, just two miles away from where I live now. These intersections in time have led me to where I am now — with the honor of speaking to you here, to commemorate our school's founding.

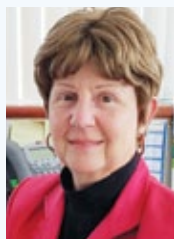
As we continue through the second semester of the school year, I challenge you to reach out to our girls who seem lost or misunderstood. Encourage them. Challenge them. Inspire them. Love them.

Keeping in mind the spirit of Miss Jennie, I would ask that you lift your hearts and minds. I hope that the following prayers can be imprinted on your hearts:

"Lord, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ.

"God our Father, you see your children growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." ■

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



HUMAN (AND RELIGIOUS) life contains a multitude of stories. Some are short and come to a nice, neat end. Others stretch over a long span of time, developing and changing and revealing new truths.

One such long story is the multi-hued tale of race in America, and one of those chapters involves the Episcopal Church. The 2018 General Convention set racial reconciliation as a top priority of the church, and many churches and dioceses have been examining their history and ties to slavery and segregation.

Our stories in this issue that focus on race take place in Virginia, where a church dropped the name of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, and in Alabama, where a church removed a pew associated with Confederate President Jefferson Davis. As proof that vast differences remain between North and South in this country, this Northerner did not realize there were many Confederate memorials still extant in the South until the question of what they were commemorating burst into the public

consciousness in the past few years.

Although the South, as the physical location of most slaves, is wrestling with a most urgent and painful legacy, the North doesn't get off so easily, either. Our story about a New York church that is pressing for bail reform notes that incarceration disproportionately affects communities of color — and that's a nationwide issue.

Northern churches, also, are acknowledging the former upstairs "slave galleries" in their worship spaces and examining whether profits from the slave trade built their sanctuaries. One of the people working on the Episcopal Church's racial reconciliation initiative is Katrina Browne, who discovered that her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history and made a film about it — "Traces of the Trade."

The church is living proof of Southern writer William Faulkner's quote about history: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Considering that the Episcopal Church elected its first black presiding bishop, Michael Curry, only four years ago, the church will be writing many more chapters in this story. ■

Episcopal JOURNAL

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Editor Emeritus: Jerrold Hames

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Advertising: Shanley + Associates, LLC

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

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

NEWS

Virginia bishop addresses political scandals

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Diocese of Virginia Suffragan Bishop Susan Goff issued a statement Feb. 12 about the series of political scandals that have engulfed the state, which, Goff said, provide Episcopalians an opportunity to “take a close look at our own lives” and to repent.

“This scandal invites us to confess the ways we have fallen short of the image of God that is in us and to repent, to turn around and act in a different way,” Goff said. “The political realities of this current moment in our commonwealth are complex, but our faith response is not. Out of our own confession and repentance, we can call for the repentance of our leaders.”

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam has faced widespread calls to resign over the revelation that he wore blackface in the 1980s, a scandal sparked by the discovery of a photo on his medical school yearbook page showing someone in blackface standing beside another person dressed as a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Northam, a white Democrat, has said he intends to stay in office.

The political uproar has spread to

include other top Virginia leaders. Two women have accused Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, who is black, of sexual assault. Two additional white politicians in the state, one a Democrat and the other a Republican, have admitted their own experiences wearing or promoting blackface decades ago.



Northam

Blackface’s roots date to the pre-Civil War era, when white performers in the North and South darkened their skin to spoof black characters, often using exaggerated features and gestures to depict demeaning stereotypes of black appearance and behavior. The tradition, which persisted into the 20th century in everything from pop culture to college parties, is widely condemned today as racist.

“After World War II, black Americans, by dint of a long struggle, finally managed to shame white Americans into not doing blackface anymore. And then other ethnic groups continued shaming white Americans into not doing other kinds of ethnic face since then,” John Strausbaugh, author of “Black Like You,” said in an interview with Vox. “Certainly by the 1960s, blackface had become one of the few very absolute taboos in American culture.”

In the Diocese of Virginia, Goff has



“This current scandal provides us an opportunity to examine not only the lives of our political leaders, but to take a close look at our own lives.”

— Bishop Susan Goff

taken on the role of ecclesiastical authority while the diocese seeks a successor for Bishop Shannon Johnston, who stepped down last year. The diocese encompasses 38 counties in the northeast third of the state, including suburban Washington, D.C.

In her Feb. 12 statement, Goff, who is white, alluded to “the painful legacy of racism in our nation.”

“White American culture once not only tolerated white people donning blackface, but embraced it as a form of entertainment. Yet it was always hurtful, demeaning and insulting to people of African descent,” Goff said. “What was accepted back then was not acceptable, and it is not acceptable now.”

The Episcopal Church has identified racial reconciliation and healing as one of its three top priorities, in addition to evangelism and creation care, under Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, the church’s first African-American leader. General Convention in 2015 placed such racial healing work in the context of the church’s decades-old efforts to confront its historic complicity in the sin of racism during the eras of slavery and segregation. Additional resolutions

targeting racism were approved in 2018.

Becoming Beloved Community, a framework launched in 2017, has become the church’s cornerstone initiative on racial reconciliation, symbolized by a labyrinth with four parts: “Telling the Truth,” “Proclaiming the Dream,” “Practicing the Way” and “Repairing the Breach.”

The core questions under the heading “Telling the Truth” include, “What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing?” Goff echoed that question in her message about the Virginia scandals.

“We as people of faith, no matter what our race, gender or ethnicity, promise in our baptismal vows to respect the dignity of every human being. We also know the power of confession, so much so that we engage in the practice regularly,” Goff said. “This current scandal provides us an opportunity to examine not only the lives of our political leaders, but to take a close look at our own lives.”

“When have we done or said things that have diminished the dignity of others? In what activities have we engaged that were once accepted, but never acceptable?” ■

Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday to be observed on March 10

By Episcopal Journal

Looking toward the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, March 6, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has invited Episcopalians to observe Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday on March 10.

“As we follow in the footsteps of Jesus this Lent, we know that living out God’s love for the world is our ultimate goal,” said Curry. “I invite all congregations to devote a Sunday in Lent to reflect on the life-giving work of Episcopal Relief & Development and to demonstrate God’s love by giving meaningfully to this vital ministry.”

The 2009 General Convention designated Lent as a time for dioceses, congregations, and individuals to remember and support the work of Episcopal Relief & Development. Although the first Sunday in Lent is the official day of observance, churches may hold a special service on any Sunday. For additional information and to download a planning guide, visit www.episcopalrelief.org/Sunday.

This year, Episcopal Relief & Development celebrates 15 years of Lenten Meditations with selections from previous years. These booklets and other resources including hope chests, pew en-



Episcopal Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

velopes, bulletin inserts and prayers are available at www.episcopalrelief.org/Lent. Supporters may sign up for daily e-mail meditations in English and Spanish.

“There is no greater support for the work of Episcopal Relief & Development than when faithful people remember our partners, program participants and staff in their prayers,” said Episcopal Relief & Development President & CEO Rob Radtke. “We are thankful for all the congregations and individuals who choose to join us in observing Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday.”

For more than 75 years, Episcopal Relief & Development has worked with supporters and partners for lasting change around the world. Each year, the organization responds to the needs of more than 3 million people struggling with hunger, poverty, disaster and disease. It currently focuses its programs on three areas: women, children and climate. ■

Curry urges support for Good Friday Offering

Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry called upon Episcopalians to support ministry in Jerusalem and the Middle East by responding to the annual special offering on Good Friday, which this year falls on April 19.

“The Good Friday offering of our church is one way to help connect the love of Christ on the cross with our support of the ongoing ministry of love and compassion carried out by our Anglican sisters and brothers throughout the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East,” Curry said in a letter to the clergy of the Episcopal Church.

“Whether funding a hospital in Gaza or the West Bank, or an eye clinic in Aden or women’s programs or summer camps and leadership training for young people, the Good Friday offer-

ing is making a difference in the lives of so many. I have witnessed this Jesus-inspired compassion and commitment at work with my own eyes. I believe our partnership with those who keep the faith of Jesus alive in the region where our Lord walked and began his movement is a significant aspect of our work as part of the church catholic,” he wrote.

In his Good Friday letter, Curry asked each bishop and congregation to consider providing assistance for the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

Information, including bulletin covers and bulletin inserts on the offering, is available at www.episcopalchurch.org (search Good Friday offering resources).

For more information, contact the Rev. Canon Robert Edmunds, Episcopal Church Middle East partnership officer, at redmunds@episcopalchurch.org. ■



EPISCOPAL LIVES

Three dioceses elect new bishops

The Rev. **Thomas James Brown** was elected Feb. 9 to become the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Maine. The rector of the Episcopal Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester, Mass., he was elected on the third ballot from among five nominees. Brown will become the Episcopal Church's only openly gay and married bishop currently leading a diocese. He is married to the Rev. Thomas Mousin, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Charlestown, a neighborhood of Boston.



Brown

Brown has served as rector of St. Michael Episcopal Church in Brattleboro, Vt., and as the director of alumni and church relations at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. He is chair of the Church Pension Fund's board of trustees.

Pending consent of a majority of the church's bishops with jurisdiction and the diocesan standing committees, Brown will be ordained and consecrated on June 22. He will succeed Bishop Stephen T. Lane, who has served the diocese since 2008 and will retire in June.



Traquair



Snook

The Rev. **Megan M. Traquair** was elected the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Northern California on Feb. 9. The canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of Arizona, she was elected on the third ballot from among four candidates. She and her husband, Philip, have two adult children.

Pending the required consents, she will be ordained and consecrated on June 29.

The Diocese of San Diego elected the Rev. Canon **Susan Brown Snook** as its fifth diocesan bishop on Feb. 2. She was elected on the first ballot from among three candidates.

Brown Snook is the canon for church growth and development in the Diocese of Oklahoma. She previously served as a church planter in Scottsdale, Ariz. She authored "God Gave the Growth: Church Planting in the Episcopal Church" and co-founded the Acts 8 Movement, a group dedicated to proclaiming resurrection in the Episcopal Church. In a previous career, she was a certified public accountant.

Pending required consents, she will be ordained and consecrated June 15.

— ENS, the dioceses of Northern California and San Diego

OBITUARIES

Patricia Mordecai

Patricia "Pat" Carson (Nason) Mordecai, 80, of Scarborough, Maine, died peacefully at Gosnell Memorial Hospice Home on Feb. 7 from cancer. She was predeceased by her husband of 28 years, Donald D. Mordecai.

Born in Orange, N.J., and brought up in New Rochelle, N.Y., she had a lifelong career with the Episcopal Church at various levels, including at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass.; the Diocese of Massachusetts; and St. Albans Church in Washington, D.C. From 1998 until her retirement in 2006, she served as the chief operating officer of the Episcopal Church at the church center in New York.



Mordecai

"The chief operating officer exercises a ministry of care and oversight on behalf of the presiding bishop. I can think of no one more suited to that task than Pat Mordecai. Her previous diocesan, seminary and parish experience, together with her well-developed ability to balance close attention to the proper working of the systems under her charge with respect and care for those engaged in the work at hand, made her the right person at the right time," said former Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold.

Gregory Howe

The Rev. Gregory Michael Howe, eighth custodian of the Book of Common Prayer, died on Jan. 12, nine days after his 80th birthday, in Provincetown, Mass.

Howe's interest in liturgy was honed

in childhood, growing up at St. Ignatius of Antioch in New York, then serving as a boy chorister at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. He was ordained a deacon in 1964 and a priest in 1965.

A longtime deputy to General Convention (1975-1997), he served on the Committee on Prayer Book and Liturgy and helped craft many new rites and see them through the legislative process. In 2000, then-Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold appointed him custodian of the prayer book, a position he held until 2015. He oversaw authorized translations of the 1979 prayer book into various languages and contributed to "Gleanings: Essays on Expansive Language with Prayers for Various Occasions."

Howe and his wife of 50 years, Bernice, retired to Provincetown in 1998, where he was active in the Episcopal Parish of St. Mary of the Harbor.

— Episcopal News Service

BISHOP TRANSITIONS

Alabama bishop to retire

Diocese of Alabama Bishop John McKee Sloan announced in a Feb. 9 diocesan convention address that he would step down as the diocesan bishop at the end of 2020.



Sloan

"I have loved being your bishop, and I still do. I'm not mad at anybody, I haven't lost my faith, I'm not quitting in a huff, and I'm not being run out of town. It's just time. By 2020, I will have been married to the woman of my dreams for 33 years and will have been ordained for more than 39 years," he said. "I will have served as a bishop for 13 years and as your bishop diocesan for nine." It's time, he said, "to find some new adventures."

Sloan said the process of nominating and electing the next bishop of Alabama will likely take a about one year and a half. After the election, there will be a few months of transition, he said.

— Diocese of Alabama

Chicago's Lee to retire

Diocese of Chicago Bishop Jeffrey D. Lee announced Feb. 14 that he would retire in August 2020 and called for the election of his successor.

Lee was ordained in February 2008 to lead a diocese that comprises 33,000 people in more than 120 congregations in northern and west central Illinois. His tenure included the reunification of the dioceses of Chicago and Quincy and a major renovation of St. James Commons, the diocesan headquarters in downtown Chicago, that created a venue for retreats and meetings called the Nicholas Center.

Under Lee, the diocese conducted an examination of the legacy of slavery in its common life and supported the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender queer Christians in the sacramental and ministerial life of the church and policies to stem the tide of



Lee

gun violence in the region and across the country. Through advocacy and personal support, members of the diocese also worked against the persecution and marginalization of immigrants and refugees.

— Diocese of Chicago

Southern Va. bishop retires

Diocese of Southern Virginia Bishop Herman Hollerith IV retired on Dec. 31. Elected in September 2008, he was ordained and consecrated the diocese's 10th bishop on Feb. 13, 2009. The election of a new bishop is scheduled for Sept. 21.

Hollerith served as a member of the board of the College for Bishops, the House of Bishops Committee on Pastoral Development, the Disciplinary Board for Bishops and the board of the Berkeley Divinity School, the Episcopal seminary at Yale University.

Hollerith undertook a significant diocesan reorganization during his tenure, including the relocation of the diocesan office. He led the diocese in responding to slavery and racism, establishing the Repairers of the Breach Task Force and issuing a formal apology on the diocese's behalf at a service of Repentance, Reconciliation & Healing in 2013. Hollerith supported the full inclusion of LGBTQ Christians in the life of the church, establishing the Living a Holy Life Task Force to foster conversation throughout the diocese around issues of human sexuality.

— Diocese of Southern Virginia

Bishop search extended

Minnesota Bishop Brian N. Prior and Deborah Brown, president of the diocesan standing committee, issued a joint statement Jan. 23 extending the timeline for the church's bishop search.

The election of the 10th bishop for the Episcopal Church in Minnesota has been rescheduled from September 2019 to Jan. 25, 2020.

On Sept. 25, Prior announced he planned to step down after nearly a decade of service leading the Episcopal Church in

Minnesota. He will continue to serve as bishop until his successor is consecrated.

— Episcopal Church in Minnesota

Long Island names assisting bishop



Franklin

Bishop R. William Franklin of Tonawanda, N.Y., will become an assisting bishop in the Diocese of Long Island, announced Long Island Bishop Lawrence Provenzano on Feb. 11.

Franklin is serving as diocesan bishop of Western New York until April. He previously served churches in Philadelphia and Rome, as well as being associate director of the American Academy in Rome, associate priest of the Anglican Centre in Rome, dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, and professor at General Theological Seminary in New York and St. John's University in Minnesota.

"[H]e will focus on the formation ministry of the Mercer School of Theology, Sunday parish visitations and support for clergy and lay leaders," Provenzano said in an announcement on the diocesan website. "He will join Bishop Daniel Allotey and Bishop Johnny Itty in assisting roles, while Bishop Geraldyn Wolf will continue to serve as the assistant bishop of Long Island."

— Diocese of Long Island

Waggoner to assist in Nevada



Waggoner

Retired Diocese of Spokane Bishop James Edward Waggoner Jr. will serve as assisting bishop in the Diocese of Nevada beginning April 1. Waggoner will continue living in Spokane, where he served from 2000 to 2017, and will assist in Nevada on a quarter-time schedule.

Waggoner's assisting in Nevada is part of the diocese's discernment after it postponed an election scheduled for November 2018 with a three-person slate. He will continue in that role until the diocese elects its 11th bishop.

— The Living Church

AROUND THE CHURCH

Court of review upholds retired Los Angeles bishop's suspension

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

An Episcopal Church court has concluded that retired Diocese of Los Angeles Bishop J. Jon Bruno was properly suspended from ordained ministry for three years because of misconduct.



Bruno

pret or apply the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, nor did it commit a procedural error" or engage in a decision-making process contrary to the church's Title IV canons on clergy discipline, it said.

"We believe the decision reached in the Bishop Bruno matter is just, but no cause for celebration in any quarter," Maine Bishop Stephen Lane, court president, said in a press release. "We hope the decision brings clarity to the canonical requirements by which we govern ourselves, will promote healing and reconciliation, and will be helpful to dioceses and bishops in their ministries."

In its order, the court said that, as bishops, they were "sympathetic to the fact that bishops diocesan are on the front line, with many irons in the fire, juggling numerous decisions on a daily basis for the overall benefit of their diocese. It is not an easy job." The bishops said they had a "formidable task" in passing judgment on a bishop "who has devoted years of his life to the church."

However, the bishops said, Bruno did not claim he was wrongly found to have taken certain actions but, instead, focused on technicalities to get his sentence set aside. "This is contrary to the canons, which are supposed to focus on justice and reconciliation," they said.

Bruno retired from the Diocese of Los Angeles at the end of November 2017, after serving as bishop diocesan since Feb. 1, 2002. Episcopal Church

bishops retain their episcopal order after retirement. He was succeeded by Bishop John Taylor. Meanwhile, the St. James congregation returned to its church on April 8, 2018, after being barred from worshiping there for nearly three years because of the dispute.

Bruno has no further avenue for appeal, Lane told Episcopal News Service.

Taylor issued a statement late on Feb. 1 saying, "I give thanks that the Court of Review decision brings to an end the official narrative of these difficult years for the Diocese of Los Angeles, Jon and Mary Bruno and their family and colleagues, and the people of St. James Episcopal Church.

"But our reconciliation narrative is still being written. With the healing phase coming up soon, we will have ample opportunity to share our feelings with one another, acknowledging pain and brokenness and encouraging healing."

He called for prayers for all who had been hurt in the conflict. "Let us envision together a diocesan community of renewed collaboration and coopera-

tion, of restored relationship and mutual care," he said. "Let us commit ourselves to the spirit of unity amid difference and to rebuilding sturdy bonds of affection that will again enable our church to show a better way forward to a polarizing world."

The Court of Review met in Atlanta in late September to hear oral arguments by the parties. The court's decision was crafted over the next eight weeks, and the members of the court reviewed the decision and signed off over the weeks since Christmas, according to the release.

The members of the Court of Review for this appeal, in addition to Lane, were Connecticut Suffragan Bishop Laura Ahrens, Nebraska Bishop Scott Barker, Montana Bishop Franklin Brookhart, retired Diocese of East Carolina Bishop Clifton Daniels, retired Western Kansas Bishop Michael Milliken and Kentucky Bishop Terry White. Two other members (Diocese of New York Assisting Bishop Mary Glasspool and Diocese of Florida Bishop John Howard) recused themselves before the appeal was heard, Lane said. ■

The Court of Review for Bishops said it made the three-year suspension retroactive to Aug. 2, 2017, the day a hearing panel originally recommended the sentence, rather than with the court's Jan. 31 order.

The case against Bruno involved his unsuccessful 2015 attempt to sell the property of what was then known as St. James the Great in Newport Beach, Calif., to a condominium developer for \$15 million in cash. That effort prompted some St. James members to bring misconduct allegations against Bruno, alleging he violated church law.

The hearing panel conducted three days of testimony on those allegations in March 2017. Bruno subsequently tried to sell the property while the panel considered how to rule on the case. That attempt earned Bruno two ministerial restrictions from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

"The majority of the factual determinations of the hearing panel are supported by substantial evidence when viewed as a whole in light of the record on appeal," the court said in its order. The hearing panel "did not erroneously inter-

University president retiring

Everett B. Ward announced Jan. 25 that he would retire on July 24 after five years as president of Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh, N.C.

Ward was the 11th president and third alumnus of the historically black institution to lead the university.

Under Ward's leadership, the university was removed from probationary status by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Accreditation Agency in December. Donor supporter increased from \$1 million in 2014 to \$2.9 million in 2018.

Founded in 1867 by the Diocese of North Carolina, the mission of Saint Augustine's University is to sustain a learning community in which students can prepare academically, socially and spiritually for leadership in a complex, diverse and rapidly changing world.

— Saint Augustine's University



Ward

Historical award offered

Application deadline is May 1 for the inaugural Robert W. Prichard Prize of the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church (HSEC). The prize aims to recognize the best Ph.D., Th.D. or D. Phil dissertation that has considered the history of the Episcopal Church (including in the 17th- and 18th-century British colonies that became the United States) as well as the wider Anglican church.

Dissertations successfully defended between Jan. 1, 2016, and Dec. 31, 2018, are eligible. The winner will receive \$2,000 and make a submission to the society's journal, *Anglican and Episcopal History*. For details, visit hsec.us/grants.

— HSEC



George named honorary canon

In recognition of her decades of service to the Diocese of Mississippi and the Episcopal Church, Anita Parrott George was named an honorary canon to the Cathedral Church of St. Andrew in Jackson, Miss., at the 192nd Annual Council, which met in Hattiesburg Jan. 25-27.

George is a lifelong Episcopalian and a Mississippi native who co-chairs the Task Force on Racial Reconciliation in the Diocese of Mississippi. She also was an advisory board vice chair for the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi.

She was elected to serve as a deputy to General Convention seven times and was involved in much of the church's anti-racism work. George also served two terms on Executive Council. — Diocese of Mississippi



Mississippi Bishop Brian Seage presents Anita Parrott George with a certificate designating her as an honorary canon of the Cathedral Church of St. Andrew in Jackson.

Application period open for Roanridge Trust Grants

Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Dioceses, congregations and Episcopal-related organizations and institutions are invited to apply for the 2019 Roanridge Trust Grant Awards. The deadline to apply is April 30.

The annual grants support creative models of leadership development, training and ministries in small towns and rural communities across the Episcopal Church. Awards generally range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and are given to help equip leaders who serve as catalysts for civil and social well-being in rural municipalities where the community is uniquely interwoven with the vitality of the local church.

"These awards affirm the rich gifts and unique witness at work in rural Episcopal communities. They are a key piece of the 'Jesus Movement' in building

leaders who sustain hope, health and creativity in what can be overlooked or under-resourced localities," said Melanie Mullen, Episcopal Church director of reconciliation, justice and creation care. "Roanridge Trust Grant recipients annually represent the great potential, diversity, and Jesus-rooted resilience in rural America."

More information, application and instructions are in English and Spanish at www.episcopalchurch.org. Although previous recipients are eligible to apply, priority is given to new applicants.

The Roanridge Trust was established by the Cochel family, who originally gave a working farm in Missouri called Roanridge to the Episcopal Church. Income from the trust generates the grant funds.

For more information, contact Ann Hercules at ahercules@episcopalchurch.org. ■

NEWS

PITTSBURGH continued from page 1

She was apprehensive about Opat and the direction he was heading theologically.

"I had heard a lot of stories about Episcopalians from the Anglican [ACNA] church — one side of the story — and I was praying about my commitment to a church family where people had acted terribly and decided they couldn't be together," Yoon said. "What came to me through nights of painful prayer was to let go of any and all labels or thoughts of Anglicans versus Episcopalians and get back to what this is really about: telling people about the love of Christ.

"I spoke with Kris because I wanted to know: Does he believe in one God and Father, salvation in Jesus Christ and the continued work of the Holy Spirit? We had a frank conversation around those three questions, and our beliefs very much aligned with each other. Kris was clear that we would become a place of community."

Others stayed at St. David's despite or because of family concerns.

Sam White had been baptized, raised and confirmed at St. David's. He worshipped in the ACNA congregation and decided "to see if The Episcopal Church seemed a little more aligned with the attitudes I remembered learning at church during my youth." That choice put him at odds with his parents, with whom he was living at the time; they left with the ACNA parish. White is now senior warden of St. David's.

Logistics made member Jamie Sticha decide to stay. "I did consider leaving, and it was a difficult time," she said. "With four young kids, I felt it would be more difficult to make it to church because we'd have to be ready a half hour earlier."

To fan the small ember that was his parish, Opat worked alongside Hays the first 18 months before being appointed priest-in-charge. With no altar guild and no readers, Opat did whatever was needed Sunday mornings, even playing guitar with the band.

"They were traumatized, shell-shocked, so we didn't ask the laypeople to do more. They needed to engage in healing," Hays said. "Kris was extremely active in recruiting a vestry and focusing on Sunday morning. But number one, he loved the people. He was demonstrating to them through faithfulness to the Scripture, and just that sense of warmth and connecting that he has, that they could be comfortable with us. He was what we call the non-anxious presence that reassures people that it's going to be okay."

By end of first year, about 75 people were coming to the big church that everyone passes on a main thoroughfare. Some families attend after first experi-

encing the community through the preschool. About a dozen returned from the ACNA congregation. "We are open about anyone coming back," Opat said.

St. David's discovered what it could — and could not — be about. These lessons brought the parish out of the ashes and bucked the trend of Episcopal churches losing visitors and members. Here are some of those positive steps taken by the congregation:

Welcoming children to the table. The last Sunday service each month is a Godly Play sermon, and Opat invites children to the table to help break the bread and learn the responses to the Eucharistic prayer.

Emphasizing love in small actions. Instead of "please be," Opat uses "invite." This makes the service "feel more like an act of worship rather than an obligation," said White, the senior warden.

Accepting less programming. "Our culture is not about doing a lot of stuff," said Yoon, who now directs children's ministries. "Our families are busy, and they don't have extra time for weekday commitments."

Welcoming community groups (which also helps pay the mortgage on the new building erected in 2001). St. David's is also home to tutoring, music lessons and exercise classes. An evangelical Presbyterian church meets there, too.



Photo/courtesy of St. David's

Welcoming children to participate in St. David's services has helped spark the congregation's rebirth after all but 20 members decamped. The Rev. Kris Opat, center, attended St. David's as a teenager.

Using extra land to feed local people. Opat and an Eagle Scout built a community garden that produces peppers, green beans, zucchini and more — all of which goes to a local food bank.

Hosting a weekly farmer's market. With a group of moms from St. David's and others who live nearby, Opat organized local growers and makers to set up in St. David's parking lot. Today his mom runs it, and hundreds of shoppers take part weekly.

Engineering a path to ministry

Opat's resilience was strengthened at Grove City College, where education "is also about learning how to serve others while pursuing your own life's work," as the school's website states. Those paths didn't converge right away when Opat studied engineering there. He wanted to switch to philosophy, but that idea didn't



Photo/courtesy of St. David's

St. David's Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Pittsburgh is a growing parish with almost 300 members who have no previous Episcopal ties. It rebuilt after a theological split in the diocese.

fly with his mother. His ministry took root when a summer leadership internship involved planting a successful house church.

From there, Opat became involved with Three Nails, then a part of the emergent church movement in Pittsburgh and accountable to the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In 2005, it was described as a fellowship of believers that cut across denominational lines and incorporated Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox and Jewish liturgies in its services. The group had no regular meeting place, gathering instead in homes, coffee shops, bars and old church buildings.

That experience led him to seminary, at what was then called Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, in Ambridge, Pa., and the frontline of a theological battleground over the ordination of the Rev. Gene Robinson, the first priest in an openly gay relationship to be consecrated a bishop in a major Christian denomination. Robinson's consecration fueled the Pittsburgh split.

"In my ordination class of 12, I was the only one who stayed in the Episcopal Church," Opat recalled. Today, the seminary has dropped "Episcopal" from its name and uses the tagline "an evangelical seminary in the Anglican tradition."

"It was about taking a side more than it was theology," Opat said. "If there is any Christian tradition that splits over anything but the creeds, that splitting makes so little sense in the Episcopal tradition, which is about space and room to disagree. I wanted to be part of what was diverse, open to nuance and the Holy Spirit doing things in our midst and the tradition of scripture and faith — but not in a dogmatic and unquestioned way."

At St. David's, Opat routinely states that he doesn't have all the answers. His interpretation of the Bible, while informed by his professional studies of the text, may not be the only one, he says. He constantly invites the parishioners to discussions outside the service.

When the theological argument over same-sex relationships cropped up at St. David's, Opat's response was based in compassion.

"We had a preteen program for kids in our parish and others who don't go here, and a conservative mom had words with Kris about homosexual marriage," Yoon said. "Calmly and respectfully, he didn't back down. He agonized for days about that because he knows that people hurt in a lot of different ways, and he doesn't like to have anyone walk away, to not come to solution."

Moving forward

Today, St. David's is the seventh largest of the 36 participating congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. Almost all of the legal disputes with the breakaway Anglican congregations have been settled. "While acknowledging our deep differences, both sides have been concerned with seeking the highest degree of relationship possible, in the hope of reducing the scandal to the Gospel posed by the split," said Pittsburgh Bishop Dorsey McConnell in early 2018, as the diocese reached an ongoing agreement with nine ACNA congregations concerning their use of church properties.

(On Dec. 4, a judge approved the agreement, clearing the final legal requirement for it to go into effect. Under the agreement, the diocese and the ACNA parishes commit to treat each other's missions with respect. The parishes will continue to maintain, insure and pay for the operations of property held by the diocese before the division, and pay an annual fee to the diocese. If a dispute arises, the diocese and parishes agree "to resolve the dispute promptly as fellow Christians through direct exchange of information and discourse.")

St. David's story, as told on its website, says, "Since the split, St. David's has experienced a wonderful renaissance. The conflict and uncertainty are over and a stable, warm, and inviting spirit has taken root. In this welcoming environment we are growing and flourishing."

For Opat, his calling isn't denominational.

"I'm not super-interested in making them [people at St. David's] Episcopal," he said. "I want them to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus. When I stand in the pulpit, I say, 'Yeah, this is what we believe, and I have not been sure what to make of it either. But I've not found a story more satisfying and real in its experience than this one, with its room for questioning and uncertainty and whatever you bring to it.'" ■

Michelle Hiskey is an Atlanta-based freelance writer.

NEWS

San Diego Episcopalians continue aiding asylum seekers

By Lynette Wilson
Episcopal News Service

When U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement last fall alerted the San Diego Rapid Response Network it would begin releasing asylum seekers — including families with children — onto the streets, the county's interfaith and social and human rights organizations responded by setting up temporary shelters.

"A rapid-response team here in San Diego brings asylum seekers who've been released by border officials to a shelter, provides food and medical attention, and assists the asylum seekers in arranging transportation to family members or others who will host them while their cases are adjudicated," said San Diego Assisting Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, adding that the adjudication process sometimes takes years.

Good Samaritan Episcopal Church was one of many churches that stepped up to identify immediate needs such as food, clothing, diapers and cash assistance. The church began accepting clothing and other donations in late October. It has continued to receive donations daily; once a week, an average

10-12 interfaith volunteers sort them by size and wearability.

"We felt it was the right thing to do," said Carol Hamilton, Good Samaritan's outreach chair. "One of the most beautiful things for us is that it has drawn in other faith communities."

In the three years that the Rev. Janine Schenone has served as rector, she's encouraged the congregation to get more involved in social justice and outreach, said Hamilton.

At first, said Schenone, some congregants worried that the church was helping undocumented immigrants. But when it became clear that they were assisting people seeking legal entry into the United States through the asylum process, they got behind it, she said.

Good Samaritan has assisted some 6,000 asylum seekers since October, when ICE began releasing large numbers into communities without a support system. That was when Good Samaritan and other partners in the San Diego Rapid Response Network mobilized.



Photo/Lynette Wilson/ENS
Good Samaritan Senior Warden Penny Powell and the Rev. Janine Schenone, rector, sort through clothing donations.

Shelters offer asylum seekers a place to find food, rest, a shower and clothing before boarding buses and airplanes to unite with family across the country, said Schenone, who has used her discretionary fund to provide cash to families traveling to other parts of the country.

"You can't just stick people on the bus without food, diapers, money," she said. "The real heroes are the [volunteers] who were showing up at the bus station."

From the time of initial need, the

interfaith community advocated for a crisis declaration, hoping the government would assist the way it did in 2016 when a surge of Haitian asylum seekers crossed the border, said Kevin Malone, executive director of the San Diego Organizing Project, a non-partisan, multi-faith network of 28 congregations in San Diego County.

"[Former California] Gov. [Jerry] Brown opened up the armory to process a lot of people really fast. But it's a completely different crisis; they are not moving thousands across in a short

period ... It's been 50 to 70 a day for a long time, and in a way that leaves them on the street."

"Without us, they would have added to the homeless population — people were coming across with no money — and that would have been awful," said Malone.

After the network's temporary shelter was forced to move four times because of safety concerns, on Jan. 29 the San

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to the Friday morning Coffee on the Corner, a six-week experiment that began in September and has continued ever since.

Calafat and St. Luke's member Donnell Guynn recently explained that trajectory one chilly Friday while serving coffee, cocoa, sausage biscuits and other treats. At a meeting with counselors at nearby Middlebrook Middle School, parishioners learned that the students needed the shirts for those days when they came to school out of uniform or on special days when they can wear such logo shirts.

That finding coincided with the church's yard sale, so volunteers culled all the college logo T-shirts from the donations and gave them to the middle school. "It just started the conversation," Calafat said.

At the same time, the parish was hosting another kind of dialogue, sponsored by Living Room Conversations, a non-profit organization that helps people who disagree find ways to work together and respect each other. Last July, the monthly gathering at St. Luke's discussed refugee families and the Trump administration's zero-tolerance immigration policy.

Eight "brave women" were present, Calafat said, and they decided that, while they knew little about refugees, they knew there were immigrants in their neighborhood. The women wanted to find a way to tell their neighbors that



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS
The Rev. Karen Calafat, rector of St. Luke's in the Meadow, chats with a mother during the weekly Coffee on the Corner.

St. Luke's "was not on the bandwagon" with the administration's policies.

Three of the women got together to talk more, but "we realized we didn't even know what the neighborhood needs," Calafat said. "We can't plan some big program because what if it's not needed? So, we just honed it down to: Let's stand on the corner and get to know the neighbors, give them a cup of coffee and just visit."

St. Luke's has a strategic corner in the neighborhood. The area elementary school is across from the front of the church, and the middle school is down a side street. That side street is also where high school students wait for buses. The vestry is considering building a bus shelter.

As the Fridays went by, the volunteers learned a lot. For instance, an

early thought about offering English-as-a-second-language classes became a reality, but in reverse. The St. Luke's women began asking the Spanish-speaking parents the Spanish names of some of the food they were handing out, such as bananas and oranges. The parents would quiz the volunteers in subsequent weeks to see if they remembered their translations.

One mother later suggested that the parents and parishioners continue trying to learn each other's languages, and now the morning chats are becoming increasingly bilingual.

On a recent day, some Spanish-speaking students brought

a newly arrived Asian friend with them. Then, two Rwandan sisters who walk their younger sister to the elementary school came by. The sisters, who speak five languages, according to Calafat and Guynn, often hang out around Coffee on the Corner before they go to school.

It's not all about coffee and goodies. Prominent on a corner of the rolling treat cart is a brightly colored mug with squares of paper asking, "How can we pray for you?/Cómo podemos orar por usted?" The mug is the invitation; the volunteers never push anyone.

Calafat said she takes any filled-in cards that are left on the cart to her desk. "I just kind of keep them in front of me and lift them up in prayer, and when they come back the next week, we ask them how things are going," she said.

One morning a woman visited, saying

she had seen Coffee on the Corner but had never stopped. That day, she said, she needed prayers for her marriage. Three or four weeks later, she returned to say she and her husband had a good week. "It's just about keeping track of people," Calafat said.

Melissa Subject, the college and career readiness coach at Meadowbrook Middle School, stops by nearly every Friday when she drops off her daughter for pre-K classes. She likes to greet some of her students as they take their younger siblings to the elementary school.

Subject praised both the parish's initial effort to give college T-shirts to the middle school and the coffee stand. "I think this church is pretty remarkable," she said. "This is one of the highlights of my Fridays. It starts you off in a good mood." ■



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS
An invitation to leave prayer requests stands on the treat cart at Coffee on the Corner.

NEWS

Alabama church removes pew, plaque dedicated to Confederate president

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The pew had been an unmistakable fixture for decades at St. John's Episcopal Church in Montgomery, Ala. Online photos show the pew — a cross-shaped poppy head carved in its wooden finial — sticking out among the rows and rows of newer, plainer-looking pews that filled the rest of the church's sanctuary.

One other detail made this pew stand out: It was known as the Jefferson Davis pew and had an accompanying plaque touting its history: a tribute to the Confederate president who attended St. John's for three months in 1861 before the capital of the Confederacy moved from Montgomery to Richmond, Va.

Today, that pew is in storage. The congregation recently removed it and its plaque and moved a newer pew from the back of the sanctuary to take its place.

"To continue to allow the pew to be in our worship space would be troublesome," the Rev. Robert Wisnewski, rector at St. John's, said this week in a message to the congregation.

At a time when Episcopal churches and institutions across the country are reckoning with their historical ties to slavery, the Confederacy and Jim Crow segregation, Wisnewski and vestry members decided to remove the Jefferson Davis pew because its ties to Davis were false and its dedication ceremony 89 years ago was a political act steeped in racism, which runs counter to Christianity, Wisnewski said.

"Davis was a political figure, not a church figure, nor even a member of the parish," Wisnewski said. "Acting to remove the pew and plaque is the correction of a political act and hopefully will help us all to focus more completely on the love of Christ for all people."

In an e-mail to Episcopal News Service, Wisnewski explained why the church began scrutinizing the history of the pew and plaque.

"In teaching a Sunday school class this past fall, I became aware of the pew's dedication not occurring until 1925," said Wisnewski, who has served at St. John's since 1995. That pew wasn't an original, he said. The congregation had replaced its old pews with new ones in the early 1900s. By the 1930s, a pew from Davis' era had been re-installed and labeled, but its ties to the Confederate figure were uncertain at best.

The plaque called Davis "a communicant," but Davis was not yet a confirmed Episcopalian when he attended services at St. John's, he added.

Montgomery's roots

The timing of the 1925 dedication, with racism and segregation on the rise, coincided with the "Lost Cause" campaign across the South, which sought to rehabilitate the image of the Confedera-

cy and its leaders by denying the South fought the Civil War to protect slavery.

In the 1950s, Montgomery became a pivotal battleground in the civil rights movement, with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., as pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, joining others in leading the successful Montgomery bus boycott. But a century earlier, Alabama's capital city was known as a commerce hub in

"We have no way of knowing how many times he or his family attended, perhaps only a few times or perhaps as many as a dozen times," Wisnewski said in his message to the congregation about the Davis pew. "Since Davis was not confirmed, it is probable that he never received Holy Communion here and technically was not a communicant."

After leaving Montgomery, Davis was



Photo/David Berenguer

Above, a pew known as the Jefferson Davis pew is seen among newer pews at St. John's Episcopal Church in Montgomery, Ala.

At left, Confederate President Jefferson Davis is seen in this portrait by Matthew Brady.



Source/National Archives

the slave-powered cotton empire of the antebellum South.

St. John's is Montgomery's oldest Episcopal parish. It formed in 1834, and in 1837 the congregation completed construction of its 48-pew brick church. When membership topped 100, the congregation built a new church in 1855, and slaves were given use of the old brick church, according to a guidebook published by the Civil Heritage Trail.

Montgomery "was the exhilarated, thronging capital of the Confederate States of America" in the first months of 1861, the guidebook says, and Davis was inaugurated the Confederacy's president in the city on Feb. 18.

Davis was raised a Baptist and began attending Episcopal services in Montgomery at the urging of his second wife, Varina.

confirmed in 1862 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, once known as the Cathedral of the Confederacy. Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee also worshiped at St. Paul's.

Pew plaques and stained glass windows at St. Paul's had long touted the Richmond church's historical ties to those two prominent Confederate figures when, in 2015, St. Paul's launched its History and Reconciliation Initiative to re-examine that history and consider whether changes were warranted.

The catalyst

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof opened fire at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., killing nine black worshippers. When photos surfaced of Roof posing with a Confederate flag, it fueled a nationwide debate over the racist legacy of such imagery and its embrace by white supremacists.

At St. Paul's, the congregation decided to remove all representations of Confederate battle flags but to keep family memorials to fallen Confederate soldiers. The congregation left untouched its plaques marking the pews where Davis and Lee once sat.

In 2017, a violent clash between white supremacists and counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Va., over the fate of the

city's Confederate statues led to a new round of national debates and amplified calls to remove such symbols from public display, including at Episcopal institutions. Washington National Cathedral in the nation's capital removed stained-glass windows depicting Lee and a fellow Confederate general, Stonewall Jackson. Sewanee: University of the South in Tennessee moved a statue of another Confederate general from a prominent spot on campus to the university's cemetery. R.E. Lee Memorial Church in Lexington, Va., changed its name back to its original Grace Episcopal Church.

"The argument is simple: The Confederacy fought to maintain slavery and white supremacy in the United States, and this isn't something the country should honor in any way," Joe McDaniel Jr., a member of General Convention's Committee for Racial Justice and Reconciliation, told ENS.

General Convention has passed numerous resolutions to guide the Episcopal Church as it responds to racism and atones for its own complicity in racial injustice and support for racist systems. Such efforts have led to the creation of the Becoming Beloved Community framework, now the church's cornerstone initiative on racial reconciliation.

McDaniel, a 58-year-old retired lawyer living in Pensacola, Fla., said he had followed closely the debate over Confederate statues and other memorials in recent years. He disputes arguments that removing such monuments amounts to erasing history. The monuments were not motivated by Southern pride or benign historic preservation, McDaniel said, but rather to promote a cause that was dedicated to keeping black Americans enslaved.

"Most of America is finally coming to terms with that," McDaniel said. "I applaud St. John's action in moving the Jefferson Davis pew."

Racist pedigree

Vestry members made that decision after he brought his research on the pew to their attention, including the evidence that the pew was not in place for the 1925 dedication, Wisnewski said.

"The lore that the pew had been in place since the beginning of the Civil War and always known as the Jefferson Davis pew is not true," Wisnewski said.

The rector also discovered details of the 1925 dedication ceremony, which featured a speech by writer and historian John Trotwood Moore, known as "an apologist for the Old South" who espoused virulent white-supremacist rhetoric and defended lynching.

A 1999 article in the Tennessee Historical Quarterly provides a description of Moore's speech at the dedication of the Jefferson Davis pew, based on contemporary newspaper reports. Alabama's governor and other

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NEWS

Church dedicates new 'home base' for racial healing

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A year after changing its name from the R.E. Lee Memorial Church to its original Grace Episcopal Church, a congregation in Lexington, Va., is moving forward with a new emphasis on racial reconciliation.

For more than 100 years, the congregation's name had paid tribute to the Confederate general who served as a senior warden there after the Civil War. Facing pressure from Southwestern Virginia Bishop Mark Bourlakas and from like-minded parishioners, the congregation's vestry narrowly voted in September 2017 to change the name back to Grace, though that move left a wound that is still healing.

"We lost a lot of people," said the Rev. James Hubbard, interim rector. "A good number of the folks who left have come back slowly. Some have not. I'm sure some will never come back, but it was for all sorts of reasons."

A year and a half later, the congregation is charting a way forward by empha-

sizing racial reconciliation. On Feb. 3, parishioners were in a festive mood for the dedication of three newly renovated gathering spaces in the church's undercroft, including a community room created as a "home base" for the congregation's racial-healing efforts through the Episcopal Church's Becoming Beloved Community framework.

The dedication ceremony, held between the congregation's two Sunday-morning services, featured a psalm and a prayer: "Lord God almighty ... look with favor on your servants who will gather in this clean and simple space. Enable them to communicate truth, to foster love, to uphold justice and right, and to provide enjoyment. Let them promote and support that peace between peoples."

Grace Episcopal Church's community room, backed by a \$47,000 grant from the United Thank Offering (UTO), is named after Jonathan Myrick Daniels, a white Episcopal seminarian killed in 1965 while shielding a black girl in Alabama from a shotgun blast. Daniels attended the church in Lexington while he was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute, and the Episcopal Church honors him as a martyr on Aug. 14.

The UTO grant application noted that the congregation in Lexington "nearly came apart" in 2017 after two years of tense debate over its name. The process of congregational soul-searching began in the wake of the 2015 massacre at a black church in Charleston, S.C., by a white gunman with a fondness for Confederate symbols.

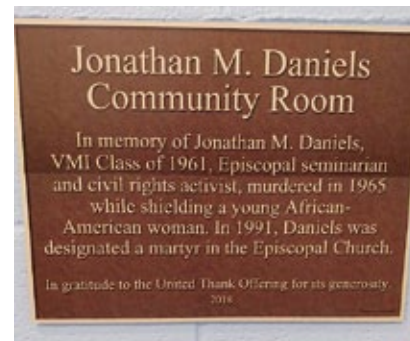
"I think the general feeling in the parish is that we have



Photo/Martha Ann Burford

Parishioners at Grace Episcopal Church in Lexington, Va., attend the dedication of the Jonathan M. Daniels Community Room.

The Jonathan M. Daniels Community Room is part of the renovated undercroft at Grace Episcopal Church in Lexington, Va.



Photo/Grace Episcopal, via Facebook

come through a very bad time but are now on the other side of it — wiser and more sober-minded, I think, for having gone through it," Anne Hansen, a former vestry member, told ENS by e-mail.

Hubbard expressed hope that the congregation had begun moving past the bitter conflict over its identity and history. "I don't think conflicts get wholly smoothed over," he said, but "it's a much happier place."

The congregation took a big step forward in May when it invited monks from Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, N.Y., to lead parishioners in a healing-and-reconciliation workshop, Hubbard said. Church members who had taken opposing positions during the debate over the old name faced each other across the aisle of the church and

asked for forgiveness.

"There were people with tears running right down their faces," Hubbard said.

The congregation is working to add Beloved Community events to its schedule of activities in the community room. Even before the room's dedication, the church had begun hosting events aimed at racial healing, such as a hymn sing that was joined by a half-dozen churches, black and white, in Lexington.

Grace Episcopal "is really solidly behind" the work of racial reconciliation, Hubbard said. ■



The congregation in 2017 changed its name to Grace Episcopal Church from R.E. Lee Memorial Church.

DAVIS continued from page 8

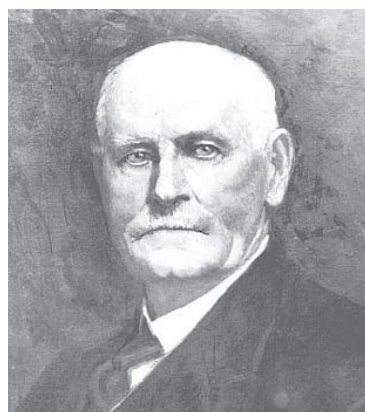
civic leaders attended the event.

Besides hailing Davis as a "pure-blooded Anglo-Saxon," Moore made a case that racial purity and white superiority were part of Davis' legacy.

"We are the children not of our father and mother but of our race," Moore said. "It is well to teach our children that they are well-bred, descendants of heroes. Only the pure breed ever reaches the stars."

Moore's role in the dedication of the pew gave little doubt about its racist pedigree, Wisniewski said. "Confederate monuments and symbols have increasingly been used by groups that promote white supremacy and are now, to many people of all races, seen to represent insensitivity, hatred and even evil."

"The mission of our parish is diametrically opposed to what these symbols



Source/Tennessee State Library and Archives

John Trotwood Moore, known as an "apologist for the Old South," spoke at the dedication of the Jefferson Davis pew in 1925.

have come to mean," he said. "Even if the actions which brought about the Jefferson Davis pew in 1925 were only to memorialize an historical fact, and that appears improbable, the continuance of its presence presents a political statement."

The vestry voted to remove the pew and place it and the plaque honoring Davis in the church's archives.

"This was not done to rewrite our history or to dishonor our forebears," Wisniewski wrote in his message to the congregation. The current vestry would not vote to add such a pew honoring Davis, so it would be "troublesome" to let the existing pew remain, he said.

"St. John's prides itself in being a spiritual home for all people and a place where politics takes a back seat to the nurture of our souls," Wisniewski said. ■

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New York church takes up bail reform

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

General Convention has voted since 2015 to emphasize criminal justice reform as an essential step toward ending the American system of mass incarceration that disproportionately punishes people of color.

An example of that system — and, for reformers, an opportunity — can be found on an island in the middle of New York's East River.

Rikers Island is the city's primary incarceration site, home to eight inmate facilities that hold most of the more than 8,000 people in New York who in an average day are held behind bars while they wait for a court hearing or trial, or as they serve their jail sentences. More than half of the city's inmates and detainees are black, and a third are Hispanic.

Last fall, members of Trinity Church Wall Street, an affluent parish in Lower Manhattan, joined a "mass bail out" of certain detainees being held at city jails. The congregation is on the front lines of a movement to close Rikers Island, which advocates call a costly, unjust, ineffective and deteriorating relic of an outdated system. Advocates argue for replacing Rikers with jails in each of the city's five boroughs, where they would be more convenient for court hearings and family visits. Such a transformation depends first on an overall reduction in the number of people the city incarcerates.

"The larger piece is, we need to make Rikers no longer necessary," said the Rev. Winnie Varghese, Trinity's director of justice and reconciliation.

That was an underlying recommendation of a 2017 report issued by the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, whose work received financial support from a dozen philanthropic organizations, including Trinity.

"Research shows that incarceration begets incarceration," the report said. "Spending time behind bars also begets other problems, including eviction, unemployment and family dysfunction. These burdens fall disproportionately on communities of color."

The commission set a target of reducing the city's jail population to 5,000 in a decade, which would mark a dramatic turnaround from a peak of more than 20,000 people behind bars in New York in the early 1980s.

Most of that reduction would be achieved by bail reforms: by changing the way the city holds suspects who are accused of crimes but not yet convicted. Pretrial detainees make up three of every four people incarcerated in the city.

Advocates for bail reform argue that

many of those pretrial detainees remain at Rikers Island simply because they are too poor to pay their bail, not because they have been accused of a serious crime or are a significant danger to the public. Bail's purpose, they point out, is merely to ensure that a defendant will appear in court for a hearing, or else the defendant risks forfeiting that money.

"What this system has turned into is a way to keep poor people in jail because they cannot afford bail," Jonathan Lippman, a former state chief judge who chairs the reform commission, told Varghese in a video interview produced by Trinity Wall Street.

Lippman advocates eliminating cash bail altogether as one safeguard against unnecessary detentions, which often do more damage than good, he said. Simply spending a day or two at Rikers can have a profound effect on a detainee, and taken to extremes, can ruin lives, Lippman said.

He noted the example of Kalief



Photo/Trinity Wall Street, from video
The Rev. Winnie Varghese, left, of Trinity Church Wall Street interviews Jonathan Lippman, former New York state chief judge, about bail reform.

Browder, who was accused of stealing a backpack in 2010 at age 16, was arrested and was held at Rikers for three years, much of that time spent in solitary confinement, because his family was unable to afford his bail. He was never tried or convicted. After he was released, he hanged himself at age 22. In January, New York agreed to pay Browder's family \$3.3 million in a settlement over his detention.

"What a waste of a human being," Lippman said. "This was a trifecta of everything that's wrong with the criminal justice system." Browder, Lippman said, was a child charged as an adult, suffered through extended delays in his case and was unable to return to his family immediately because of a flawed bail system.

Michelle Alexander has called mass incarceration "The New Jim Crow" in her book of that name, likening it to slavery and segregation as another race-based caste system. In 2015, General Convention passed a resolution encour-



Photo/Reuters
The Rikers Island prison complex in the Queens borough of New York is the city's main incarceration site.

aging Episcopalians to read Alexander's book.

Also in 2015, General Convention passed another resolution that said "implicit racial bias and racial profiling result in a criminal justice system that disproportionately incarcerates people of color" and challenged the church "at every level to commit mindfully and intentionally to dismantling our current mass incarceration system."

The resolution also urged reform of bail-bond systems, which it said "rely upon often-unlicensed and unregulated bail bond agents and on conditioning release from pretrial incarceration solely on the ability to pay."

New York isn't the only state facing pressure to reform its bail laws. Last year, California became the first state to eliminate cash bail for suspects awaiting trial, though critics of that reform legislation argued the new law "actually undermines genuine criminal-justice reform" because of its use of an algorithm to determine when suspects should be detained or released.

New Jersey, though not eliminating all cash bail, greatly limited its application through a law that took effect in January 2017. Crime rates appear to have plummeted in the two years since then, WNYC reported, though it wasn't clear if the bail reform was the reason. The law's lasting effects are still up for debate.

Those states' laws and other examples around the country are helping to guide the work of reform in New York, Varghese said. "Frankly, we're learning from other places." She expressed optimism for the bail reforms offered by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in his state budget proposal in January.

Cuomo's legislation calls for an end to cash bail and a significant reduction in the number of suspects held in jail awaiting trial. The legislation also would require police to rely on tickets rather than arrests for low-level crimes, though prosecutors could request a hearing to determine whether a suspect is too much of a threat to be released while a case is pending.

The Episcopal Church and other Christian denominations can add a powerful voice to such debates, Varghese said.

"I think churches have language around the morality of holding a person, taking the freedom of a person who has not been convicted of anything," Varghese said. The Episcopal Church, especially given its vocal support of anti-poverty initiatives, "can bring some real moral weight," she said.

Varghese said she participated in the Mass Bail

Out. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights launched the campaign in early October to pay bail for female and teenage suspects held in Rikers, both as a direct action that would reduce the jail population there and as way to draw attention to the cause of bail reform and closing the facility.

Organizers raised money from different donors to pay the bails. The role of volunteers like Varghese was to go to corrections offices, fill out paperwork and turn over a check to release the suspects. Varghese declined to provide to ENS any identifying information about the person she helped bail out other than to say it was a woman being held at Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers for a small-time charge, equivalent to shoplifting.

"We want to show them that the faith community supports them," Varghese said. "One night at Rikers Island can change your life for the worse."

About \$1.2 million in bail was posted during the campaign, freeing 105



Photo/Trinity Wall Street, via video
Marvin Mayfield, a bail-reform advocate, speaks at a forum hosted by Trinity Church Wall Street, New York.

people with bails ranging from \$700 to \$100,000, according to a New York Times report. City officials initially raised safety concerns when the Mass Bail Out was announced. As of mid-November, two of the suspects released through the campaign had failed to appear at their subsequent court hearings.

Varghese and Lippman spoke Jan. 31 at a breakfast forum on bail reform

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COMMENTARY

Talking 'rudely' about money

Editor's note: Bishop John McKee Sloan posted this message on the Diocese of Alabama's website, but much of it applies to the wider church, also.

By John McKee Sloan

Part of my job as an ordained person is bringing Episcopalians to order. At parish dinners, meetings and gatherings, and now at various diocesan events, the moment comes for me to look out at the people of God chatting away in happy fellowship and to declare that it's time for us to do whatever it is we're all there to do. In true time-honored Episcopal fashion, I yell out above the din: "The Lord be with you!"

Some hear me and respond as we've all been taught: "And also with you!" Some hear me but just want to complete whatever they were talking about; others don't hear me and have to be shushed by others. Every time, I remember Mama telling me not to interrupt grown-ups when they're talking; every time, I regret that I disrupted the camaraderie in the room.

Recently at such a moment, after the people had quieted down enough for us to start with a prayer, I was a little surprised to hear myself say what was on my mind: "Lord, forgive me for interrupting all those conversations."

Sometimes we have to do something

we were taught was rude.

As children we all learned to share, to respect our elders, to not call people names. We learned to take turns and to walk in line to lunch or recess. Later we learned that polite people don't talk about politics, religion or other people's money.

Sometimes it's a challenge for me to be polite. Quite often I have to interrupt grown-ups when they're talking. I try real hard not to talk about politics, but I'm pretty much expected to talk about religion. I still try to share, and I walk in a line almost every Sunday morning.

Now, hoping you'll give me license to be a bit rude, I want to talk about other people's money. More specifically and even worse, I want to talk about your money.

The Episcopalians of the Diocese of Alabama are generous people. We give to our universities, we give to various charities and worthy causes, and we give to our parishes. Our parishes in turn give to the diocese, and the Diocesan Council — elected at the annual Diocesan Convention — makes the annual budget which determines how we as a diocese can support many of the wonderful ministries that are being offered by our little part of God's holy church.

I hope we give to our parishes because it's a way for us to give thanks to God for all that we have been given. I hope we give to our parishes because we believe in the work of the church, bringing all of God's people to unity with God and with each other. I hope we give joyfully

and freely. And I hope we give more. (If you're still reading this, perhaps you'll be willing to forgive me this rudeness: I hope you will give more.)

I don't think I've ever known a parish or a diocese that had too much money. Somehow it seems that we always work

‘What if we gave a little more, just so we could imagine what more we could do together?’

out by some arcane church algebra that in the coming calendar year we'll need about what we needed this year, and we manage to scrape together the needed amount minus just a little bit, to keep the vestry and the rector on their toes. The vestry then sighs and wrings its hands and cuts the budget: not the utility costs, insurance premiums or payments to the bank, but discretionary spending — funding ministries and programs, paying the employees and, almost inevitably, giving to the diocese. Diocesan Council then adds up all those numbers, sighs and wrings its hands, and cuts the budget.

But wait. Is that really the way we want it to be? Is that the way it has to be? What if your parish had enough mon-

ey that the vestry wasn't just scraping by to pay the bills but could look around and see what more we should be doing to further the kingdom of God? What if the parishes gave so generously to the diocese that our Diocesan Council could more fully fund ministries that are important to the people of the diocese and to God's children near and far?

What if the people charged with being stewards of our money — the parish vestry and the Diocesan Council — worked out all the numbers and made a budget and had some left at the end of the process so we could imagine what more could be done in the name of Jesus Christ? What if scraping by is not the best we can do?

What if we changed the algebra, so that we had a sense of what it would take to scrape by, and then gave that much plus more, just to keep the vestry or the Diocesan Council on their toes? What if we gave a little more, just so we could imagine what more we could do together? Again, and with apologies for being rude: What if you gave a little more?

Above the din of our noisy lives I yell out, "The Lord be with you!" to gather the people of God and call us to do what we're supposed to be doing. It is not enough that we in this part of God's holy church should be content to scrape by. There is so much that we need to do. Thank you for your generosity in the past. Please be generous as you consider your pledge to your parish and your covenant to our diocese. ■

SAN DIEGO continued from page 7

Diego Board of Supervisors voted to lease an old courthouse to the response network to operate a shelter for asylum seekers through 2019.

Until late January, U.S. Customs and Border Protection processed up to 100 asylum seekers a day; the Trump administration reduced that number to 20 on Jan. 25.

On Feb. 11, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed an order to withdraw two-thirds of the state's National Guard troops from the border, disputing claims of an "illegal immigration crisis" and calling it nothing but "political theater," Reuters reported.

On Feb. 15, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency to build a border wall, citing an "invasion" at the southern border.

The number of people apprehended while crossing the border illegally fell to some 396,000 in 2018, down from a peak of 1 million in 2006.

The rights of persecuted people to seek asylum and undocumented immigration often become conflated in political arguments.

"Frequent public misunderstanding of the distinction between 'asylum seeker' and 'undocumented immigrant' adds to the confusion. Asylum seekers do so legally, whether they are met by officials at the border or after entering the



Photo/Antonio Zaragoza for ENS

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection agent patrols the U.S.-Mexico border fence between Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, Calif.

United States," said Jefferts Schori. "It is vital to recognize that seeking asylum is a legal right. Even if a person crosses the border without official permission, international law requires that the request for asylum be heard."

The Episcopal Church, through General Convention and Executive Council resolutions, has a long history of supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. During General Convention last July in Austin, Texas, Episcopalians gathered outside a detention center housing migrant women to protest the Trump administration's immigration policies separating families.

Since then, Episcopalians have joined interfaith efforts across the Southwest to

respond to and shed light on the humanitarian crisis at the border in places like El Paso, Texas, which borders Ciudad Juarez, and in San Diego.

The San Ysidro port of entry connecting Tijuana and San Diego is the busiest border crossing in the United States, both in terms of economics and people. People and students cross the border daily for work and to attend school.

For 20 years, a slatted border fence has separated San Diego from Tijuana. U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents patrol the United States side, where a state park and a protected estuary form a buffer between the border and the nearest residential beach community. On the Tijuana side, people live

close to the fence, which extends into the Pacific Ocean.

The existing border fence, however, has not deterred migrant "caravans" and asylees' arrivals at the border. (In 2014, an unprecedented number of unaccompanied minors fleeing violence in Central America was detained crossing the border.)

Hundreds of Central American migrants began arriving Nov. 14, 2018, in Tijuana and other ports of entry. The caravans have been politicized in United States and in their Central American countries of origin (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), where one of the main drivers of migration — forced displacement by violence — is often denied.

In the United States, Trump has called economic migrants and asylum-seekers an "assault on our country." Last November, he deployed National Guard troops to the border. Trump has threatened to cut aid to Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras over the caravans.

"The current border crisis is centered on aiding asylum seekers as they leave the border to wait for their cases to be adjudicated. The level of violence in Central America has caused thousands of people to flee for their lives, and many are seeking asylum in the United States," said Jefferts Schori. "Those seeking asylum are women with small children, families, unaccompanied minors and single individuals of working age." ■

FEATURE

Bible study and skateboards meet at Skatechurch

By Bobby Ross Jr.
Religion News Service

When Brant Lozano was 13, he thought the idea of a church for skateboarders was stupid.

But a friend kept inviting him, and, eventually, Lozano gave in.

To his surprise, “Skatechurch” — a ministry hosted by the First United Methodist Church in downtown Tulsa, Okla. — turned out not to be so lame, he said.

“Everybody was really good [at skating], and the facility was really nice, and I was like, ‘Wow, this is really cool,’” said Lozano, who was not a Christian when he first showed up.

Nearly two decades later, Lozano, now 32, leads a regular Sunday afternoon Bible study amid foosball and ping-pong tables in the Methodist church’s fitness and sports building. Afterward, dozens of skateboarding enthusiasts — mostly male, ranging in age from 8 to 40 — perform flat-ground tricks, grind on rails and jump over ramps in the church’s gymnasium.

“It’s nice — a fun place to be,” said Noah Lusk, 13, who listened quietly to Lozano’s 30-minute lesson on guilt and forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ before taking his skateboard into the gym.

The ministry in Oklahoma’s second-largest city started in 1997 as skateboarding grew in popularity — and as skaters nationwide often were pushed off street corners and out of town squares.

According to skate-review.com, there are an estimated 16 million skateboarders in the United States and an additional 4 million around the world.

“Over the years, other skate parks opened in the area, but the kids that valued the community and ministry remained, creating an outreach ... ministry to youth who may never attend a traditional youth group,” said the Rev. Jessica Moffatt, First United Methodist’s lead pastor.

In recent decades, numerous faith-based outreach efforts designed to appeal to skateboarders have popped up all over the United States and Canada — and beyond.

“In both North and South America, skate ministry is huge,” said Nathaniel Muench, 24, founder of Skaters of Christ Skateboard Ministry and a skateboard missionary to Germany, where he has lived for the last three years.

The ministries come in all shapes and sizes.

“It can look like anything from a guy pulling some ramps and a rail out of his garage every week and opening up his Bible to 10 kids showing up at a skatepark with 15 pizzas and sharing the gospel,” said Muench, who works with the global movement Youth With a Mission.

Mike Steincamp, of North Carolina-based MS Skate Ministry, travels year-round to do events and produces gospel tracts and materials such as a 14-day “Landing Bolts” devotional guide — all geared toward skateboarders.

“The skateboarding culture is a very dark one that is very against Christianity and, really, faith at all,” Steincamp said. “So Christian skateboarders feel very burdened to take a stand for their faith



Brant Lozano, left, program director for Skatechurch at First United Methodist Church in downtown Tulsa, Okla., prays during a Bible study with skateboarders.

in the skateboarding culture.”

Steincamp, 28, said he’d been a skateboarder most of his life. Because all of his friends are skateboarders, he said, it was natural to want to share the gospel with them.

In 1988, John Barnard was an eighth-grade skateboarder who weaved in and out of the teens playing basketball out-



Photo courtesy of First United Methodist Church

Every Sunday, the Youth and Family Center gym of the First United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Okla., is converted into a skate park.

side a Baptist church in his hometown of Houston.

Then church leaders invited him to skate inside the church gym, and the acceptance he felt changed his whole outlook on life, he said. He began going to church events, became part of the congregation and started dating a minister’s daughter, Mandi, who he married.

He went on to become a minister himself.

More than 30 years later, Barnard serves as executive director of Waco, Texas-based Middleman Skateboard Ministries. After serving for 19 years as a Baptist youth minister, he now works with a team of mentors who go to skate parks across the nation and engage with teens, handing out free skateboards, T-shirts and Bibles with skateboard graphics on the front.

Barnard’s goal is to introduce skaters accustomed to being treated as outcasts to a misfit named Jesus.

“I can tell them, ‘You know what? Christ was a rebel,’” he said. “He went against what so many religious leaders were saying back then.”

In Tulsa, each skater pays \$3 per week to cover expenses, such as hiring crews to set up the ramps and equipment in the gym. That process takes an hour before and after each week’s session. Skateboarders — or their parents — also must sign liability-waiver forms upon entering the building.

“For the longest time, we never had a place to go and skateboard,” said Jeff Hutto, who was 12 when he first came to Skatechurch and remains a regular.

Now a 33-year-old financial adviser who trades his suit and tie for shorts, checkered shoes and a Misfits brand skateboard on Sunday afternoons, Hutto said he tried to serve as a positive role model for the younger skaters.

“It’s a good place for kids to come. Parents know when they drop them off that they’ll be safe and taken care of,” he said. “They get to participate in the Bible study, which is a good thing for them.

And they’ve got people like Brant that they can talk to about whatever.”

Another regular, Brandon Morrow, 28, said Skatechurch had helped make him a better person.

“I love the Bible study,” he said. “It always hits the notes that I need.”

On a recent Sunday, only a handful of



Photo/RNS/Bobby Ross Jr.

Noah Lusk, 13, left, and Brandon Morrow, 28, study the Bible and enjoy performing skateboard tricks during Skatechurch hosted by First United Methodist Church in downtown Tulsa, Okla.

the 40-plus skaters came into the game room for the Bible study. Recalling his own skepticism as a teen, Lozano said he had no complaints about that.

Nobody skates while he’s teaching, but the Bible study is entirely optional. Anybody is welcome to come and skate, he said, so long as they wait until the praying and discussion of Scriptures finish.

“The whole thing about this is to introduce kids to Christ and church,” said Lozano, a mechanical engineering graduate who works during the week for a company that makes natural-gas compressors. “For some of these guys, this is the only building they step in as a church.

“For me, that’s kind of a big win,” he added. “If they feel comfortable enough to walk through those doors and hang out for a while, I feel like I’m doing all right.” ■

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FEATURE

Search for more Dead Sea Scrolls reveals West Bank artifacts dispute

By Michele Chabin
Religion News Service

When pieces of ancient pottery and never-before-seen scroll fragments began making their way to the antiquities black market a few years ago, archaeologists suspected that looters had found a new cache of Dead Sea Scrolls.

Determined to discover and protect whatever scrolls might remain hidden in the parched Judean desert, a joint team of archaeologists from Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., began excavating some of the unexplored caves near Qumran, where all known Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1940s and 1950s.

"The concern was that the caves were being ransacked by locals who were illegally selling them," said Randall Price, a professor of biblical and Judaic studies at Liberty University and co-director of the excavation, which began three years ago. "The Geneva Convention permits salvage excavations to try to recover items before they're lost to history."

If Price's team unearths additional Dead Sea Scrolls or other artifacts, both Palestinians and Israelis will be sure to claim ownership.

The question of ownership comes at a particularly sensitive time in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Palestinian leaders have stepped up their bid for statehood

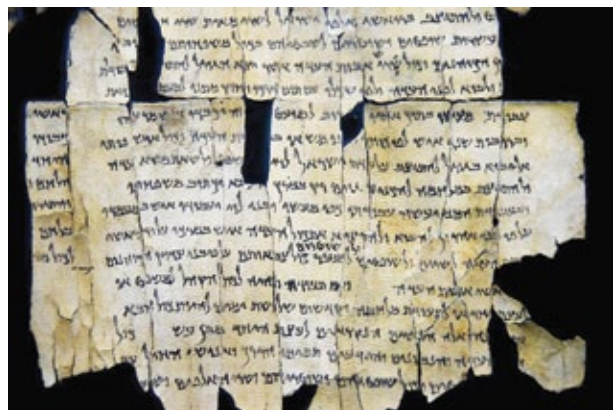


Photo by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin/The Jordan Museum/Creative Commons
Part of Dead Sea Scroll number 28a (1Q28a) from Qumran Cave 1.

by claiming that Jews are colonial invaders to the region and denying Jewish religious or historical ties to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israeli leaders counter by arguing both territories were parts of the biblical land of Israel, according to the Hebrew Bible.

On Dec. 31, Israel and the United States severed their membership in UNESCO, a world heritage preservation body, after it designated ancient Jewish holy sites such as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as Palestinian heritage sites.

Qumran is in the West Bank — territory Israel captured from Jordan during the 1967 Middle East War — which Palestinians say will be part of their future state.

Although international law assigns



The Qumran caves, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, are in the eastern section of the West Bank.

ownership of artifacts to the country where the excavation is taking place, the status of the disputed West Bank is not so clear-cut, some experts say. The Palestinians do not have an independent state, and Israel, which most countries consider an occupying force, has not annexed the territory.

Legally, a conquering nation is prohibited from removing artifacts from another's land, "but with the West Bank, it's not so simple," said Aren Maeir, a professor of archaeology at Bar-Ilan University.

"It can be argued that the territory wasn't conquered," he said, referring to the territory's history.

In 1947, the United Nations voted to create a Jewish state alongside an Arab state in then-British Mandatory Palestine.

The following year, Jordan and other Arab countries attacked Israel, hoping to destroy it. When that failed, Jordan seized control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but its rule was never recognized.

Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which contain the ancient Hebrew and Aramaic texts that form the

basis of the Hebrew Bible's canon, were discovered when Jordan ruled the territory from 1948 to 1967.

Under the 1993 Oslo Peace Accord, the Palestinian Authority was given civil control over large swaths of the West Bank, but not the Qumran region in what is called Area C.

"This isn't currently Palestinian territory, and I don't think there is any substantive claim that objects found in Area C would have to be returned to the Palestinians," Maeir said.

A report by the International Humanitarian Law Resource disagrees.

"Israel's archaeological activities in Area C of the West Bank are in violation of its customary obligations under IHL, IHRL and the UNESCO legal framework," the report states.

This view is shared by Ahmed Rjoob, general director of the World Heritage unit at the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

"The Dead Sea Scrolls and other artifacts belong to the Palestinians because they were found on Palestinian land. That applies even before 1948 when there was the British Mandate and during the years when Jordan ruled," Rjoob said.

"Two or three months ago," Rjoob said, the Palestinian Authority asked UNESCO to pressure Israel into returning the scrolls and other artifacts to a museum in East Jerusalem, which Palestinians hope will be the capital of their eventual state.

Eugene Kontorovich, an international law professor at George Mason University in Arlington, Va., insists the Palestinians have no claims on the scrolls,

the first of which were discovered by Bedouin shepherds who sold them to an antiquities dealer.

"The Palestinian government neither discovered them nor bought them. Indeed, a Palestinian Arab government did not even claim to exist at the time," he said. "As a matter of cultural rights, these artifacts are part of the historical posterity of the Jewish people, and arguments to the contrary are attempts to erase Jewish history."

The scrolls and other artifacts simply have nothing to do with the Palestinians, Kontorovich said.

Price cannot envision Israel ever giving the items to the Palestinians.

"This has been a long-standing request by the Palestinians, but, frankly, everyone I know in the Israeli government or antiquities administration rejects this outright," he said. "They see the Palestinians trying to make a political statement. Because if Israel says the Palestinians have a right to the artifacts, you might as well say all the land is theirs as well."

Palestinians, Price said, claim that the scrolls and related artifacts are part of their history and culture. But he argues that "there was no known Palestinian people" at the time the artifacts were created.

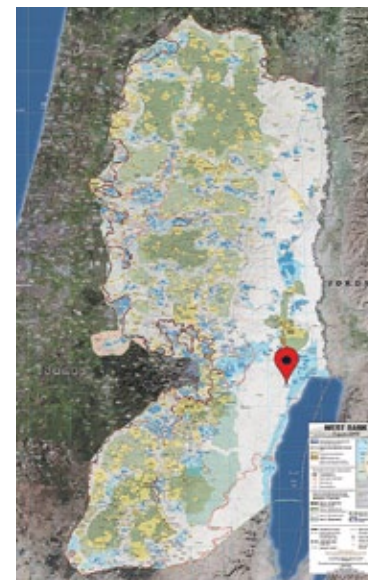
tifacts were created.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, he said, help scholars understand Jewish texts, customs and laws. Many of them are copies of the Hebrew Bible and are written in Hebrew and Aramaic.

As such, they should reside in Israel, he said.

"This isn't about politics and religion and ownership but saving the past from being lost to the people whose heritage this is," he said. ■

Photo by Lux Moundi/Creative Commons



Map courtesy of CIA/Creative Commons

Qumran, indicated with a red pin, is in an Israeli-controlled area on the eastern side of the West Bank.

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Book suggests exploring Lent through the senses

Review by Neva Rae Fox

I was taught the significance and a deep appreciation of Lent as a young girl attending Catholic elementary school. Ever since, I annually approach Lent with the commitment and respect that bespeaks of the 40 days of penance and reflection.

For many years, I, like thousands of others, gave up something for Lent, ranging from sweets to smoking to a memorable Lent as a teen when I gave

up Cheese Doodles (that was a sacrifice!). My observances for Lent modified over the years, and for the past two decades I have taken on self-improvement reading, ranging from an examination of St. Paul and Islam to books by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Thomas Merton. Of late, I have been searching for a new way to observe the 40 days of penance, and I am delighted to have discovered it in a compact book, "Sense and Sensibility."

"Sense and Sensibility" provides an approach to observe Lent in a fresh,

albeit penitential way through daily prayers focusing on our five senses.

Author Sam Portaro explains that his approach relies on our physical senses, not on denying ourselves. "Lent is often a season given to denial of physical pleasure and sensation," he begins. "Yet a cultural atmosphere saturated with visual images, noise and air pollution, violence and processed foods has dulled the senses."

Portaro is a former university Episcopal chaplain who has authored numerous books on vocations and Christian life. In "Sense and Sensibility," he offers a new distinct way to observe a holy Lent through spiritual penance while observing, and not denying, the world surrounding us.

Most daily offerings start with a Scripture reading or a collect, followed by a reflection that is not long, but is spiritually based and thought-provoking.

Chapters are aptly titled Touch, Sight, Smell, Sound and Taste, corresponding to the weeks in Lent. The first chapter begins with Ash Wednesday and the days following; the last chapter is Holy Week, concluding on Easter.

The introduction to each chapter sets the stage for the physical sense being explored:

- "Touch is essential to an encounter with the spirited God."
- "Seeing is believing, we say. Com-

Sense and Sensibility: A Lenten Exploration

By Sam Portaro

Church Publishing
130 pages, \$12.95Sense and Sensibility
A Lenten Exploration

SAM PORTARO

prehension is signified in the expression 'I see.' But in our modern culture we're bombarded with images."

- "Scent attracts and repels ... Our noses help us to identify friends and mates, and warn us of people and produce that may be a tad 'off.'"

- "Speech, hearing and listening represent the most tangible communion between God and us."

- "The central liturgies of many religions are meals, rituals tidbits and sips ... We are a people of the table."

"Sense and Sensibility" is ideal for a busy lifestyle — and who doesn't have a busy lifestyle? — to pause, to pray, to reflect and to observe Lent in a spiritual manner. ■

Neva Rae Fox is the principal of The Fox Group, a communications consulting firm whose clients include religious organizations and nonprofits.

'Beauty of holiness' visual art sought

By Episcopal Journal

Episcopal Church & Visual Arts has scheduled its spring member exhibition, titled "Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness." The submission deadline is March 9 and the exhibition will be displayed digitally at www.ECVA.org beginning April 14.

"Worship and praise of the Divine has taken many forms through time and space," exhibit curator and ECVA member Tobias Stanislas Haller, BSG, writes in the call for artists.

"Much of it has been verbal, but the words of prayer and liturgy have often been accompanied by a humble sense of their inadequacy to comprehend the incomprehensible greatness of God. At the same time, suspicion of (and even harsh antagonism toward) visual representations of the Divine have often starved the eye to favor the ear, neglecting the truth expounded by Saint Gregory the Great that imagery offers a path to understanding for those unskilled in words; and when it comes to the ultimate quest of faith — seeking better understanding of God — we all lack sufficient skill.

"It is likely best to allow the verbal and the visual to serve hand in hand and side by side, as they have done for most of religious history apart from those times in which austere iconoclasm dominated the religious sphere. A more tolerant attitude to the visual allows each of these modes of expression to fulfill the goals best suited to the minds and hearts of those who worship. After all, at the heart of our eucharistic worship, all of the words eventually serve to consecrate and sanctify those very tangible and physical elements of bread and wine, taken and consumed as a sacramental participation in the life of the incarnate God.

"So it is that art (and the arts) are servants in the human quest for engagement with the Divine. In this present call, visual artists in all media are encouraged to 'incarnate' their vi-



Iconography by Tobias Haller, BSG.

sions in dialogue with the texts of the eucharistic liturgies of the Book of Common Prayer — perhaps inspiring a "Gallery of Common Vision" to stand side by side with those venerable words: the beauty of holiness mirrored in the holiness of beauty, the union of the good, the true and the beautiful as a pointer towards the ineffable and inexpressible that is beyond our grasp — but as close as every breath we take."

Submission guidelines

Current members of the ECVA artist registry are invited to submit images of up to two works in 2D and 3D, video or film to entry@ecva.org. For each submission, artists should send a digital image that is 72 dpi, is 600px on the longest side, is under 1MB and is in JPG, TIF, or PNG format. Image files should be named with the artist's name and the artwork title. For video/film works, artists also should include a link to the video at their Vimeo or YouTubeRed account; videos from YouTubeStandard accounts will not be considered.

Artists should submit an artist statement for each entry and one artist bio (together, about 300 words). If a work was collaboratively executed, submit a group artists' statement and group description. Submitters also must include a contact e-mail address and phone number.

For more information, contact Joy Jennings, ECVA exhibitions, at jjennings@ecva.org. ■

Who was the real Jesus?

Review by Solange De Santis

Bob Libby states his purpose in writing this slim novel plainly in the prologue to his latest book — and it's a bit startling if one thinks all priests have rock-solid faith and no doubts.

"In my own spiritual journey, I had a midlife crisis. Was the Incarnation, 'the



What If It's True? A Novel about Jesus Coming of Age

By Bob Libby

WestBow Press
56 pages, \$9.95

Word made flesh and dwelt among us,' merely a nice idea, or did it really happen? Was Jesus for real? Was he really 'truly human and truly divine?'"

Over more than half a century of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church, Libby notes, his job has been to relate Scripture to human experience. He's preached in many settings — parish ministry; as director of radio and television at the church center in New York; in schools, cruise ships and cathedrals. His

published works include "The Forgiveness Book" and "Grace Happens."

At the beginning of "What If It's True?," Libby settles for himself the question of whether Jesus actually existed in a few (perhaps too few) sentences, citing the biblical and historical scholarship of N.T. Wright.

He goes on to wonder about Jesus' early life, sparsely covered in the Gospels, and especially about Luke's account of Jesus in the temple at age 12, astonishing the elders with his questions and answers.

In seeking to draw a personal portrait of Jesus, Libby uses Scripture, some apocryphal accounts (such as the existence of Anne, Mary's mother) and archeological discoveries such as Sepphoris, a Roman city near Nazareth where, Libby posits, Joseph may have worked as a carpenter.

The author gracefully expands the biblical accounts of Jesus' birth and youth, placing him in the context of a family that includes grandparents and a half-brother, James. Libby imagines that James was a son from Joseph's previous marriage that ended with the death of his wife, Sarah.

In Libby's hands, these are ordinary people involved in an extraordinary event and entrusted with a gift from

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NEWS

Faith leaders call for prayer, fasting to address nation's ills

Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Faith leaders, including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, recently issued the following letter, edited for space:

Reclaiming Jesus: A call to prayer, fasting, and action

As the elders who wrote the declaration “Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis,” (www.reclaimingjesus.org) we now issue “A Call to Prayer and Fasting.” We urge Christians to remain steadfast in their faith and engage with the deepening challenges our nation faces.

In 1863, at the height of the Civil War — the most divided time in American history — Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national “day of fasting, humiliation and prayer.” Today, we also believe our national crisis calls for prayer, fasting, humility and repentance. With the season of Lent before us, we ask how we can apply Lenten spiritual practices to our lives and to the dangers facing our democracy.

We pray with those who suffered during the unconscionable government shutdown and with those who face poverty and hunger every day. We pray for those who live in fear of deportation and family separation. We pray for those who face violence — especially parents who fear for their children of color — and those who endure language of racial divisiveness. We pray for the soul of the nation and the resilience of our govern-



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS
Curry

ment's processes. We pray for those who have lost hope.

Above all, we pray for God to take away our fear and stir within us certainty in the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. We pray that all will come to know that Jesus is love and that this knowledge will permeate our lives. We pray that we may have wisdom to discern and speak truth, and courage to stand for it in our public squares. We pray that we may be bridges that bring God's love to our angry national discourse. We pray for pure hearts.

Therefore, we are calling for national prayer and fasting beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 6, and continuing through the season of Lent. We call upon church leaders, pastors and local congregations to respond to the ongoing devastation that so many people face. We also call upon church leaders to stand up to the misuse and abuse of political power, in protection of the constitutional checks and balances of government and the common good.

We announce this “Call to Prayer,

Fasting, and Action” to local cathedrals and churches, for Ash Wednesday services around the country. We call on clergy to pray and preach the gospel message and lead their churches to serve as the conscience of the nation. We call on clergy to foster dialogue that builds unity. We call on clergy to offer prayers that our political leaders will make decisions not for their self-interest but for what is right for our nation and those whom Jesus called “the least of these.”

Let us assemble for prayer in national and local worship spaces across denominational lines. Prayer turns us to God, and fasting focuses our attention on repentance. Gathering to pray will anchor us for the days ahead. Our Lenten prayers in our homes and our churches can be weekly and daily, individual and corporate, personal and public. As we pray, let us also discern what our best responses should be in such a time as this. It is time to reclaim Jesus — and have Jesus lay his claim on us.

We must pray and ask God to take us deeper and prepare us to give a response that comes not from the Left or the Right, but because we are, first and foremost, followers of Jesus. Lent is traditionally characterized by prayer,

penitence and almsgiving — which is defined broadly as solidarity with the most vulnerable. Prayer and fasting will help us find the spiritual vigilance and availability that are necessary for action.

May God bless and keep us, guide and direct us, and prepare us to reclaim Jesus.

In addition to Curry, signers included Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, president and CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Network; Amos Brown, Chair, Social Justice Commission, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.; the Rev. Walter Brueggemann, professor emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary; Tony Campolo, Co-founder, Red Letter Christians; Iva Carruthers, general secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference; the Rev. James Forbes, president and founder, Healing of the Nations Foundation; preaching professor at Union Theological Seminary; the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary emeritus, Reformed Church in America; the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, senior pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, Ga.; the Rev. Richard Hamm, former general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the Rev. Jim Wallis, president and founder, Sojourners. ■

‘We pray that we may be bridges that bring God’s love to our angry national discourse.’

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‘The church will be there,’ Curry tells Florida hurricane survivors

Episcopal Church has not given up on survivors of Hurricane Irma, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said. Curry, who visited Florida on Jan. 12-13 in and city, Fla., hearing stories of recovery. Curry said at Episcopal Church diocesan listening sessions on the coast of 300 or more people and a standing prayer for their people. Curry said it was his hope that Curry would be a different kind of presence. Curry said he would be a different kind of presence. Curry said he would be a different kind of presence.

Episcopalians respond to federal shutdown's impact

Episcopalians are responding to the impact of the federal government shutdown in various ways, including providing support to those affected.



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NEWS

'Church parking tax' sparks questions and concerns

By Bobby Ross Jr.
Religion News Service

Like houses of worship across the United States, Calvary Church in Santa Ana, Calif., typically hasn't had to worry about filing a federal tax form.

But an obscure provision in the corporate-tax overhaul approved by the Republican-controlled Congress at the end of 2017 may change that.

That provision imposes a 21 percent tax on employee parking benefits provided by thousands of congregations and nonprofits from coast to coast.

To pay that tax, some churches may have to file form 990-T paperwork with the IRS if they provide parking for employees.

"No one is ever excited to pay more taxes, especially on what used to be free parking for our employees, but we will comply with whatever the final guidance is on the new tax," said Michael Welles, executive pastor of Calvary Church, a Southern California megachurch with 2,200 weekend attendees and a \$5.5 million annual budget. "We would rather invest our funds into helping our community."

Many pastors contacted by Religion News Service said they were unaware of the new tax.

Others said they had reviewed the interim guidance on the tax — contained in a 24-page document issued by the Treasury Department this past December — and determined that the new provision wouldn't affect their congregation.

"This is not something which causes me concern," said Patrick Ford, preaching minister for the West Islip Church of Christ on Long Island, N.Y. "Although we have significant parking-related costs for snow removal, we do not have any spaces reserved for staff."

Even if the church did have dedicated parking for staffers, said Ford, it wouldn't be enough to trigger the tax, based on the reporting threshold the IRS has established. But determining that requires a fair amount of computations.

The fact that houses of worship must make those calculations has upset leaders of national organizations — from the Jewish Federation of North America to the National Council of Nonprofits — that advocate for faith groups and charities.

Brian W. Walsh, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney and executive director of the Faith and Giving Coalition, said the tax set a "terrible precedent."

"When you tax the fringe benefits that churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship offer their employees, you're taking money directly away from their ability to operate," he said.

A for-profit company, said Walsh, can pass the cost of the tax on to customers. A church or other house of worship can't do that.

"They can't raise prices," he said. "They typically operate on very slim margins. So it can be a huge impact financially."

Beyond the financial cost, Walsh said he objected to the tax on principle.

"It really runs counter to basic American values about how we understand the proper relationship between the church and the state," he said. "So that alone is a reason why this provision should be repealed."

According to The Wall Street Journal, parking and transportation benefits were deductible for for-profit employers before the tax overhaul. When those deductions were eliminated, the rules for nonprofit employers were implemented to keep them from gaining an advantage in areas such as transportation costs and parking benefits.

A survey of more than 700 nonprofits found that the new tax on transportation fringe benefits would divert an average of about \$12,000 per year from each charity's mission, according to the Independent Sector.



Welles

The IRS' complicated formula prompted the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission to publish a recent primer titled "Does your church need to pay the 'parking lot tax?'"

"For 350,000 churches and more than 1 million nonprofits, it's going to create a tremendous headache

— first of all to calculate how much does their parking benefit cost and then to figure out how much they owe," said Galen Carey, vice president of government relations for the National Association of Evangelicals, based in Washington, D.C.

"In many cases, they'll probably pay more to accountants to figure this out than the actual amount of the tax," Carey said.

A simple way for many churches to avoid the tax might be to remove any "reserved" parking signs for church employees such as the pastor, since the calculation considers how many parking spaces are reserved for employees versus the general public.

If churches take down those signs by March 31 of this year, the IRS said, they won't be subject to the tax provisions that went into effect on Jan. 1.

"So that's a deadline fast approaching," Carey said.

Churches subject to the tax were supposed to begin making quarterly payments last year, although the IRS guidance offered a temporary reprieve on penalties. The first form 990-T for those who must file it for calendar year 2018 is due by May 15.

More than 2,700 congregations and nonprofits signed a petition that the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability sent to Congress last year, calling for a full repeal of the little-known provision in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.



Photo/courtesy of Creative Commons

The 2017 tax overhaul could affect church employee parking benefits.

So far, that repeal hasn't happened.

"One of the confusing things about this new tax is that it is an income tax on expenses, not income," said Dan Busby, president of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, based in Virginia. "And it is a tax applied to tax-exempt organizations, including church, for providing parking to its employees that perform the tax-exempt functions of the organization."

While some lawmakers have been willing to repeal the tax, others have demanded different changes in the corporate tax code as a condition for doing so, Busby said.

The federal government has projected that it will raise \$1.7 billion from churches and charities over the next 10 years from the parking and commuter benefits tax, he added.

"Raising taxes to offset the repeal of this onerous provision is generally considered to be a nonstarter in the Senate," Busby said. "ECFA continues to hope for repeal of the parking tax in the short term."

Back at Calvary Church, Welles keeps watching updates from organizations such as the ECFA to see if the tax will be repealed.

Based on his interpretation of the latest guidance, the pastor said, he doesn't believe his church will owe much. Calvary Church's parking serves the general public, and the congregation has no reserved spaces for employees.

"We do realize that we don't pay income taxes, and we have exemptions for property taxes, so our goal is to invest those dollars we would have paid in taxes into our community in volunteer hours or direct contributions," Welles said. ■

TRUE continued from page 14

God. His portrait of the 12-year-old Jesus is particularly vivid — a normal human boy not only learning from his parents, running around with his cousin (the young John the Baptist), but also questioning and discovering his divine destiny.

At the temple, Jesus meets the great Torah scholars Hillel and Gamaliel, gathered there for the celebration of the Passover. The boy asks about the Golden Rule, about God's laws and about how King David, a sinful man, could be be-

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hosted by Trinity Wall Street. The event also featured several local and state lawmakers.

Early in the session, reform advocate Marvin Mayfield spoke of his own experiences with the criminal-justice system.

"I've been a victim of far more serious crimes in police custody than anything I've ever been arrested for," Mayfield told the audience at the forum, video of which Trinity posted online.

Mayfield spoke of being arrested a few years ago on suspicion of burglary and spending four months at Rikers Island because he didn't have \$10,000 to pay his bail. While there, he said, he was repeatedly assaulted by other detainees,

loved of God.

As the book unfolds, the reader has the sense that author Libby is both telling the tale and following it to see where it will lead. It ends with Mary recalling the Annunciation from the Angel Gabriel and a quote from Luke after the temple scene: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

It feels a bit unfinished, and in some books that would be a flaw. However, for "What If It's True?," there is also the sense that the story continues, as we know it does. ■

who at one point broke his leg. He finally took a plea deal to end his ordeal.

"The system of money bail has not changed and is still disproportionately affecting the black and brown men and women of this state," Mayfield said.

Bail laws are a large factor in the injustices many of the 25,000 people held in New York jails each day suffer while they are locked up, Mayfield said.

"We must tell how [the laws are] hurting us," Mayfield said. "We've all heard about the viciousness, the inhumanity, the brutality, the apathy that exists in our county jails, but until you've lived it, you can't appreciate the true impact of having your freedom taken away and being tossed into a violent and hostile environment." ■