

Episcopal JOURNAL

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NEWS Union of Black Episcopalians marks milestone



ARTS Aretha Franklin stayed true to gospel roots



FEATURE Churches help kids heading for school

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Episcopalians work to mobilize voters

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The election in November should catch no one by surprise at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Philadelphia, Pa. Dozens of church members are participating in voter-education drives, and the congregation's goal is 100 percent parishioner turnout on election day.

Civic engagement also is running high at Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Decatur, Ga., an Atlanta suburb. The congregation is sending parishioners to canvas the neighborhood around the church in support of statewide efforts to register up to 1.2 million new voters.

And the Diocese of Indianapolis has hosted voter outreach events where church volunteers are part of an interfaith initiative seeking to reach more than 100,000 Indianans who haven't voted before.

These are among Episcopalians' efforts across the nation to engage voters in the November elections.

"We often talk about how Jesus' life shows us to be politically active. ... We need to care about the most vulnerable members of our community," said Deacon Carol Duncan, who is coordinating St. Martin-in-the-Fields' participation in election-related efforts. Epis-

copalians like Duncan have been outspoken in their call to "vote faithfully" because they say the church alone cannot change unjust systems. "You can't do that unless you vote," Duncan said.



The Episcopal Public Policy Network created this graphic and tweeted that it is considering developing it as a sticker.

Although Episcopalians may be motivated by personal political beliefs, church-based election efforts are necessarily nonpartisan. Those efforts also are grounded in church policies established by General Convention, which in July passed resolutions calling Episcopalians to greater political engagement. That engagement has the continued support of the church's Office of Government Relations in Washington, D.C.

"Voting and participation in our government is a way of participating in our common life, and that is a Christian obligation," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in a video statement before the 2016 presidential election. The Washington office's Episcopal Public Policy Network referenced Curry's comments Aug. 7 in an updated message about the upcoming elections.

The message provides voting resources, including links to voter-registration information, states' voting policies and polling locations. It also links to the Episcopal Church's voter "toolkit," which provides further guidance on individual action and how to mobilize communities in ways guided by faith.

"We encourage Episcopalians to engage in the democratic process this fall by promoting voter registration, learning about candidates on the ballot in your area, making a plan for yourself to vote on Election Day and helping others to do the same," said Office of Government Relations Director Rebecca Linder Blachly. "Our Vote Faithfully Toolkit provides resources for parishes and individuals to get involved and to participate in our civic duty."

The Aug. 7 message was perfect for adapting for an upcoming newsletter in her diocese, where not everyone has time to volunteer with

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'Heartbreaking' devastation from California wildfires shows strength of church-community ties



Photo/the Rev. Carren Sheldon

The Carr Fire, seen here on the horizon, forced an evacuation of the neighborhood around All Saints' Episcopal Church in Redding, Calif.

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Carren Sheldon's evening on July 26 was supposed to go something like this: evening prayer, dinner, compline, sleep. But after dinner, she returned to All Saints' Episcopal Church in Redding, Calif., to find the neighborhood on the brink of disaster. Heat, wind and "bizarre weather patterns" fueled the sudden advance of a growing wildfire.

"The sky was orange, and the wind was blowing cinders and ash," Sheldon recalled. "The power was out, and the traffic was gridlocked. It was apparent that it was time to gather the irreplaceable records of the church and flee."

The church was evacuated along with most of that section of Redding, a town of about 92,000 people in Northern California. The blaze, known as the Carr Fire, had consumed more than 200,000 acres, destroyed 1,077 homes and hundreds of other buildings and killed at least eight people as of Aug. 12. The fire was one of more than a dozen major wildfires that California authorities were working to contain and extinguish, from the Oregon state line to San Diego County.

By Aug. 1, the Carr Fire was still burning but no longer threatened the neighborhood around All Saints', enabling Sheldon to return and reopen the church. As interim rector, she

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CONVERSATIONS

For our new “Conversations” page, *Episcopal Journal* seeks a range of thoughts and opinions from throughout the church. Letters to the editor and ideas for opinion columns may be sent to editorial@episcopaljournal.org. The posts below are from the comments sections of various *Episcopal News Service* articles. Some have been edited for length.

Same-sex marriage

I firmly believe that “discernment” (about the nature of marriage and love in our church) based on increasing wisdom is what has led us to decide to include same-sex as well as different-sex marriage in our liturgies and in our communities, not merely “feelings.”

When Linda and I were married in our packed Episcopal church in 1988, the issue of marrying same-sex couples had not yet arisen fully in our denomination. Now, however, we know more about human sexuality and biology across species — including the fact that the scientifically normative sexual behavior of many species, including ours, includes both heterosexual and homosexual components or spectra. This scientific knowledge of the creation, as understood through God’s repeated comment in Genesis (“and God saw that it was good”), offers a new vision of the Christian possibilities for love and marriage: The old saying is true that “God does not make junk.”

Today, in my home church, Linda and I are happily surrounded by committed people of faith from all walks of life who represent many orientations in the spectrum of human sexuality. The light of Christ is clearly and discernibly shining in all of these people and in their relationships, and the light radiating in and through them increases my own personal understanding of God’s boundless love.

Yes, I am aware of the passages within God’s “eternal” Word that contradict each other and are problematic, but I believe our church today is basing its liturgical decisions and other actions on the highest and best understandings (discernments) of God’s truth and how best to witness to and live out his love in our own day.

Jon Spangler
July 13, 2018

Jon, thanks for your thoughtful comments. Yet here is a problem. Some in the Episcopal Church say that through

“discernment” [they can] claim that same-sex marriage is acceptable and, indeed, appropriate within the Christian belief system. Others say that through “discernment” same-sex marriage is neither acceptable nor appropriate within the Christian belief system. One side strongly affirms something to be the case whilst the other side strongly denies that same thing to be the case. *Both* cannot possibly be correct for that would be a logical contradiction along the lines of “round-square.” First, question: Which side *is* correct? Second question: How does one come to that conclusion? Third question: How is the church then to view those many who are shown (not merely thought) [to be] wrong?

Frank Harrison
July 14, 2018

The “Jesus Movement”

This is a response to [Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s] call to follow the “way of Jesus.” As I read the Gospels, one thing makes itself very apparent. The way of Jesus is first of all the way of repentance “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Luke 5:32) In every case where Jesus brings healing and restoration, he does so first and foremost through the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 9:2) The way of Jesus is the way of salvation, and that salvation begins with repentance. Sadly, this is not the emphasis of Bishop Curry; instead, he skips to the good part without emphasizing how to get there.

I believe the church is in deep need of repentance and that it is the only way to healing and restoration for us. This is not the emphasis of Bishop Curry, and I believe it is very misleading. I believe it sets up a false notion that emphasizing repentance is only for Christians from a certain strata of the church. This has become an increasing weakness of the Episcopal Church, and it can lead to deep misunderstandings about what following the way of Jesus really means. It is, I think, very easy to preach about love; it is much more challenging to preach about the need for repentance.

Jewels Wolf
July 16, 2018

Last time I attended the Eucharist, we confessed our sins and repented of them before receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord. How does our weekly, or

more frequent, common prayer/worship — which is the essence of being an Anglican — *not* fully support and reinforce our need for repentance? Every time Bishop Curry celebrates the Eucharist, he leads the church in repentance.

D. Gordon Braun Jr.
July 16, 2018

Certainly, repentance was a factor in some of Jesus’ teachings, following up John the Baptist. However, Jesus could do no acts of power when there was no faith, such as in Nazareth. People were healed through their faith, not their repentance. The way of Jesus is one of love. Jesus’ commandments were about love, not repentance. Granted, when we don’t love, we need to repent. A theology focusing on repentance sidesteps the supreme act of love on the cross. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Jesus did not require a worldwide mea culpa before the crucifixion. To focus on a theology of repentance is to denigrate Jesus’ salvific acts.

Craig Kuehn
July 17, 2018

The church and racial reconciliation

Please *do not* come at me with this “white privilege” crap. Using that term, among others, is just another way to further spur discontent and divisiveness. If you are Caucasian and do not leave the [Episcopal Church], then in my view, you are a person who wants to see the U.S.A. follow the path of the Roman Empire to self-destruction. I do not believe that there is systemic racism in this country; and while we are “chatting,” racism (bigotry) is *not* peculiar to white folks; bigotry is, sadly, human and will be around so long as humans are here. I

but my own, and the bigotry against black people and American Indians are the actions of evil people; ethnicity had nothing to do with their evil. They perpetrated their bigotry because that is who they were.

Larry Waters
August 9, 2018

By your very assertion that “white privilege is crap,” you are exhibiting that very self-same white privilege you denigrate as not being real. You do not have the ability to speak for all peoples in marginalized communities. You do not know our struggles, nor can you speak for them (speaking as a member of one of those marginalized communities, as a gay man.) While you are correct that it is not you personally who is responsible for the sins of slavery or of economic injustice, or so many other social ills, we all share the responsibility as members of a people who through their own erroneous deeds and actions throughout history have caused these injustices to exist.

We are all historically responsible for the sins of colonialism, exploitation and greed; we are all responsible for the sins of slavery and racism. It is all of our duties to make amends for these evils and ensure that they never happen again.

Jordan Sakal
August 10, 2018

Jordan, thank you for your comment. You show a clear sociological understanding that others who wish to use individual evidences for their points of view do not understand. Racism is a sociological and spiritual reality, not simply an interactive and psychological one.

I would like to hear more from priests of our church, like myself, in this dialogue.

The Rev. Ken Taber
August 10, 2018

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK



JUDGING FROM the number of comments on YouTube, the passing of legendary soul singer Aretha Franklin caused many people to go online to view some of her great performances.

Some folks leave religious comments, prompting one person to respond that Franklin, in the clip, was singing a secular song and “didn’t have a religious bone in her body.”

The commenter was wrong. Franklin first performed as a child at Detroit’s New Bethel Baptist Church, where her father, C.L. Franklin, was a well-known preacher. She grew up in the gospel-music tradition of the African-American church.

All her subsequent recordings — even the very tone of her voice — expressed the sense of pain and longing embedded in gospel music. She recorded two gospel albums, and one clip on YouTube has her rendition of “Amazing Grace” bringing Oprah

Winfrey to tears. As the story on page 13 notes, she once told an interviewer that her faith was important to her and had “sustained me to this day.”

The Episcopal hymn collection now contains gospel music and spirituals, particularly in “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” but classic Anglican hymns, with their measured emotion, occupy an opposite end of the spectrum.

I recently visited Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., participating in a style of worship that was openly emotional, with easily sung music and preaching that was memorably theatrical and directly personal. I plan to have that experience again.

Any of us can have that experience in the Episcopal Church by going online, since we have a preacher in this great tradition in our presiding bishop, Michael Curry. Go to www.episcopalchurch.org/generalconvention-2018-media-hub and access Curry’s rousing sermons. Better allow some time, as you won’t be able to tear yourself away, once he gets started. Like Aretha, the man’s got soul. ■

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NEWS

Welby address to U.N. council a first

Anglican Communion News Service

Archbishop Justin Welby was scheduled to participate in an open debate August 29 on “mediation and its role in conflict prevention” at the U.N. Security Council, making him the first archbishop of Canterbury to address the council. The event was one of two big “discretionary events” organized by the United Kingdom during its rolling presidency of the United Nations in August.

“Over the years, the U.N. has been increasing the amount of effort it puts

into mediation,” U.K. Ambassador to the United Nations Karen Pierce said at a news conference. “I think everybody agrees there is still more that could be done there: There is more that we can do to share best practice; there is more we can do to talk about what works.



Photo/Lambeth Palace
Welby

“A lot of countries — both off and on the [Security] Council — have very personal experiences of how mediation has helped resolve conflict or see off the threat of conflict, and we want to tap into that knowledge,” said Pierce, who invited Welby to brief the debate.

Welby has extensive experience of

international mediation and is a member of the U.N. Secretary General António Guterres’ High Level Advisory Board on Mediation, Pierce noted. “He has a particular offering to make. We wanted to have a briefer who we hope council members will enjoy hearing from. I have heard the archbishop speak; I think he will be a very good contributor.

“I do know that he comes often to the United Nations and takes his contribution to it seriously,” she said. “He makes frequent visits to New York [and] is very interested in the work of the United Nations. I had a very good chat with him before I took up my job as ambassador.”

The Anglican Communion has official observer status with the United Nations.

The communion’s representative to the United Nations, Jack Palmer-White, called Welby’s invitation to address the council “a really exciting and significant moment.”

“Not only does his participation as an expert briefer for the debate acknowledge his own expertise on matters of peace and reconciliation, but it is also an opportunity to draw attention to the vital work of mediation, conflict resolution and peace building going on around the Anglican Communion,” he said.

“I hope that those participating in the discussions can take away a really clear sense of the important role that churches and other faith actors can and do play in the peaceful resolution of conflicts.” ■

Haiti election probed

By Mary Frances Schjonberg Episcopal News Service

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has taken the next step in a never-before-used canonical process contesting the election of the Very Rev. Kerwin Delicat as bishop coadjutor for the Diocese of Haiti.

Curry on July 17 officially asked the Province II Court of Review to convene as a fact-finding commission and prepare a report on allegations of what a group of Haitian Episcopalians called an “electoral coup d’état.” The group represents more than 20 percent of the clergy and lay electors of the June 2 convention that chose Delicat, dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

The 16 priests and 26 laity say that Diocesan Bishop Jean Zaché Duracin and his supporters:

Violated a covenant that was agreed to just more than a year ago by Curry, Duracin, Haiti Suffragan Bishop Ogé Beauvoir and the diocesan standing committee to “address and resolve many of the issues of conflict that have been burdening the diocese.”

Manipulated ordinations to influence the election results.

Developed an illegitimate slate of candidates by eliminating those who did not support the bishop.

Violated election canons and the diocese’s bylaws governing elections.

Planned and implemented obstacles to voting that amounted to fraud.

The electors also claim that a different candidate had been expelled from the election process because he had “beaten, tortured and humiliated” a lay woman who was pregnant with his child and pressured her to have an abortion. They allege that Delicat and another priest witnessed the abuse, did not stop it and did not denounce it.

Duracin is retiring after serving as bishop since 1994. The ordination and consecration of his successor is set for Jan. 5.

The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley, bishop for pastoral development in Curry’s office, told the House of Bishops about the contestation on July 9 during a legislative session at General Convention. He noted that the June 2 election came after the convention failed to elect a bishop after five ballots on May 17.

The court of review has 30 days from July 17 to complete its work and give the presiding bishop a report. Curry then has 15 days to send that report to the bishop diocesan, the chancellor, diocesan standing committee and the secretary of the convention. The secretary must send a copy of the report to each of the delegates who filed the objection.

The standing committee must include the report in the materials it sends to the church’s other diocesan standing committees as part of its request that they consent to the election. The presiding bishop does the same as part of his request for consent from bishops exercising jurisdiction. A majority of each group must consent to the election. ■

Korean primate elected



Jun Yoo

Bishop of Daejeon Moses Nak Jun Yoo was elected Aug. 10 as primate of the Anglican Church of Korea. Elected at the province’s General Assembly, he will succeed Bishop Onesimus Park, the bishop of Busan, for two years.

The assembly also appointed a new general secretary, Peter Jun Gi Choi. In a message to the Anglican Communion Office, the province asked “for your continuing prayer for the new leadership and churches of the Anglican Church of Korea.”

— ACNS

Ecuador Litoral diocese elects bishop

The Rev. Cristobal León Lozano was elected bishop of the Diocese of Ecuador Litoral on the first ballot during an electoral assembly at the Cathedral Church of Christ the King (Cristo Rey) in Guayaquil Aug. 4. He will succeed Bishop Alfredo Morante España, bishop of the Province IX diocese for 23 years.

The bishop-elect was ordained a priest in 1998 and is the archdeacon of Manabí. His consecration is scheduled for Jan. 12.



Lozano

— ENS

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AROUND THE CHURCH

Curry names new canon

The Rev. Canon E. Mark Stevenson, director of Episcopal Migration Ministries, begins a new role Sept. 1 as canon to the presiding bishop for ministry within the Episcopal Church. He succeeds the Rev. Michael Hunn, who was elected bishop of the Diocese of Rio Grande.

Stevenson will support the ministry of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry as a pastoral assistant and strategic and theological adviser. Responsibilities include serving as liaison and representative to bishops and overseeing preparations for meetings of the House of Bishops, and directing the work of the

Formation, Youth, and Young Adult Ministries, and Transition Ministries departments.



Stevenson

Stevenson has directed the church's refugee-resettlement program since May 2016. From 2005 until he joined the presiding bishop's staff in 2013 as the Episcopal Church domestic poverty missioner, Stevenson served as canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of Louisiana. When Hurricane Katrina made landfall just days before he took his post, the scope of his ministry expanded dramatically to include working closely with then-Bishop Charles Jenkins, as well as local, regional, national

and international leaders and groups, to put into place processes for effective relief ministry. In partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development, the diocese instituted an Office of Disaster Response that evolved over the years into Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana, a ministry focused not only on immediate disaster relief but also on the transformation of lives by building a community of care and respect for all human beings.

Stevenson serves on the board of The Living Church Foundation and served as a member of the Episcopal Relief & Development board. He will be based at the Episcopal Church Center in New York.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Presiding bishop recovering from surgery

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry was resting comfortably following surgery to remove his prostate gland on July 31. According to his family and his medical team, the surgery went well and he was expected to recover fully.

On July 25, Curry shared news that he recently had been diagnosed with prostate cancer and would be having surgery.

Curry and his family said they were touched by the outpouring of prayers and well wishes, but asked for privacy during his recovery.

— Episcopal Church Office of Public Affairs

Library under construction



Photo/courtesy Church of the Good Shepherd

Church of the Good Shepherd in Ringwood, N.J., chose a construction theme for its Vacation Bible School this year, with activities focused on building the church, community and environment and building up ourselves. Here, campers build a "tiny library," which they later installed at a community park about two miles away from the church.

EDS sells property

Episcopal Divinity School has sold its 8-acre Brattle Street property in Cambridge, Mass., to its former neighbor, Lesley University.

The sale, announced by Lesley University on July 18, is part of the seminary's transition to New York, where it has become affiliated with Union Theological Seminary. The Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas became dean of the new entity, called Episcopal Divinity School at Union, in August 2017.

— EDS at Union

Travel grants offered

Travel reimbursement grants are available to individuals who would like to use the African American Episcopal Historical Collection (AAEHC) for research. Faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, independent researchers and Episcopal clergy and laity are encouraged to apply. Funds may be used for transportation, meals, lodging, photocopying and other research costs.

The AAEHC is a joint project of the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church and Virginia Theological Seminary. Through documents, institutional records, oral histories, personal papers and photographs, the collection documents the experiences of African-American Episcopalians. Individual collections contain significant references to religious faith and involvement in the Episcopal Church, particularly at the regional, diocesan and local levels.

Topics that are among the collection's strengths include:

- The Afro-Anglican conferences
- The histories of black Episcopal parishes
- Networking and mentorship among black clergy
- The history of the Union of Black Episcopalians
- The history of the Conference of Church Workers Among Colored People
- The history of the Bishop Payne Divinity School that educated African Americans for the priesthood during the late 19th and early 20th centuries
- The editing of the Lift Every Voice and Sing hymnal
- The work of artist Allan Rohan Crite
- The Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity

• The contributions of various individuals to the Episcopal Church, such as Bishop John Thomas Walker, Bishop Walter Decoster Dennis, Verna Dozier, the Rev. Canon Harold T. Lewis, the Rev. Canon Thomas W. S. Logan Sr. and Canon Diane Porter.

— AAEHC

Convention summary available

"A Summary of Actions of the 79th General Convention" is available online at the General Convention website at www.generalconvention.org. The text of resolutions can be found in the resolutions section of the virtual binder at vbinder.net.

The summary presents the results of resolutions and elections and appointments made during the convention, held July 5-13 in Austin, Texas. "The Journal of the 79th General Convention," the official record of the proceedings, will be available in 2019. For more information, e-mail gcoffice@generalconvention.org.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Training course to equip refugee advocates

Registration is open for "Love God, Love Neighbor," a training course for clergy and laity that is designed to equip Episcopalians to be advocates, allies and ambassadors for refugees and the ministry of refugee resettlement.

Sponsored by Episcopal Migration Ministries, it will be held Oct. 11-13 at Christ Church Cathedral, Louisville, Ky.

The training explores the global displacement crisis, United States refugee policy, how refugee resettlement works, faith-based advocacy for refugees and organizing to welcome and support refugees in one's home community. The gathering will bring together people from across the Episcopal Church plus ecumenical and lay partners, while exploring different local contexts as they relate to refugee resettlement.

Registration costs \$150. Deadline is 5 p.m. Eastern time Aug. 31. For more information, contact Allison Duvall, Episcopal Migration Ministries manager for church relations and engagement, at aduvall@episcopalchurch.org.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

OBITUARY

Gender-justice advocate dies

Colleagues and supporters have paid tribute to a leading campaigner for gender justice within the Anglican Communion, Beth Adamson-Strauss. Beth Adamson, as she was known, a Methodist who worked as a volunteer for the Episcopal Church, died on Aug. 12 in the hospital, where she was receiving treatment for serious injuries from an accident two weeks earlier.



Adamson

For several years, she had led the Episcopal Church's campaigning on gender justice issues at the United Nations. She helped to organize delegations from both the church and the wider Anglican Communion to the annual U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) meetings in New York.

"Together, we worked on every aspect of preparing women from around the world to attend this annual two-

week session," said Rachel Chardon, former general program and administrative officer at the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations in New York. "This included a timeline that would generate over a seven-month period materials for study that addressed the priority theme set for that year with the main purpose of empowering women. When the two-week event concluded, these women had bonded, and they soon returned home with new resources to share with their respective communities."

In 2015, Adamson received an Award for Global Service for her dedicated work to strengthen Anglican women's presence at the UNCSW.

"Beth was instrumental in organizing what was then called Anglican Women's Empowerment," said Margaret Rose, ecumenical and interreligious deputy to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and former Episcopal Church director for women's ministries. "She has since continued that work through the Anglican Communion office, the U.N. Working Group on Girls and much more."

— Anglican Communion News Service

AROUND THE CHURCH

New grant program to support congregational work on racial healing

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A new grant program approved by General Convention in July will help congregations tackle issues of racial reconciliation at the local level.

Building on the progress made under the church's Becoming Beloved Community framework, the grant program will be the first such churchwide program dedicated to financially supporting Episcopalians working toward racial healing and justice in their congregations and communities.

The 2019-2021 church budget includes \$750,000 for the grants. While that is much less than the \$5 million requested, it "could really seed some powerful work," said Heidi Kim, the church's staff officer for racial reconciliation. She hopes that the grant process will shine a brighter light on existing efforts already making a difference, she said. "I think

people all over the church are doing amazing things that we just don't know about."

This year's United Thank Offering grants also focused on racial healing, reconciliation and justice. UTO in July announced it was awarding more than \$1.2 million in grants for 34 projects.

The convention also passed a resolution calling for creating a Becoming Beloved Community by the end of 2019 to support and inspire the leaders of racial-reconciliation initiatives. This will allow people involved in local programs to share insights with others across the wider church.

As these programs develop, church leaders and staff point to the model of the Episcopal Church's church planting network, through which the creators of new ministries receive grant money and learn from fellow church planters.

"That's when grants make a huge difference in the church, and that's what we now have the opportunity to build



Photo/the Episcopal Church

A labyrinth diagram showing the four parts of the Episcopal Church's Becoming Beloved Community is colored for an Advent mailing.

around 'beloved community,'" said the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care.

General Convention in 2015 identified racial reconciliation as one of the church's three top priorities, along with evangelism and creation care.

Last year, the church launched Becoming Beloved Community. The framework divides into four parts, illustrated as a labyrinth: telling the truth about our churches and race, proclaiming the dream of 'beloved community,' practicing the way of love in the pattern of Jesus, and repairing the breach in society.

Because Becoming Beloved Community launched in the middle of the triennium, about \$1 million was left from the money budgeted for implementation in 2016-2018. When General Convention met in July in Austin, Texas, it approved a new budget that applies that unused amount to continued implementation in the new triennium.

Overall, the convention approved \$10.4 million for work on racial justice and reconciliation over the next three years. That funds a range of expenses, from anti-poverty initiatives to ethnic ministries, as well as Becoming Beloved Community and the new grant pro-

gram. The convention tasked Executive Council, which next meets in October, with developing and implementing the grant program.

The local focus of the grants will be critical, said the Rev. Edwin Johnson, a deputy from Massachusetts and chair of General Convention's Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee.

"We're excited because there is considerable funding available for communities to do this work in their own context," said Johnson, rector of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Dorchester, Mass. "There was overwhelming support in both houses [of General Convention] for this work and, in particular, for work that is decentralized."

Johnson points to the experience of his own congregation, which is largely Afro-Caribbean. He received a Mission Enterprise Zone grant to start a Spanish-language ministry there, and it has thrived with support from the network of Episcopal church planters, he said.

Johnson is active in developing a similar network of racial-reconciliation leaders. About 50 people testified on resolutions before Johnson's committee at General Convention. Afterward, he reached out to each to enlist them in a new community of action around racial healing.

"I think we did a really good job of bringing forth and calling forth new leadership in this area," he said. Their energy is "precisely what we're going to need for the long haul."

Catherine Meeks, a leader in the church's longtime push for racial justice, echoed Johnson in emphasizing the role of congregations.

"This work has to be done at the parish level ultimately ... Becoming Beloved Community is trying to make that happen," said Meeks, one of the featured speakers during a TEConversation on racial reconciliation at General Convention. "The more informed, the more conscious people are, hopefully, the more they engage with the work."

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EPISCOPAL LIVES

Virginia bishop to retire

Diocese of Virginia Bishop Shannon S. Johnston announced Aug. 3 that he will resign his office effective Nov. 3.

"I will then serve the diocese in a consulting capacity to facilitate the transition to new leadership," he wrote in a letter to the diocese. "I will fully retire effective July 1, 2019, having served over 12 years as a bishop in this diocese."



Johnston

The announcement appeared to culminate a process that began in October 2017 when he announced plans to seek a suffragan bishop after the retirement of Assistant Bishop Ted Gullick. On May 24, Johnston announced an end to the search, citing "serious questions raised by members of the diocesan staff having to do with the leadership and the culture among diocesan staff," and saying he was taking "full responsibility for this situation." Johnston also said that he had begun to look more seriously about retiring earlier than he originally had planned, having reached age 60 and having 30 years of service in the Episcopal Church.

On Aug. 7, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry sent a letter to the Diocese of Virginia expressing his gratitude for Johnston and his wife, Ellen, for their "ministry among you and for your faithful engagement in God's call through Jesus upon your own lives and ministry."

— Episcopal News Service

Professor wins award

Emilie Amt, Hildegard Pilgram professor of history at Hood College, Frederick, Md., has received the 2018 Nelson R. Burr Prize from the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church.

Amt was honored for her article "Down from the Balcony: African Americans and Episcopal Congregations in Washington County, Maryland, 1800-1864," published in the



Amt

March 2017 issue of *Anglican and Episcopal History*. While her professional focus specializes in the experience of religious women and in 12th- and 13th-century English government, finance and war, for the last eight years she has researched slavery in western Maryland. This work grew out of a desire at her church, St. Mark Episcopal Church-Lappans in Boonsboro, Md., to know more about the enslaved people who attended when it was built in 1849. Her work has also contributed to the Truth & Reconciliation project and Trail of Souls Pilgrimage in the Diocese of Maryland. Her most recent book is "The Latin Cartulary of Godstow Abbey," published by Oxford University Press for the British Academy in 2014.

The Burr prize honors scholar Nelson R. Burr, whose two-volume "A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America" and other works constitute landmarks in the field of religious historiography. Those interested in obtaining a copy of Amt's article may contact Matthew P. Payne at administration@hsec.us or 920-383-1910.

— Historical Society of the Episcopal Church

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NEWS

VOTE continued from page 1

voter-engagement drives, said the Rev. Fatima Yakuba-Madus, missionary for community engagement for the Diocese of Indianapolis.

In her former role as a deacon at St. John's Episcopal Church in Speedway, Ind., she regularly participated in neighborhood canvassing — knocking on doors, encouraging people to vote and helping them register if they weren't yet registered.

As missionary, she is active in the collective of congregations known as Faith in Indiana, which is leading the effort to reach more than 100,000 unregistered voters and persuade them to vote on Nov. 6. Church volunteers have called some of those residents during phone banks the diocese has hosted at Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis and St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, located north of the capital in Carmel. The Episcopal volunteers' specific focus on reaching residents in a legislative district with historically low voter turnout.

Civic action is rightly influenced by faith, Yakuba-Madus said. "We have to participate in voting."

Government agencies have unparalleled capacity to fulfill the Christian mission of serving people living on the economic margins of society, and "nobody's going to if we don't vote," she said.

General Convention regularly affirms the church's commitment to political engagement.

"Our church has policy that urges all of us to advocate for the right to vote, including eliminating barriers to voting," Blachly said. "Voter-registration issues are addressed at the state level, so we encourage you to get involved."

In July, General Convention approved two resolutions addressing voting rights. Resolution C047 commits the church to advocating in support of the principle of "one person, one vote."

Resolution D003 condemns measures that result in voter suppression and supports steps to increase voter participation, such as "policies that will increase early voting, extend registration periods, guarantee an adequate number of voting locations, allow absentee balloting without the necessity of having an excuse, and prohibit forms of identification that restrict voter participation."

The resolution also criticizes partisan gerrymandering and urges the National Conference of State Legislators to develop a fair process for establishing legislative and congressional districts.

Gerrymandering is the tactic of drawing districts that will favor one party over the other in elections, usually by packing similar voters into just a few districts or diluting them across several districts where they will remain in the minority.

The debate over gerrymandering is complicated further by gerrymandering's use, under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to ensure greater minority representation in Congress by drawing district lines to create "majority-minority" districts. Critics have argued that this has had the long-term effect of pooling more Democratic voters together and

ceding more districts to Republicans.

"For the follower of Jesus, gerrymandering undercuts our fundamental vow to respect the dignity of every human being," the Rev. Jarrett Kerbel, rector of Philadelphia's St. Martin-in-the-Fields, wrote in an October 2017 article. "Participation in shaping our common life is a Christian duty and something Christians regard, respect and protect for all people regardless of affiliation, belief or nonbelief."

At the time, Pennsylvania was grappling with a gerrymandering controversy. In January, the state Supreme Court ruled the congressional district boundaries were unconstitutional. The court followed up with a map establishing new district lines that will take effect when the next term of Congress begins in 2019.

St. Martin-in-the-Fields, meanwhile, has turned its focus to voter education and voter registration.

"We know how important voting is, particularly this year," said Duncan. Her church has partnered with a group called POWER, an interfaith coalition of more than 50 congregations focused on community organizing in southeastern and central Pennsylvania.

POWER organizers led a forum in July at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and about 40 parishioners attended to learn more about voter-mobilization efforts, Duncan said. Training was scheduled



Photo/Dennis Patterson Jr.

Soyini Coke, right, arranged for a voter mobilization training at Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Decatur, Ga., led by the New Georgia Project organizers, including Carey C.J. Jenkins.

Aug. 26 to coincide with the kickoff event for a voter-education drive.

Other examples of Episcopal engagement across the country include Good Samaritan Episcopal Church in San Diego, which will host the League of Women Voters on Sept. 29 for a presentation about state propositions. The Diocese of Texas' Episcopal Health Foundation partnered in 2016 with Mi Familia Vota to register Latino voters, and similar efforts are planned for this election cycle in metropolitan Houston and Atlanta.

"People's votes really do matter," said Soyini Coke, a member of Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Decatur, who is coordinating the congregation's voter-registration efforts in the Atlanta metropolitan area.



Photo/courtesy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields

The reform group Fair Districts PA held a presentation in October 2017 at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Pennsylvania about redistricting. The event featured the map of Pennsylvania in the form of a puzzle that attendees could piece together.

Coke never voted and was disinterested in the political process — until the November 2016 presidential election, she said. She was disheartened by the outcome but committed herself to turning her anger into action, she said. "It is not sufficient to just complain."

She and about 20 parishioners met at Holy Cross on Aug. 4 for voter-registration training, followed by making direct contact with voters. Some broke into teams of two to knock on doors, guiding unregistered voters through the process of signing up. Others remained at the church to call potential voters on lists provided by the New Georgia Project.

The nonpartisan project has been

registering Georgians to vote for several years, with a goal of full participation of all eligible voters. It identified 400 unregistered residents within a two-mile radius of Holy Cross, Coke said. The Aug. 4 registration drive generated 396 phone calls, 97 contacts with voters and seven new voter registrations.

Holy Cross hopes to organize similar drives before the November election, Coke said. It is a majority black church, and such activism has deep roots in the black church tradition, she said.

"It's very natural there," she said. "If you're going to talk about activism in the black community, the church is at the center of that and always has been." ■

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Meeks' work in developing and conducting anti-racism training for the Diocese of Atlanta has served as a model for such training, which was mandated for ordained and lay leaders by a 2000 resolution passed by General Convention.

Implementation has been uneven. "It's a mandate that nobody really enforces," she said.

In July, General Convention passed Resolution A044 to try to clarify the criteria for such training, suggesting a structure coinciding with the four parts of Becoming Beloved Community. Another resolution said that "not all dioceses have followed the spirit of the anti-racism training required," and called for better documentation of participation in the training.

The training is vital, Meeks said, because it provides a safe setting for Episcopalians to confront tough questions about their church and themselves while helping them open their minds and consider ways they engage in racial healing and justice.

Meeks is executive director of the Ab-salom Jones Center for Racial Healing, a ministry of the Diocese of Atlanta that offers a churchwide resource for fostering open dialogue about race and racism.

Questions about the language of reconciliation and clarifying the mandate of the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism generated spirited debate

during General Convention. Meeks led a push this year to move away from the term "anti-racism" in favor of a greater focus on healing, justice and reconciliation. She helped Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright and others draft a resolution shifting that language.

"To talk about our work under the rubric of healing and justice and reconciliation just has a more positive energy around it and states what we're trying to do in the world," Meeks said.

The final resolution changed the committee's name to the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism & Reconciliation. It also adjusted the church's focus to "dismantling racism" while emphasizing "racial healing, justice and reconciliation."

"What pleased me the most was the conversation we had around the issue, because I think that conversation was very healthy and very needed," Meeks said.

Many people feel strongly about these issues, whether affirming the need to maintain a focus on dismantling racism or pushing for a more theological approach to racial healing, said Kim, the staff officer for reconciliation. The value of the Becoming Beloved Community framework, she said, is that it seeks to engage all Episcopalians in that conversation, wherever they may be on their spiritual journey.

"We all have room to grow in terms of how we can be reconcilers and healers," she said. ■

NEWS

FIRE continued from page 1

had spent the past week checking on parishioners' safety and providing pastoral care to church members and neighbors, several of whom had lost their homes or were just beginning to assess the damage.

Sheldon also kept in regular contact with the Diocese of Northern California's Disaster Response Team, which has been supporting All Saints' and the smaller congregations south of Redding affected by two large fires near the Mendocino National Forest. Members of those congregations, too, were displaced

or were helping with the emergency response.

As California's annual wildfire season expands outside of its normal months and the fires grow hotter and larger, the diocese's Disaster Response Team has responded to several large fires in recent years. The team's priority in each case is to reach out to Episcopalians affected by the fires while also establishing local churches as resources for communities dealing with the devastation.

"For us it's, how do we help [the churches] to be a community center for so many people who are displaced and

traumatized?" said Kati Braak, director of operations, who helps coordinate the team. "That cup of coffee, the WiFi, a prayer — those things go a long way in helping the surrounding communities find some stability. ... These don't have to be big things."

The Carr Fire came within three or four blocks of All Saints' but caused no damage to the church other than dropping a layer of ash on the ground that had to be cleaned up before the building could reopen. The typical Sunday attendance at All Saints' tops 100, but on July 29, parishioners had to find other options for worship. Some joined St. James Lutheran Church in Redding, and others traveled to St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Anderson.

Northern California Bishop Barry Beisner, in a video message to All Saints', said he and Episcopalians churchwide were "mindful of the great challenges that you face, the great struggle that you face."

"We will be praying for you," Beisner said. "We watch, wait and pray together, and we're prepared, once the time for watching and waiting is done. ... We will support you and help you and work together with you for as long as needed. We are with you. Christ is with you. We are one in him."

Before its own evacuation, All Saints' served as a gathering place for Redding residents threatened by the fire. Now that the church has reopened, Sheldon is offering the church, the largest community facility in that part of Redding, as a resource for organizations that need a place to stage relief efforts.

Some of the support provided by the diocese has been money raised through its standing Disaster Relief Fund. A diocesan newsletter reported that the fund paid for \$1,500 worth of Target and Safeway gift cards that Sheldon distributed. An additional \$5,000 was to cover other fire-related needs.

Much of the support the diocese provides is guidance on how congregations can partner with other local organizations in matching resources to community needs, Braak said. The diocese receives similar support from Episcopal Relief & Development, which also distributes financial assistance through emergency grants that the diocese is requesting.

"We're called by God to care for the whole community," Braak said.

Sheldon said she felt that calling too. "We are in the very early stages of this,"

assessing the community's needs and how to help, she said.

At the same time, some members of All Saints' live west of Redding and had to evacuate homes still in or near the fire zone.

"Those people are still very much in harm's way, and there are a lot of people in our congregation who cannot get back into their homes," she said.

The threat also remains for Episcopalians living in the area of the Mendocino Complex Fire, composed of two fires that as of Aug. 12 had burned more than 300,000 acres and had become the largest wildfire in state history. St. John's Episcopal Church in Lakeport is located directly east of one of those fires.

Deborah Smith, senior warden at St. John's, also works with the Red Cross and has been on the front line of the emergency response in that area.

"I ... have been working as a shelter manager, first in Kelseyville and then in Lower Lake when we had to move the shelter when Kelseyville went under mandatory evacuation," Smith told ENS in a brief written message late July 31.

Other congregation members have faced evacuations as well, including the church organist and his family, according to a Facebook post.

The other Episcopal congregation in the region, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, to the west in Ukiah, is farther away from the Mendocino Complex Fire but still was affected. The Rev. John Day, priest-in-charge, reported intermittent power outages July 30 in a news release about hosting a camp for 50 children traumatized by the fires.

As of Aug. 1, the Mendocino Complex Fire was located in mostly unincorporated areas, where the Episcopal congregations nearby are smaller. The situation there was different from what people in Redding faced with the Carr fire, Braak said, but the church maintained a similar focus on community outreach.

Sheldon lives in a part of Redding that did not need to evacuate, so she spent time in the city checking on people by phone, e-mail and text messages. She visited people staying in shelters or at the homes of neighbors. There is a great need for pastoral care in a time of disaster, she said.

"It's heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking. And it's also what I'm called to do," Sheldon said. "It's hard, but it's important. And it's a blessing to be able to do it." ■

Two dioceses ponder sharing one bishop, staff, mission

Episcopal News Service

A friendship in the House of Bishops between the Episcopal Church's oldest active diocesan bishop and its youngest has fostered a first-of-its-kind collaborative experiment that could point to the future shape and feel of dioceses.

Western New York Bishop William Franklin, 71, told the House of Bishops at General Convention that he and Northwestern Pennsylvania Bishop Sean Rowe, 43, acted upon a common concern for the mission of the church.



Photo/ENS

Northwestern Pennsylvania Bishop Rowe, left and Western New York Bishop Franklin announce plans for greater collaboration between their dioceses.

On Oct. 26-27, the two dioceses will hold a joint convention in Niagara Falls, N.Y. Western New York will vote on whether to make Rowe its provisional bishop for five years. Franklin is due to retire April 2.

For the past five years, Episcopalians in the two dioceses have shared a formation process for deacons and a board to examine chaplains for the ordination process, and they have held some joint clergy conferences. The dioceses recently started sharing transition-ministry functions.

It will remain a collaboration, not a merger, if the Western New York convention elects Rowe. Merging would require the consent of General Convention, and neither diocese currently wants to lose its identity, the two bishops told ENS.

"The only way we're going to know if these models work is to try them, so it's a risk. This is not being driven by finances or trying to drive success," Rowe said. "This is us asking, 'What do we think is the next best step, given where we are?'"

James Isaac, chair of the Western

New York Standing Committee, said his attitude was: "Why not give it a try?"

"The pooled energy of ministry of both the clergy between Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania and the strength of the laity has huge potential," he said.

The neighboring dioceses are in a part of the United States that has undergone a massive economic downturn. Western New York, with headquarters in Buffalo, includes 57 churches. Northwestern Pennsylvania, headquartered in Erie, has 33 congregations.

The area has declined with the loss of employment in now-outdated steel mills. However, redevelopment is happening in cities in both dioceses. "Both areas have seen the worst, and they're coming back in a different form," Isaac said.

"We're trying to do church in a way that allows the Episcopal Church to survive and flourish in an area where we've had challenges — demographic and cultural challenges," Franklin said.

Rowe agreed. "This is not a move to save an institution. This is not about diocesan viability. What this is about is what's best for the mission of the church in our region and the mission of God," he told the bishops.

Eventually, the dioceses would share one staff. Rowe would have offices in both Buffalo and Erie, which are about 90 minutes apart, and would visit congregations in both dioceses. Elected leaders in both dioceses would exercise their canonical functions, and each diocese would maintain its cathedral.

Both bishops point to the possible financial efficiencies of the collaboration, which could free up more money for mission. For instance, a bishop search can cost upwards of \$200,000.

Combining diocesan staffs will "increase the staff capacity for the same number of dollars" by allowing for more specialized staff, Rowe said. He said he doubted any staff members would lose jobs because of anticipated retirements and other departures.

If some people do lose their jobs, Rowe said, "we're going to treat people like a church does. We're going to be good to people and fair and help people find the next thing." ■

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NEWS

Union of Black Episcopalians celebrates 50 years

By Pat McCaughan
Episcopal News Service

The Union of Black Episcopalians wrapped up a 50th-anniversary celebratory conference in Nassau, Bahamas, July 27, reviewing and renewing the organization's commitment to justice for all, embracing the "Jesus Movement's" way of love and affirming the organization's calls to youth and to ministry to the most vulnerable.

About 300 people from across the Americas and the United Kingdom attended. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's opening sermon July 23 at Christ Church Cathedral launched spirited, standing-room-only nightly worship with gospel choirs, jazz music and dance ministries in local congregations.

Participants attended daily morning prayer and Bible study. Panel discussions and presenters considered UBE's role and continuing relevance in a post-Christian, increasingly racially and ethnically divided and politically charged world. Discussions included the complexities of multiculturalism, "becoming the beloved community," the "Jesus Movement," environmental justice, current clergy trends and youth leadership.

UBE National President Annette Buchanan proclaimed the organization "the largest advocacy group in the Episcopal Church." And she announced the addition of new chapters, expanding a collaborative-advocacy initiative and offering ongoing support of black youth, seminarians, congregations, clergy and institutions.

Aaron Ferguson, an Atlanta financial consultant, told banquet attendees on July 26 that the organization's mentoring and support transformed his life. It afforded him opportunities to travel, create lasting friendships, acquire college scholarships and garner appointments to such church bodies as the Standing Commission on National Concerns at age 19.

"We hear the board meeting, the business meeting, we talk about all those things. [But] UBE has a spirit about itself that affected my life tremendously," he said. "I promise you, there's some young people here whose lives will be changed in ways you can't imagine, with the wonderful way UBE operates, to create this inner sanctum of peace, safety and security for young black people in the church."

UBE emerged in 1968, the year the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and the Kerner Commission concluded that the nation's 1967 riots and civil unrest were sparked by its steady move toward two societies: one black, one white; separate and unequal.

That knowledge made the anniversary celebration "both exciting but also bittersweet, because we are looking at the very same conditions in our society then and now," said the Rev. Gayle Fisher Stewart, an associate pastor at Calvary Church in Washington, D.C., and a conference co-dean.

Conference presenter the Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas, dean of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, New York, agreed.

"We've come a long, long way during these 50 years, yet ... the very violence that took Martin Luther King's life remains a prevalent and pervasive reality in our land, in our nation today," she told

the black church to strengthen its characteristic faith and to help others thrive despite the current climate.

Curry's "Jesus Movement" calls us to a "rule of life," a way of life, back to "the center of black faith ... to discover what compelled slaves to continue to fight for justice against all odds and never succumb to the enslaving conditions of

the world responded with a resounding, 'Amen!'

"Now, black Episcopalians have to step out of the shadows and outside of our churches and proclaim it, too, proclaim the gospel we know," she said. "Proclaim the love and saving power of the God we know in Christ so that the world can know him and love him, too."

May 19 was the day "Christians woke up and said, 'That's not the church I left when I was 13. I'm coming back.' It was the day that atheists began to tweet, 'If that's Christian, sign me up,'" she said. "The word 'Episcopal' was the most searched term on Google that Saturday. People were so curious about what is this church and what kind of Jesus does this guy know about."

Within a week of the royal wedding, a newly created Facebook page, Episcopal Evangelists, had 2,000 followers, she said.

While Curry woke the world up about the Episcopal Church, she said, "at times such as these ... when white supremacy has gained not just a toehold, but is sleeping in the White House, ... when our nation scoffs at the poor and the refugee and the widow and children and everybody Jesus loved most," the world needs Christians to wake up, too.

"The world needs Episcopalians whose lives depend on the God we know in Jesus Christ, and if there is anyone in this church who has needed this faith to survive, who

has wrested the faith from the hand of the colonizer and the hand of the master, surely it is black Episcopalians," Spellers said.

UBE is celebrating not just a half-century but 400 years of black Anglicans on this continent, with "the ups and downs, the trials and triumphs that have brought us to this moment," she said. "The question now is: Do we know what time it is?"

Multiculturalism

Panel discussions focused on changing circumstances affecting many already-vulnerable black churches, such as diminishing opportunities for full-time traditional clergy employment, and ways to welcome those with different cultural identities, including youth, who have largely left the church.

While the United States prides itself on being "a melting pot" for all cultural identities, the percentage of foreign-born people in the general population has remained static over the past 156 years, said Elliston Rahming, author and Bahamian ambassador to the United Nations.



Photos/Pat McCaughan/ENS

Above, from left, the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, Indianapolis Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows and the Rev. Keith Yamamoto attend UBE's 50th-anniversary celebration.



UBE National President Annette Buchanan renewed the organization's mission to support African-American seminarians like Shawn Evelyn, left, from the Diocese of Los Angeles, who attends the Virginia Theological Seminary.

the gathering via Skype. "That assassin's bullet is a manifestation of the very same violence that is the legacy of slavery, the very same violence that is white supremacy ... that is 'make America great again.'" she said.

African Americans continue disproportionately to experience extreme poverty; institutionalized racism; and a lack of decent housing, jobs, educational and recreational opportunities. This contributes to pervasive violence — both self-inflicted and often at the hands of law-enforcement authorities — and makes eventual incarceration more likely, contributing to "a poverty-to-prison-to-death pipeline," she said.

U.S. poverty rates hover at 22 percent for blacks and 19 percent for Latinos, compared to 8.8 percent for whites. African Americans number 13.2 percent of the U.S. population but are 5.1 times more likely than whites to be incarcerated, constituting almost 40 percent of the prison population, she said.

Douglas and the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop's canon for evangelism and reconciliation, described Curry's initiatives as a way for

death that were around them," Douglas said.

That faith was born of struggle and challenge, yet when slaves sang spirituals such as "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord," they were affirming Jesus' presence with them in their suffering and pain — that, not only was he there with them, but they also present to him, she said. "They were living in this crucified reality" from which they drew strength to survive.

That song represents both a call and a challenge to the black church's present reality, she said. "What does it mean to be there with Jesus, not at the foot of the cross, but on the cross? What does that mean to be with the crucified classes of people in our own time?"

It means being accountable to and in solidarity with the most vulnerable today, such as transgendered teenagers, who have the nation's highest suicide rate, or with asylum-seeking immigrant parents separated from their children, she said.

Spellers told the gathering that Curry's May 19 sermon at Britain's royal wedding "proclaimed the gospel, and

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"In 1860, foreign-born citizens within the U.S. represented about 13.2 percent of the population. In 2016, there were 43 million foreign-born citizens within the United States, representing about 13.5 percent," he said.

Quoting a 2013 "Christianity Today" article by Ed Stetzer, Rahming added, "The church is called upon to be an instrument in the world showing and sharing the love of Jesus. The church is also to be a sign pointing to the kingdom of God and acting as a credible witness of God's power. People are supposed to look at the church and say, 'That's what the kingdom of God ought to look like.'"

Yet, to paraphrase Martin Luther King, "Sunday morning at 11 a.m. is still the most segregated hour in the U.S.," he said.

Heidi Kim, the church's missioner for racial reconciliation, and the Rev. Chuck Wynder, missioner for social justice and advocacy engagement, presented "Becoming the Beloved Community," a reconciling initiative to help "repair the breach."

Kim and Wynder, who have organized justice pilgrimages as a way to

healing and transformation, called the resource creative, adaptable and different.

"Previously we thought we'd just make everybody do anti-racism training and then we'd all be trained and everything would be fine, but that didn't work," Kim said.

The Rev. Sandye Wilson said facilitating authentic relationships at the Episcopal Church of St. Andrew and Holy Communion in South Orange, N.J., where she is rector, requires "deep prayer, with deep respect for the traditions of all the people who are there, with an opportunity for people to learn from one another."

"My challenge to us is to recognize that the kind of hospitality we have to offer folks is very different from years ago when American blacks sat on one side of the aisle in churches and folks from the Caribbean sat on other," she said. "Just because we look alike doesn't mean our experiences have been similar. And our hermeneutic of life is determined by our



Massachusetts Suffragan Bishop Gayle Harris was the first woman to celebrate Eucharist at the Holy Cross Anglican Church in Nassau, Bahamas.

States and the British Virgin Islands. The organization is hoping to recruit

clergy for three- to four-week stays in the Virgin Islands to offer much-needed rest to overwhelmed clergy, she said.

The next annual meeting is planned for late July 2019 in Los Angeles. ■



Photos/Pat McCaughan/ENS

UBE youth lead a worship service at Holy Cross Anglican Church in Nassau, Bahamas.

UBE awards

The Union of Black Episcopalians honored several people at a July 27 banquet during its 50th-anniversary celebration in Nassau, Bahamas. They included:

- Diane Porter, receiving the Marie Hopkins Award for outstanding contributions to the social mission of the church;
- Austin, Texas, City Councilwoman Ora Houston, receiving the Dr. Verna Dozier Award for service-oriented work;
- Dr. John F. Robertson, a founding UBE member, receiving a special community award for physical and mental health initiatives and "for ensuring UBE stays a healthy community," Buchanan said;
- The Rev. Donald G. Kerr, assistant curate, St. Barnabas Parish in Nassau, honored for facilitating the organization's first gathering outside the United States; and
- Panama Bishop Julio Murray, who in August will be consecrated primate

of the Church in Central America, receiving the 2018 Presidential Award for steadfast support of youth and UBE.

"The union has played a very important part in my life," Murray said, adding that the organization gives voice to people across the diaspora and raises up youth leaders. "We need to keep connected. While we are together, we are so strong. We are called to be a union. We need each other; we need to take care of each other.

"Union of Black Episcopalians, don't stop only at change. We need to continue to work for transformation," he said.

"If you stop at change, it will go back to be what it used to, and some of that is going on now. So we need to move and work together for transformation so that it will never be what it used to, but it will be part, as Michael [Curry] would say, part of the dream God has for all of us."

— Pat McCaughan

lived experiences."

The traditional model of the full-time priest is in decline because of dwindling membership, aging congregations and static pledge and plate income, accompanied by rising costs — trends that had prompted some UBE youth delegates to question the church's goal of raising up leadership if congregations are unable to fairly compensate them, said the Rev. Anne Mallonee, executive vice president and chief ecclesiastical officer for the Church Pension Group, in another workshop discussion.

Strategic outreach

UBE added three new chapters — Haiti, Alabama and Central Gulf Coast — to its current 35, collaborated with the Consultation and Deputies of Color to help ensure representation on church-elected bodies and passed supportive legislation at the 79th General Convention affording members "a seat at the table," Buchanan said in her address at the July 26 business meeting.

UBE also supported the Episcopal Church's appointment of the Rev. Ron Byrd as missioner for the office of black ministries, she said.

Youth representatives Julia Jones and Cameron Scott reported that a dozen youth from Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Alaska, Michigan and Georgia attended the conference. They participated in a local service project along with their Bahamian counterparts, Jones said. They also led July 25 evening worship, a jazz mass at Holy Cross Anglican Church.

A panel of youth called for change, telling the gathering they were frustrated with their lack of voice, power and role in church leadership. But, Jones said, "We know we are the future, and we are proud to live up to that challenge."

UBE's continued support of the historically black St. Augustine's University in Raleigh, N.C., and Voorhees College in Denmark, S.C., was acknowledged by their respective presidents, who reported increased enrollment and fundraising efforts, expanded curricula and higher retention rates.

Buchanan said UBE's priorities remain fostering the vitality of black churches and supporting laity and clergy. The organization plans to offer mentoring programs for both and has sought to strengthen its ties with clergy in the dioceses of New Jersey, Newark, New York, Long Island and Maryland.

Additionally, the organization provided financial and material aid to Hurricane Irma victims in both the United

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CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

NEWS

Charlottesville Episcopalians join peaceful gatherings a year after violent demonstration

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The three Episcopal congregations in Charlottesville, Va., participated in a weeklong series of ecumenical and interreligious events to promote peace, faith and unity one year after a white-supremacist demonstration turned violent, thrusting the city into a national debate over race and Confederate symbols.

The churches are part of the Charlottesville Clergy Collective, which scheduled prayer gatherings each weekday from Aug. 13 through 17. The collective also organized an evening worship service, described as “a service of gratitude, repentance and hope,” and an afternoon “singout.”

“There was a somewhat unspoken consensus that we wanted — we being Charlottesville — we wanted to be in charge of what this weekend looks like,” said the Rev. Cass Bailey, vicar of Trinity Episcopal Church. “There just was a sense that we wanted to project a positive image.”

That positive image was intended as a contrast to the events of Aug. 12, 2017, when one counterprotester died amid clashes with a large assembly of neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klansmen and other hate



The Rev. Cass Bailey, speaking at an interfaith service, is vicar of Trinity Episcopal Church in Charlottesville, Va.

groups who had come to Charlottesville for a “Unite the Right” rally they said was in opposition to the city’s plans to remove two statues of Confederate generals.

A year later, the legal battle continues over the statues, which remain in place. The white supremacists appeared to be focusing on a new rally in Washington, D.C., on the anniversary rather than returning to Charlottesville en masse, which relieved some anxiety locally, Bailey said.

Police still were “gearing up for the worst-case scenario,” Bailey said. Because the city’s security measures would make it virtually impossible to hold worship services downtown, Christ Episcopal Church decided to close for the weekend



Photos/Charlottesville Clergy Collective

The Charlottesville (Va.) Clergy Collective holds an interfaith service at The Haven during faith-based activities to mark one year since hate groups’ demonstrations ended in violence.

and worship in the morning with Bailey’s congregation at Trinity and in the evening at St. Paul’s Memorial Church.

The Diocese of Virginia and its clergy and congregations, meanwhile, expressed support for the churches in Charlottesville a year after many of them came to the city and joined with the faith community in standing against racism and hatred.

“I think that God has given an imperative to the church to hold firm in our resolve to stand in the public square in opposition to anything that is contrary to Jesus’ teaching that we must love one another — no exceptions,” Virginia Bishop Shannon Johnston said in a written statement. “We will therefore always stand up to hate-mongering, and we will continue to do all in our power to ensure that the world around us knows without question that the love of God is present to us and will always prevail over division and hatred.”

The events last year in Charlottesville turned this Southern university town into a flashpoint in the larger debate over the Confederacy and the enduring legacy of racism. Episcopal institutions, too, were swept up in that debate.

Washington National Cathedral altered its stained-glass windows to remove Confederate symbols. Sewanee: University of the South moved a Confederate general’s monument from a prominent byway in Sewanee, Tenn., to a campus cemetery. An Episcopal church in Lexington, Va., that had been called the R. E. Lee Memorial Church in honor of the Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee changed its name to Grace Episcopal.

When Presiding Bishop Michael Curry traveled to Charlottesville last September for a pastoral visit, most of his itinerary was filled with clergy meetings and an evening sermon promoting love over hate. He also took a few minutes to reflect at the foot of the downtown stat-

ue of Lee, then wrapped in a black tarp.

The tarp is gone, and the statue is visible from the second-floor office window of the Rev. Paul Walker, rector of the historic Christ Episcopal Church in downtown Charlottesville. He returned in August from a four-month sabbatical and was not involved in the decision by other church leaders to close during the anniversary weekend, but he said he thought it was the right call. Other downtown churches made similar arrangements to worship elsewhere.

Virginia’s governor also declared a state of emergency in Charlottesville because of the potential for renewed unrest.

“I’m very grateful that all hands are on deck for the weekend because last year was horrible, deeply traumatic for our city,” Walker said before the anniversary.

“I think there’s a strong sense, in terms of the city and state police ... that law enforcement and government are going to be overprepared rather than underprepared,” said the Rev. Will Peyton, rector of St. Paul’s Memorial Church, which overlooks the campus of the University of Virginia.

City officials were criticized last year for being unprepared for the “Unite the Right” rally, starting with the white supremacists’ torchlight march on the evening of Aug. 11 at the University of Virginia rotunda, while Episcopalians and other concerned citizens had gathered across the street at St. Paul’s for a prayer service.

The next morning, members of St. Paul’s, Trinity Episcopal and Christ Episcopal joined an interfaith prayer service and then participated in their own march to Emancipation Park to rally against the supremacists’ event planned at the park, the site of the Lee statue.

Before the supremacists’ rally even started, the city deemed it an unlawful assembly and forbade it from proceed-

ing. Club-wielding and gun-toting white supremacists began clashing with counterprotesters, some of whom also carried weapons. The street clashes continued and even escalated, and the police force was blamed for failing to keep the violence in check.

That afternoon, a car rammed a crowd of counterprotesters, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring 19 others. A 20-year-old Nazi sympathizer from Ohio was charged with Heyer’s murder.

Since then, Charlottesville has seen a dramatic turnover in its leadership. The city attorney left, the city manager is leaving, and Charlottesville has a new mayor, Nikuyah Walker, the first black woman to hold that office. After the former police chief stepped down in the face of a report critical of his department’s response on Aug. 12, Charlottesville hired a new police

chief, RaShall Brackney.

That’s not to say that Charlottesville has solved all of its own problems, some of which stem from long-simmering racial divisions that were brought to the surface by last year’s violence, clergy said.

“I would say that there’s still an extraordinary amount of tension and animosity in public life here,” Walker said. “I think that Charlottesville is really struggling to cope with what happened on Aug. 12 and the history of racism here. And we’re a city steeped in history, and all of that is at the fore now.”

Peyton described the community as suffering from a sort of collective post-traumatic stress disorder, still shell-shocked from the events of a year ago. On the anniversary, the national spotlight returned along with memories of the horror of that day, he said.

At the same time, “the local issues are the same as they are in many, many American cities, issues of housing and wages and entrenched structural racism,” he said. “We’re no different than a lot of other places in those regards.”

As for the legal battle over the statues, most accept that “to a certain extent it’s out of our hands,” said Bailey.

But the work of racial reconciliation continues. Bailey’s church recently received a \$11,000 grant from a local foundation to launch an African-American history project, featuring video interviews with older members of the community and workshops on the issue of historical trauma. The first event will be held this fall.

“In general, the community has acknowledged that there is a problem here in Charlottesville and [that] the events of [last] Aug. 12 were the erupting of underlying tensions,” Bailey said. “The work of the government and the work of the civic leader is to address those underlying tensions, and people have been trying in various ways to do that.” ■

NEWS

Northern Michigan provides assistance after floods

By Lynette Wilson
Episcopal News Service

Lois Siler's phone rang at 4:45 a.m. on June 17; it was her 29-year-old daughter Suzanne Brush calling to tell her she was homeless. She wasn't homeless, exactly, but she, a friend and a dog were trapped in her home's second level, and water continued to rise.

Brush next called emergency responders, volunteers in this rural part of Michigan. An hour and a half later, she called her mother to say that she, Katelyn Hough and Polar, a white husky mix, were safe and at the fire station.

"My daughter's house is a total loss with the flooding," said Siler, a Lake Linden resident and member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Houghton.

Brush's was one of eight homes destroyed by the massive flood that ripped through Houghton County, hitting Lake Linden, Hubble and Tamarack City par-

ticularly hard. Brush's homeowner's insurance policy didn't include flood insurance, so even though the property was condemned, she's still responsible for the mortgage and property taxes. Brush, Hough and Polar have been staying with a friend in Lake Linden while they look for permanent housing, said Siler.

Following the June floods in the Western and Central Upper Peninsula, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder declared disasters in Houghton, Menominee and, later, Gogebic counties. The Federal Emergency Management Agency early in August made available disaster assistance.

The rains began on Saturday night, June 16, and continued into Sunday, when more than seven inches fell within hours on the Keweenaw Peninsula, the northern most part of the state. The peninsula is home to just over 36,000 people, more than 20 percent of whom live in poverty.

"That set off this really strange flood-

ing that happened all over the area," said Rick Stanitis, campus missionary for Canterbury House at Michigan Technological University in Houghton. "Lake Superior is a huge watershed, and you don't [usually] have to wait long for it to drain."

But the rain's intensity was more than the watershed readily could absorb, a situation worsened by rock and steep hills. The flood destroyed streets, knocked out culverts and left 500 basements filled with mud. Close to two months later, some residents still had mud in their basements, he said.

"There's a lot of suffering going on and a lot of poor folk — a lot of people suffering without money who are not going to tell anyone they're in need and they have a basement full of mud," said Stanitis.

Three weeks after the first flood, heavy rains caused a second flood in Houghton County.

Stanitis' job to keep the diocese informed of the work of the Long-Term Recovery Group Steering Committee, which is tackling solutions to bring resources to the emerging needs. The Diocese of Northern Michigan has been collecting donations for flood relief since the June flood.



Photo/Courtesy of Lois Siler

A massive June 16-17 rainfall caused flooding in three Upper Michigan counties. This photo shows the water level at Suzanne Brush's home, which had to be condemned, just outside Lake Linden.

"The flash flood in Houghton County ... has left a path of destruction to infrastructure and homes in Houghton County, said Bishop Rayford Ray in an e-mail. "Many of you have seen the photos and videos on news and social media sites showing the devastation to public infrastructure, but individuals in the community have also suffered many losses and setbacks of all types. The community continues to assess the damage from the disaster, and relief efforts have been underway and continue to this very day.

"It is estimated that costs are over \$50 million because of the flooding, which does not include the emotional impact to those who were touched by this devastating flood."

Siler's yard was damaged, but not seriously. But Brush, who lived just outside Lake Linden, lost everything. Even though the century-old house still sits on its foundation, it's beyond repair. ■

Prayers for victims and rescuers follow Genoa bridge collapse

Anglican Communion News Service

At least 38 people were killed when a section of the 3,600-foot long Morandi bridge in Genoa, Italy, collapsed on Aug. 14. Around 20 people were thought to be missing as rescuers searched the Polcevera River, railway lines and an industrial area below the bridge.

The 148-foot-high concrete and steel bridge was constructed in the 1960s to



Photo/Salvatore 1991/Wikimedia

A section of the Ponte Morandi in Genoa, Italy, collapsed Aug. 14.

carry traffic between France and Italy on the A8/A10 motorways. The road is part of the wider E80 trans-European route from Lisbon in Portugal in the west to Gürbulak, on the Turkey/Iran border in the east. The local Roman Catholic archbishop, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, conducted a state funeral for the victims on Aug. 18, which was designated a day of national mourning in Italy.

"Thank you all for thoughts and prayers," the Holy Ghost Anglican Church in Genoa posted on Facebook. "Please continue them. So far as we know, members of the congregation who live in that part of Genoa are all safe, but there is a concern for all who are bereaved, injured or missing. Please pray for the safety of the emergency service personnel still . . . searching for

survivors amid the wreckage."

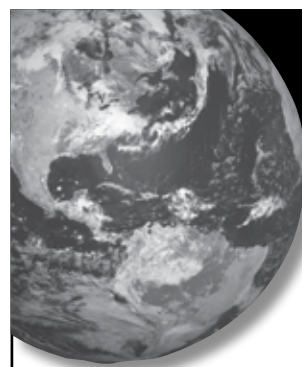
"Please remember those who were killed, and the survivors, and pray for their families and friends," it said. "Give thanks for the work of the emergency services and those making the rest of the structure safe (and pray for their safety)."

On its website, the church also thanked "all of you who have reached out to our congregation and city with your messages and prayers following the tragic collapse of the Morandi motorway bridge."

One of those to do so was Church of England Suffragan Bishop in Europe David Hamid, who broke off from his annual leave to send a message to the parish priest, Canon Tony Dickinson. "It is certain to affect huge numbers of people — a sudden moment which will change so many lives," he said. "Please be assured of the prayers of the people of the diocese at this time.

"We pray to the Lord for all who have lost their lives so suddenly, and we pray that God's mercy, comfort and healing will be with all who are injured and with those who will be grieving, and that God's strength will sustain the members of the emergency services and those who are attending to the needs of all who are suffering and affected by this accident.

"I am sure that you and the members of Holy Ghost parish will be anxiously seeking assurance of the safety of your own members and loved ones. Your brothers and sisters in Christ send our love, and we pray that God, our refuge and strength, will be with you and the community and especially with those whose lives are affected by this tragedy." ■



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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Writing icons reveals the presence of God

By Melodie Woerman

Acrylic paint. A wooden board. Short brush strokes. More paint. Those all help the Rev. Les Jackson, rector of St. Matthew's, Newton, Kan., finish an icon of Jesus, Mary or one of the saints. But they are not what get him started.

It's prayer. "To write an icon is to engage in prayer," he said. "We make ourselves present to God."

And breathing. "You breathe in God's mercy and grace, and breathe out all the bad stuff."

And creating. "Creating is what God did in the beginning and created us to do that, too."

Icons are central in Eastern Orthodox practice but are less understood in Western Christianity, Jackson said. But icons' origins in prayer and as vehicles for creating beauty can enhance the spirituality of believers today, he said. "The theological understanding behind icons is that God created us beautiful, in his image, and then someone lied to us. And we believed the lie."

The rich colors and luminous gold of icons are a form of beauty that helps reveal God's presence to us, he said. And to create an icon one must slow down, be intentional and be truly present to God. "We are consumed by 'fast,'" he said. "Here you slow down. Be aware of the textures and colors. And ask God for the grace to do this work."

And breathe, he said: It takes deep breathing to calm the soul enough to be attuned to God's presence.

Pointing you back to God

You don't paint an icon, Jackson said, you write it, because Eastern Orthodoxy believes icons and Scripture equally are revelations of God. And the reason for icon writing always points back to God, he said. "The purpose isn't to create a great work of art but a great time of prayer."

The need for a deeper prayer life that drew Jackson to icons 13 years ago. A friend suggested it when he struggled



Photos/Melodie Woerman

Above, the Rev. Les Jackson poses with some of the icons he has written. Another icon writer created the icon of St. Matthew, hanging on the wall, that belongs to his church. At right, Jackson's icons are displayed surrounding a book about icons.

*The Rev. Les Jackson writes an icon of Jesus.*

with questions of vocation. Writing icons helped still his mind and heart and find peace, he said.

It also connected him to the intentionality of creating. "All the time we are creating things in our lives but are not aware of it," he said. "Writing an icon is intentional. We can do the same thing in life — be intentional about what we create, including relationships."

Halos, eyes and color

Writing an icon starts with a pattern traced onto a board — plain wood or, more often, an art panel — composite wood made for painting. Designs usually come from pattern books, but Jackson said he would take inspiration wherever he found it. A stylized icon of Jesus as

the Good Shepherd came from a church school lesson.

He uses acrylic paints because they are easier to use, even though that strays from the tradition that icons be made only with natural substances, he said, noting that egg tempera is much harder to use.

He starts by applying a dark base coat, using short brush strokes in different directions so the paint stays smooth. Then come highlights: layer upon layer of different paints to create the features of a face and hands, or the folds in clothing.

He adds halos last, sometimes in thin sheets of gold leaf but more often in gold paint. Gold leaf is tricky to use, and it's almost impossible to repair if it tears, he said.

Icon colors are highly symbolic: blue for the transcendent mystery of God,

green for life and hope, deep red for royalty, white for glory. But when at a loss for the right color to use, Jackson said, ask God to guide you, and then be still and wait.

Eyes are prominent features in icons and often seem like they follow the viewer around a room. Jackson sticks to the tradition of not painting a glister in the eyes. "The light is supposed to come from within," he said.

It takes him 12 to 16 hours to complete a simple icon, which he then gives away. "In the process of doing one, I usually think of someone who needs it."

One exception is an icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a recent work that he will give to one of his daughters. He wrote a similar icon several years ago, and she asked if he would create one for her. This one, he said, "invokes a sense of kindness, compassion and gentleness. I hope my daughter also sees my love for her."

His favorite icon, he said, is whatever one he is creating.

Icons have become a major part of Jackson's spiritual life. "This practice has taught me that being whole is better than being perfect; that mistakes add strength, learning and character; and that we seek God's image in all things," he said. "We ought to create and bring beauty into our lives at every stage."

But don't be judgmental about it, he added, saying that he knows he is not a great artist. But that isn't really the point, he said. "Doing this work prayerfully allows us to get to the heart." ■

Melodie Woerman is director of communications for the Diocese of Kansas. This story first appeared in the diocesan magazine, The Harvest.

Historical grants made

The Historical Society of the Episcopal Church has announced \$13,000 in grants to support scholars in significant research and publications related to the history of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Recipients are encouraged to publish, when appropriate, in Anglican and Episcopal History, the society's quarterly academic journal.

Recipients are:

- Pusey House Library, Oxford, England, towards the electronic cataloguing of its collection, specifically those volumes about the history of the Episcopal Church and the Church of



England in the 18th century.

- Chrissy Yee Lau, assistant professor in humanities at Texas A&M University — Corpus Christi, to undertake two research trips and present at the 2019 Tri-History Conference as part of her work on the role of the Japanese Episcopal Mission in Los Angeles during the 1920s.

- Russell M. Lawson, history professor at Bacone College, Muskogee, Okla., to pursue research at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston as part of a project investigating the intellectual relationship between C17 scientist Robert Boyle and New England cleric John Eliot.

- John E. Magerus, archivist of the

James DeKoven Center in Racine, Wisc., to investigate primary material about the family and early life of James DeKoven at archives in Connecticut, as part of a projected biography.

- The Episcopal Center for Children, Washington, D.C., toward organizing, cataloguing and digitizing its archives. This project is undertaken as part of the center's 125th anniversary celebrations coming up in 2019.

- John Saillant, professor of English and history at Western Michigan University at Kalamazoo, Mich., to pursue research into African-American Episcopalianism in C19 Rhode Island at the Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence.

— Historical Society of the Episcopal Church

FAITH AND THE ARTS

‘Queen of Soul’ kept church connection throughout her career

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

Aretha Franklin, a singer who began her career with gospel music and was later crowned the “Queen of Soul,” died on Aug. 16 after battling a range of health issues.

“Her instantly recognizable voice has captivated listeners ever since she toured with her father’s gospel revue in the 1950s,” read the citation when President George W. Bush awarded her the 2005 Presidential Medal of Freedom.

A Memphis, Tenn., native, Franklin, 76, got her start in the Detroit church of her pastor father, the Rev. C.L. Franklin. She was first recorded at his New Bethel Baptist Church on the album “Spirituals” at age 14.

“Aretha, like Al Green, is one of the few artists who is universally accepted in the black church,” Bil Carpenter, author of “Uncloudy Days: The Gospel Music Encyclopedia,” told Religion News Service. “The church often shuns artists who sing R&B as backsliders and reject them when they come back and sing gospel. However, Aretha’s always been given a pass.”

Franklin was a “gifted singer even as a young girl,” said gospel and soul singer Candi Staton, who traveled on the gospel circuit with Franklin during the 1950s. “What I love about it is that she never lost her connection to the church, and that church training was always

and Anita Wilson.

“It’s the sheer power of her voice and the unique phrasing that distinguish her from her peers. In her prime, Aretha’s voice took listeners to a place that few other artists’ voices could take them,”



Photo/Andy Kropa/Invision/AP

Aretha Franklin performs for the last time at the Elton John AIDS Foundation gala at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Nov. 7, 2017, in New York.

Carpenter said. “Whether she was singing a Broadway tune, a Jazz standard or an R&B song, she always brought that authentic black gospel flavor to it.”

The singer known for “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman” and “Respect” also gave a nod to faith in “I Say a Little Prayer,” which begins: “The moment I wake up/Before I put on my makeup/I say a little prayer for you.”

Her best-selling album, 1972’s “Amazing Grace,” is among five Franklin recordings that are featured in the Grammy Hall of Fame.

“Critics always talked about the gospel feeling in Aretha’s voice, so it was a very big deal when she finally made a proper gospel album like ‘Amazing Grace,’” Carpenter said. “For years, it was the best-selling gospel album by a woman ever ... until Whitney Houston’s ‘The Preacher’s Wife’ stole that top position at 3 million units.”

Franklin’s two-record set includes the classic hymn by John Newton as well as “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and “God Will Take Care of You.”

On that live album, Franklin “sings like never before on record,” a Rolling Stone reviewer said.

“‘Amazing Grace’ is more a great Aretha Franklin album than a great gospel album,” wrote Jon Landau at the time. “The liberation and abandon she has always implied in her greatest moments are now fully and consistently achieved.”

Clara Ward, of the Ward Singers, and Mahalia Jackson were among Franklin’s

mentors. She sang “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” at Jackson’s funeral. She also performed the song, a favorite of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., at the 2011 dedication of the Washington memorial in his honor.

When asked in 2017 by the Chicago Sun-Times about her faith, Franklin said: “It is very important. It certainly has sustained me to this day.”

Earlier, in 2013, she told The Associated Press that her healing from an undisclosed condition was considered “absolutely miraculous” after she had been ill for several months.

“I was talking to Smokey Robinson, my oldest best friend Smokey, talking about the fact that some doctors are not very well acquainted with faith heal-

ing,” she told the Associated Press. “And Smokey said, ‘Well, they just don’t know who your healer is.’”

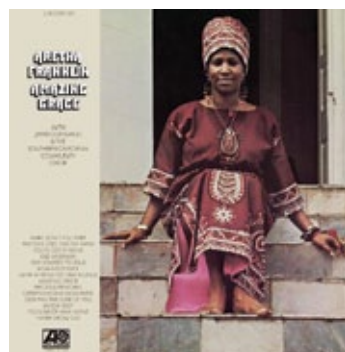
In 1987, Franklin became the first woman inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. “In Aretha Franklin’s sprawling career, she has taken on many roles — the devout gospel singer, the sensual R&B siren, the pop crossover phenom, Lady Soul — and dominated them all,” the hall’s website says.

The same year, Franklin again recorded sacred music at New Bethel for the album “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism,” which won a Grammy for best soul performance.

Franklin received a Kennedy Center honor in 1994.

Her more recent Grammy wins one in 2007 for “Never Gonna Break My Faith” with Mary J. Blige. The song was featured on the soundtrack of the film “Bobby,” about the 1968 assassination of U.S. Sen. Robert Kennedy. In 2010, she won a Grammy for “You’ve Got a Friend,” recorded with Ronald Isley.

Franklin, who had announced retirement plans in 2017, had hoped to continue touring in 2018. ■



Aretha Franklin’s gospel albums were “Amazing Grace,” released in 1972, and “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism,” 1987.

channeled through her music regardless of what she was singing,” Staton said. “She took you to church even if she was singing about a no-good man.”

A lifelong Baptist whose mother and sisters were gospel singers, Franklin continued to represent her church roots on stage and on some of her secular albums for decades, Carpenter said. She influenced artists in genres stretching from R&B to country, as well as inspiring gospel artists from Richard Smallwood and The Hawkins Family to Karen Clark Sheard, Donald Lawrence

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

In 'First Reformed,' a pastor's strained faith is tested

By Ken Valenti

The Rev. Ernst Toller's struggle is a solitary one. The smattering of congregants who attend his church in upstate New York could hardly be called a flock. The 250-year-old Dutch Colonial building, once a



Photo/courtesy of A24

stop on the Underground Railroad, is now known more as a tourists' point of interest than a house of worship. Toller (Ethan Hawke) even gives the tours, and stoically weathers the odd bad joke. In "First Reformed," the film from writer-director Paul Schrader, Toller's already strained faith is tested after a pregnant woman (Amanda Seyfried) asks him to meet with her husband, an environmentalist whose radicalism has become unsettling. We think of priests as spiritual guides who are available to counsel their congregants, not to take on their causes. But after a jarring event that follows the meeting, Toller finds himself with a mission he seems unable to ignore, equating care for the natural world with care for God's creation.

His preoccupation with the issue becomes a concern to the Rev. Joel Jeffers, pastor of Abundant Life, the parent church to Toller's.

"You don't live in the real world,"

Jeffers tells him. (The pastor-to-the-pastor is played by Cedric Kyles, better known as Cedric the Entertainer, who is a natural in the serious role.)

Where that real world resides is not readily apparent. Toller moves in a spare environment. There are few if any scenes of large crowds or well-populated places. Footsteps echo on wooden floors in empty rooms. Perhaps it is the austerity and the solitary nature of the reverend's lifestyle that creates the vacuum so easily filled by his newfound purpose.

But Toller is about to be presented on a larger stage. A coming reconsecration ceremony for his church will draw important people, and Jeffers wants it to go off well. Toller's growing instability is a concern.

Writer-director Paul Schrader creates a somber mood. Hawke carries the intensity of a man living a quiet life, but not a happy one. (It's a clear sign you may need to watch your drinking when you're dolloping Pepto Bismol directly into your whiskey.)

Toller does find solace in Mary, the pregnant wife (now widow) of the environmentalist, who seems not much happier than he is. (Seyfried is convincing in the role, which is in stark contrast to her current stint on the big screen starring in "Mama Mia! Here We Go Again.")

Without her, it seems, the priest would not have any social activities at all.

The movie is a seamless merging of the personal and political. Schrader, who wrote the screenplays for "Taxi Driver" and "Raging Bull" and wrote and directed "American Gigolo," is not interested in a polemic on the importance of the green movement. His dialogue and directing keep the scenes (with one notable exception) grounded in realism and focused on the three-dimensionality of the main character.

Hawke is an ideal actor for the role, conveying the aura of a quiet man with troubles that run deep, a man of the cloth who cannot separate the cause

from his calling. When Jeffers references a Bible passage about redemption, Toller asks, "So we should pollute so God can restore? We should sin so God can forgive?"

It's the response of a man who no longer can take his gaze off a single issue. The conclusion, as the viewer watches what Toller does with this preoccupation, becomes a bit muddled. But that does not take away from a thoughtful, well-realized movie.

("First Reformed" is available on Amazon Prime.) ■

Ken Valenti is a freelance writer based in the New York area.

Online Bible studies set



ChurchNext, a ministry of Forward Movement, will host three live-streaming Bible studies beginning Sept. 12. The Wednesday Night Bible Study series can be accessed through the ChurchNext platform.

"Many churches have traditionally singled out Wednesday nights as a time for spiritual growth, but busy schedules have made that difficult. However, with today's technology things have just gotten easier," said ChurchNext founder Chris Yaw.

Study topics and instructors will be:

- The Bible and Racial Justice, taught by the Very Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas, dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, New York;
- Heretics in Good Company, exam-

ining how the church has handled answers to questions of belief and doctrine, especially in the light of Scripture, taught by Forward Movement Executive Director the Rev. Canon Scott Gunn and author the Rev. Melody Wilson Shobe; and

- The Bible and Evangelism, examining how to share the gospel in today's world, taught by author the Rev. Marcus Halley.

All three Bible studies begin in mid-September and run for six weeks from 8-9 p.m. EST, unless otherwise noted. Participation is free to subscribing ChurchNext congregations, dioceses and individuals. To sign up, visit www.churchnext.tv.

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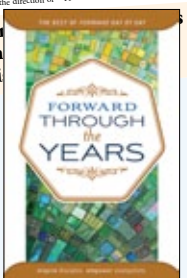
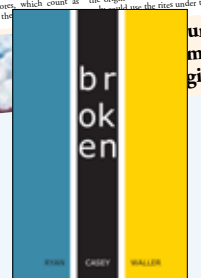
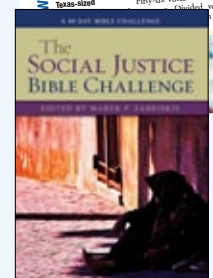
Convention gives church full access to trial-use marriage rites

Change would allow same-sex couples to wed in their parishes

The Episcopal Church's General Convention, which met from July 5 to 13 in Austin, Texas, voted to allow all Episcopalians, including same-sex couples, the ability to be married by their priests in their home churches. The rite had been approved for trial use by the 2015 General Convention. Resolution B012 had gone from the House of Deputies of the bishops and back to the deputies on its road to approval. Deputies overwhelmingly approved a heavily amended version of the resolution and the House of Bishops added a technical amendment that did not change the resolution's goal of giving full access to two trial-use marriage rites for same-sex and opposite-sex couples approved by the 2015 General Convention. The resolution provides for:

- Giving rectors or clergy in charge of a congregation the ability to provide access to the trial use of the marriage rites for same-sex and opposite-sex couples. The 2015 resolution and original version of B012 said that clergy could use the rites under the direction of their bishop.
- Requiring that, if a bishop "holds a theological position that does not embrace marriage for same-sex couples," he or she may invite another bishop, if necessary, to provide "prayer support" to any couple desiring to use the rites, as well as to the clergy member and congregants involved. In any case, an outside bishop ministering to a couple desiring to be married must be asked to take requests for remarriage if either member of the couple is divorced, to fulfill a canonical requirement that applies to opposite-sex couples.
- Continuing trial use of the rite until the completion of the 2020 comprehensive revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

 The resolution also eliminated the original B012's call for a Task Force on Communion access. Difference. Such a group was created as a separate resolution. "We have already engaged in a grace-filled debate — an honorable and healthy dialogue — on a journey and healthy dialogue and struggle," the Very Rev. Candler, deputy from Atlanta and chair of the convention's marriage resolutions, told the House of Deputies in urging passage. He further stated that when it returned from the House of Bishops.



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FEATURE

Houses of worship mobilize for back-to-school time

By Bobby Ross Jr.
Religion News Service

On a recent weekend, Pamela Jennings brought her 7-year-old granddaughter, Amara, and 4-year-old grandson, Trend, to People's Church, an evangelical congregation in Oklahoma City. But, though Jennings is a Christian, the family didn't come for worship.

Instead, they were drawn by the church's Day of Hope — an annual Saturday event where volunteers give away 3,200 backpacks filled with school supplies and offer free services such as medical exams and haircuts.

"It's just awesome, because some people really can't afford to get school supplies or get a haircut," Jennings said. "This is a real blessing for a lot of people."

From the National Council of Jewish Women in Southfield, Mich., to the Islamic Center of Northridge, Calif., religious groups nationwide organize back-to-school events in the late summer and early fall to serve needy families.

Christy Watson, communications director for the Oklahoma State School



Photo/RNS/Bobby Ross Jr.

Stylist Tony Coursey cuts the hair of 4-year-old Trend Cooper, grandson of Pamela Jennings, at People's Church in Oklahoma City on July 28.

Boards Association, said she had noticed an uptick in engagement between houses of worship and public schools throughout Oklahoma. Since much of the activity occurs at the grassroots level, though, it's difficult to quantify, Watson said.

Houses of worship and schools "are both places people turn to and gather at in times of celebration and need," she said. "So it makes a lot of sense that they would join forces to serve their communities."

The Oklahoma State School Boards Association gives an annual award for outstanding community partners, and, each year, school districts nominate faith groups, Watson said.

Emmaus Baptist Church, in the Oklahoma City suburb of Moore, has received the award. The Southern Baptist congregation buys school supplies and provides mentors for students, Watson said. It also served as a temporary school location for an entire year after a tornado devastated the community.

"I don't have any baseline data, so I'm reluctant to claim there is a trend of any sort," said Lallie Lloyd, director

of All Our Children, a national network that promotes church-school partnerships as a way to address social justice. "However, our organization was formed because we noticed that these ministries were emerging."

Lloyd, whose organization is affiliated with the Episcopal Church, said church-school partnerships typically have two purposes. "One is to provide direct services to the children ... and that's where the school supplies would come in," she said.

"But the second purpose, and really the motivating aspiration and dream behind All Our Children, is taking a more systemic approach to the realities of educational inequity."

According to the National Retail Federation, families with children in elementary through high school will spend an average of \$684.79 on back-to-school shopping this year.

But for the poor, buying crayons and pencils, much less shoes and jackets, can be a major financial burden. That has inspired many houses of worship nationwide to get involved, said leaders of faith groups doing back-to-school work.

"Islam teaches that you cannot just sleep at night if your neighbor is hungry next door," said Shahid Farooqi, national coordinator for Islamic Circle of North America's back-to-school drive. That principle applies to children who need school supplies, Farooqi said.

This year, the ICNA drive is distributing 50,000 backpacks in 34 states. Both numbers have increased every year since the project's launch six years ago, he said. The Northridge, Calif., mosque is among the participants.

Sandi Matz, co-president of the National Council of Jewish Women in Southfield, Mich., said her organization aimed to help women, children and families.

Before school starts, the group will welcome 600 Detroit schoolchildren to a shopping spree, Matz said. "They will come and shop — but they don't pay — for a complete set of clothing, jacket, hats, mittens, pants, shirt, shoes, underwear and a backpack that will be filled with supplies and a book."

Some of the children never have owned a new pair of socks and light up at how soft they feel, she said, "just like you gave them the biggest candy bar in the world."

It's easy to forget how costly a new school year can be, said Andy Wynn,



Photo/courtesy Shahid Farooqi

Volunteers organize supplies during an event with the Islamic Circle of North America's back-to-school drive in Hempstead, N.Y.

People's Church's director of communications.

"You've got to get new clothes for your kids. You've got to get school supplies, immunizations, haircuts, shoes and things of that nature," Wynn said. "So when you multiply that across having four or five kids, and maybe being a single parent and having only one job, it can really add up to where it's not possible."

Besides school supplies, People's Church regularly dispatches remodeling, painting and landscaping crews to public-school buildings.

"It's just another part of being part of the community ... and just showing the love of Christ," Wynn said.

At Day of Hope, bounce houses and

“The motivating aspiration and dream behind All Our Children, is taking a more systemic approach to the realities of educational inequity.”

— Lallie Lloyd

"Veggie Tales" screenings on big screens welcomed children and parents. Volunteers wore bright red T-shirts with the message "How may I serve you?" on the front.

Member Keyona Thompson's 3-year-old grandson, Isaac, helped stuff the backpacks.

Thompson said she was motivated to volunteer "by that one smile, that one parent that's struggling, that one kid that any other day wouldn't be able to have any type of supplies."

A fellow volunteer, La Keena Carter, agreed. "The community needs to know the church is there for them, no matter what the situation, that there's always going to be an open door." ■

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