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When voters go to the polls, how political can clergy get?

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

As vicar of Church of the Common Ground, a street-based ministry, the Rev. Kim Jackson serves homeless and vulnerable people living on the streets of Atlanta.

This coming January, she hopes to serve them in an additional setting: the Georgia Capitol, as a member of the state Senate.

"About half the folks that attend my service on Sundays sleep outside of the Capitol during the week — they sleep across the street from the Capitol," she told ENS. "I will serve outside of the Capitol with people who sleep out there, and I will go inside and fight like hell on behalf of them."

Jackson is running as a Democrat in a reliably blue district in Atlanta's eastern suburbs. The seat is currently held by Senate Democratic Leader Steve Henson, who is not seeking reelection. If she wins, she will be the first openly lesbian state senator in Georgia history.

Jackson, who since age 13 has wanted to be both a pastor and a politician, said the decision to run was "more a question of how do I do this or when do I do this, not will I do this."

She was inspired by other clergy members who have served in office, like the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis, an ordained Baptist minister who served Georgia's 5th Congressional Dis-



Courtesy photo

The Rev. Kim Jackson speaks during a meet-and-greet campaign event.

trict, including much of Atlanta, and the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, the South Carolina state senator who also served as pastor of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, where he and eight others were killed by a white supremacist in 2015.

Jackson, who was also born in South Carolina, described learning about Pinckney's life as a "pivotal moment" for her.

"That reminded me that I was in the South and that this was possible — that you could be a state senator who served a church ... and that there was room, particularly in the Black tradition, for one to do both of those things."

A former associate rector at All Saints' Episcopal Church in downtown Atlanta, Jackson

also got advice from three All Saints' parishioners who serve in the Georgia Legislature. She sees running for office as "an extension of [her] ministry" with vulnerable people on the streets of Atlanta, for whom political decisions can have major, immediate impacts. If elected, she would continue to serve Common Ground "because these two things are intertwined," she told ENS.

"In the congregation that I serve, the policies that we make around issues of affordable housing, around criminal justice and reentry — those policies make a difference in their lives every single day. So, yes, we talk about those things," Jackson said.

She got Atlanta Bishop Rob Wright's approval before running and does not campaign during services. Still, she has found it hard to separate Kim Jackson the priest from Kim Jackson the candidate.

"I am running as Kim Jackson, not the Rev. Kim Jackson," she told ENS. "And I did that intentionally because a year ago, I thought that those two things could be separated out. But I will say, a year into it, that that is not possible. People know me as Reverend Kim, and whether I am stumping for my campaign or standing up to deliver a homily, I am Reverend Kim, and my congregants are extraordinarily proud of the fact that I am running."

Jackson's run for office does not violate any

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At this election time, we can ask: what did Jesus do?

The following is excerpted from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's sermon at the September virtual meeting of the House of Bishops.

This November, the people of the United States will elect a president and many others to public office. This election occurs in a time of global pandemic, a time when there is hardship, sickness, suffering and death.

This election also occurs in a time of great divisions that are deep, dangerous, and potentially injurious to democracy. So what is the role of the church in the context of an election being held in a time such as this? What is our role as individual followers of Jesus Christ committed to his way of love in such a time as this?

In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke refers to the Gospel of Luke when



Photo/via Zoom

Bishop Curry speaking online at House of Bishops meeting.

said something that might be helpful to us. He made mention of the little acronym WWJD, "What Would Jesus Do?"

He said that can be a helpful way of discerning what we might be being called to do at any given time. But he offered an alternative. He said, "What would happen if we began to ask the question, not what would Jesus do, but what did Jesus do? What did he do? What did he teach? What do Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us that Jesus did and taught?"

I want to suggest that addressing that question, "What did Jesus do?" and summoning the Spirit to help us apply it to our lives and to our times may mean the difference be-

he writes:

"In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up into heaven." All that he did, all that he taught.

In a powerful sermon preached at the July meeting of the House of Bishops, Bishop Scott Hayashi of Utah

tween the church simply being another religious institution that exists for its own sake and the church being a Jesus movement that courageously follows the way of Jesus and his love, not for its sake, but for the sake of the world that Christ gave his life for and rose from the dead in.

As you know, the Episcopal Church does not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates for elective office. There is good reason for that. First, in the United States, tax exempt, religious, and charitable organizations are by law prohibited from such endorsement, support, or opposition to candidates.

This does not prohibit churches from engaging in voter education, voter registration, helping people get to the polls to vote, or even advocating for issues of public policy reflective of the tenets of our faith. And every citizen, including those of us who are members of the church, has rights and responsibilities as well.

Secondly, there are good and faithful followers of Jesus Christ who are Episcopalian. Some are Republican, some are Democrat, some are independents, some liberal, some centrist, some conservative.

Just as we must respect the right of every

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Due to U.S. Postal Service delays, Episcopal Journal subscribers may have received previous issues, and this issue, later than usual.

CONVERSATIONS

Finding joy in 2020? It's not such an absurd idea, really



By Angela Gorrell

THE YEAR 2020 hasn't been one to remember — in fact, for a lot of people it has been an outright nightmare. The pandemic, along with political turmoil and social unrest, has brought anxiety, heartbreak, righteous anger and discord to many.

Amid such suffering, people need some joy.

As a scholar who has investigated the role of joy in day-to-day life, I believe that joy is an incredibly powerful companion during suffering.

Speaking at funerals, teaching joy

This is more than academic work for me. In late 2016, less than a year after I was hired to be on a team researching joy at Yale University, three of my family members unexpectedly died within four weeks: my cousin's husband Dustin at 30 by suicide, my sister's son Mason at 22 of sudden cardiac arrest, and my dad, David, at 70 after years of opioid use.

While researching joy, I was speaking at funerals. At times, even reading about joy felt so absurd that I almost vowed to be anything but joyful.

In 2020, many people can relate to this.

I want to be clear: Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness tends to be the pleasurable feeling we get from having the sense that life is going well.

Joy, on the other hand, has a mysterious capacity to be felt alongside sorrow and even — sometimes, most especially — in the midst of suffering. This is because joy is what we feel deep in our bones when we realize and feel connected to others — and to what is genuinely good, beautiful and meaningful — which is possible even in pain.

Whereas happiness is generally the effect of evaluating our circumstances and being satisfied with our lives, joy does not depend on good circumstances.

An illumination

A couple of days after my cousin's husband died, a small group of family members and I were shopping for funeral items when the group decided to go to the place where Dustin had died by suicide. It was getting dark and the sun had almost set. As we were taking in the landscape we suddenly noticed a star above the trees. Standing next to one another in a line, we looked across the sky and one of us asked whether any other stars could be seen. There were none. We realized that there was just this one exceedingly bright shining star in the sky.

Gazing at the star, we felt as if Dustin had met us there, that he'd allowed that single star to be seen in the sky so that we would know he was all right. It was not the kind of relief we wanted for him. But for a few minutes we allowed the tragedy of what had occurred in this very space just two days before to hang in the background, and we instead focused on the star. We were filled with a kind of transformative, quiet joy. And we all gave ourselves over to this moment.

As scholar Adam Potkay noted in his 2007 book "The Story of Joy," "joy is an illumination," the ability to see beyond to something more.

Similarly, Nel Noddings, Stanford professor and author of the 2013 book "Caring," describes joy as a feeling that "accompanies a realization of our relatedness." What Noddings meant by relatedness was the special feeling we get from caring about other people or ideas.

Joy is also the feeling that can arise from sensing kinship with others, experiencing harmony between what we are doing and our values, or seeing the sig-

nificance in an action, a place, a conversation or even an inanimate object.

When I teach about joy, I use an example from my family to explain this. When my sister looks at a Mason jar now — whether in someone's hand filled with tea or bursting with flowers on a friend's coffee table — it reminds her of her son Mason. It is not just an object she is seeing, but a relationship imbued with beauty, goodness and meaning. It gives her a feeling that can be described only as joy.

We cannot put joy on our to-do lists; it does not work that way. But there are ways we can prepare ourselves for joy. There are "gateways" to joy that help us to become more open to it.

Gratitude involves bringing to mind the good that is in the world, which makes rejoicing possible. The feeling that follows contemplating nature or art that we find inspiring is often joy, as these are experiences that help people feel connected to something beyond themselves, whether to the natural world or to others' feelings or experiences. Since "hope," as theologian Jürgen Moltmann has said, is "the anticipation of joy," writing out our hopes helps us to expect joy.

Three types of joy

In my book, "The Gravity of Joy," I identify multiple kinds of joy that can be expressed even in today's troubled times.

Retrospective joy comes in vividly recalling a previous experience of unspeakable joy. For example, we can imagine in our minds an occasion when we helped someone else, or someone unexpectedly

helped us, a time we felt deeply loved ... the moment we saw our child for the first time. We can close our eyes and meditate on the memory, even walk through the details with someone else or in a journal and, often, experience that joy again, sometimes even more acutely.

There is a kind of joy, too, that is redemptive, restorative — resurrection joy. It is the feeling that follows things that are broken getting repaired, things that we thought were dead coming back to life. This kind of joy can be found in apologizing to someone we have hurt, or the feeling that follows recommitting ourselves to sobriety, a marriage or a dream we feel called to.

Futuristic joy comes from rejoicing that we will again glimpse meaning, beauty or goodness, and seemingly against all odds feel that they are connected to our very life. This type of joy can be found, for example, through singing in a religious service, gathering at a protest demanding change or imagining a hope we have being realized.

In the midst of a year in which it is not difficult to stumble onto suffering, the good news is that we can also stumble onto joy. There is no imprisoned mind, heartbreaking time or deafening silence that joy cannot break through.

Joy can always find you. ■

The Rev. Angela Gorrell is ordained in the Mennonite Church USA. She is Assistant Professor of Practical Theology, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. This article first appeared on The Conversation website.



Photo/Lidya Nada/unsplash.com

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



GIVEN THE VAGARIES of the U.S. Postal Service these days, our readers may receive their Journal in late October or early November. Either way, it may seem early to start thinking of Advent, but that season is a bit early this year, starting on

Sunday, Nov. 29.

As usual, we are presenting a selection of Advent material from Episcopal and other sources for individuals and groups.

As this is being written in the third week of October, spooky decorations are in full swing. Even in this pandemic year, many kids are eagerly anticipating Halloween.

Adults are adjusting festivities to include COVID-19 precautions, checking to see if their municipality has published any rules on trick-or-treating — and weighing their own views on the activity.

As the holidays turn in the U.S., once Halloween is over, it's time to starting thinking of Thanksgiving, then Christmas.

This year, any pleasure in anticipating year-end

holidays has been replaced with enormous levels of anxiety. We consider the wisdom of having a family gathering and if so, how many people to include and whether, in warmer climes, it can be held safely outdoors.

We wonder if we should travel and if so, how — car? Bus? Train? Plane? If we do decide to travel, we should check supplies of masks, hand sanitizer, even face shields for some. We may want to check the rate of coronavirus positive cases at our destination and the rules on mask-wearing.

In this year fraught with worry, it looks like Advent practice has something to teach us. Every year in the church calendar, we wait, for four weeks, anticipating the birth of the Christ child.

We may mark the time by dipping into a collection of prayers, meditations or readings for each day, creating a moment of relaxed stillness and contemplation. We might light a candle on an Advent wreath each week.

We don't have to go anywhere or buy anything to mark Advent. In a time more frantic than ever, the title of a popular Advent poster might also serve to create momentary calm: "Slow down. Quiet. It's Advent." ■

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NEWS

Executive Council passes 2021 budget, including \$1 million in relief for struggling dioceses

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

It was inevitable, heading into the October meeting of Executive Council, that the coronavirus pandemic would color much of the work of the church's governing body. Cases of COVID-19 are still on the rise in the United States and worldwide, and some dioceses and their congregations are struggling with decreased revenue as the virus and precautions to slow it upend parish life.

Over Executive Council's online session, held Oct. 9-12, the pandemic's impact on church operations and finances was evident. In one of its most significant moves, Executive Council approved the Episcopal Church's 2021 budget on the final day of the meeting, after a debate over staff cost-of-living adjustments and financial relief to dioceses.

The pandemic also has affected planning of the church's triennial General Convention. The 80th General Convention, which had been scheduled for July 2021 in Baltimore, could be moved online or postponed. It will be up to the church's presiding officers, after consulting with Executive Council, to make that call.

"We can expect a decision in November, so stay tuned," said the Rev. Michael Barlowe, secretary of General Convention.

Some of the other resolutions and discussions at this Executive Council illustrated how thoroughly the ground has shifted under the church since the pandemic took hold in mid-March, forcing suspension of in-person worship and face-to-face activities. With much of the work of the church moving online, church leaders are grappling with fundamental questions about how to assess congregational life today and plan for the future.

Such questions weighed heavily in the Rev. Chris Rankin-Williams' presentation to Executive Council about changes to the parochial report forms that congregations and dioceses submit each year. Data from the parochial report is intended to provide a summary of the year and help gauge trends in church vitality, but "2020 has been a bit of a pile-on year," Rankin-Williams said.

He serves as chair of the House of Deputies' Committee on the State of the Church, which had been working on a revised parochial report even before the pandemic. For 2020, the committee recommended a special edition of the parochial report that partly treats this year as a statistical anomaly.

In the special report, average Sunday attendance, one of the church's most prominent metrics, will reflect only the number of people who attended in-



Photo/ENS

The Rev. Chris Rankin-Williams, chair of the House of Deputies' Committee on the State of the Church, speaks to Executive Council about parochial report revisions.

person worship from Jan. 1 to March 1. New questions, under the heading "Worship During the Pandemic," will require congregations to say whether they've worshipped online and, if so, what platform they used. They also will be asked to report what metrics they used, if any, to track online participation. Standardized methods for counting online traffic may be recommended in future revisions to the parochial report.

"Churches are doing amazing stuff and facing some really incredible challenges," Rankin-Williams said. Some congregations are thriving online, while others soon may be at risk of closing down because of the pandemic's disruptions, he said.

The special report for 2020 will include

new narrative questions to help track "opportunities, innovations and challenges" that congregations experienced while dealing with the pandemic. Racism is another new section in the report, with congregations asked to discuss how they are "actively addressing and working toward racial justice and reconciliation."

Such narrative questions will preview a new approach to future parochial reports, as Rankin-Williams' committee responds to complaints that the past emphasis on numbers misses other examples of church vitality and Episcopalians' participation in the Jesus Movement.

"As a rector, my concern is not primarily with a report that tells me what happened but is something that the leaders of my church can use to make decisions for the future," Rankin-Williams said. He serves at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ross, Calif., north of San Francisco.

After the presentation, the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, led off a Q&A session by thanking the committee for responding so quickly "to the current realities to this global situation and the situation we're facing in the church today."

Those realities dominated deliberations by Executive Council's Finance Committee over the budget and other church finance resolutions.

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Parochial reports for 2019 show continued decline in Episcopal Church membership

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

With every release of parochial report data — the statistics on attendance, membership and finances that every parish in the Episcopal Church must submit yearly — a picture of the denomination's future comes gradually into focus.

It's not a holistic depiction of the church's health or success, and it comes with many caveats — it's difficult to infer much from one set of data, and some statistics conflict with each other. But the release of the 2019 data makes the picture clearer than ever: Even before COVID-19, the Episcopal Church's days were numbered.

"The overall picture is dire — not one of decline as much as demise within the next generation unless trends change significantly," said the Rev. Dwight Zscheile, an expert in denominational decline and renewal. An Episcopal priest, Zscheile is vice president of innovation and associate professor of congregational mission and leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

"At this rate, there will be no one in worship by around 2050 in the entire



Photo/ENS

This screen shot shows parochial report data for churches in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

denomination," Zscheile told ENS.

The decline is, of course, nothing new. The Episcopal Church has seen declining membership, to varying degrees, since the 1960s, when it counted 3.4 million members. As of 2019, it had about 1.8 million. Membership is down 17.4% over the last 10 years.

After some fluctuation — including a period of stagnation and minor growth in the early 2000s — the statistics seem to have settled into a trajectory of steady, gradual decline.

"The trends are continuing," said the Rev. Tom Ferguson, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Sandwich, Mass., who has blogged extensively about the church's decline. "It does seem, at least from this data, to maybe have slowed down a bit, but we have no idea whether

that's a blip or whether that's a trend."

Across the church, the declines in average Sunday worship attendance have slowed slightly over the past few years, but a decline is still a decline, Zscheile says.

"This most recent report shows a slight moderation of the trend of decline in the past year, but overall the trajectory is clear," he told ENS. "The Episcopal Church has lost a quarter of its worship attendees over the past decade."

Across the church, year over year, the decline in active members was essentially unchanged at 2.29%. However, Sunday attendance did show some signs of slight

improvement. Sunday attendance fell 2.55% from 2018 to 2019, compared to 4.5% from 2017 to 2018. And the percentage of churches that saw an increase in Sunday attendance year-over-year shot up from 24% to 32%, while the share of churches that had a decrease fell from 53% to 49%.

However, there are also signs of a trend toward disparity in the church when it comes to attendance, with more churches at either end of the spectrum and fewer in the middle. In 2018, 14% of churches saw at least 10% growth in Sunday attendance over the preceding five years, while 59% had lost at least 10%. For 2019, that gap widened to 15% versus 61%.

"It would be my hunch that the healthier churches are getting healthier

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AROUND THE CHURCH

National Cathedral to host interfaith prayer service on Nov. 1

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

As the United States struggles through a time of turbulence and tension, Washington National Cathedral will host a national interfaith prayer service on Sunday, Nov. 1 — two days before Election Day — featuring Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and other spiritual leaders. The service, titled “Holding On to Hope: A national service for healing and wholeness,” will be livestreamed on the Episcopal Church’s Facebook page in English and Spanish from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Eastern time.

“In the midst of pandemic, racial reckoning and a historic election, the livestreamed service will gather Americans for prayer, song, lament, hope and a call to love God and neighbor,” said the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, canon to the

presiding bishop for evangelism, reconciliation and stewardship of creation.

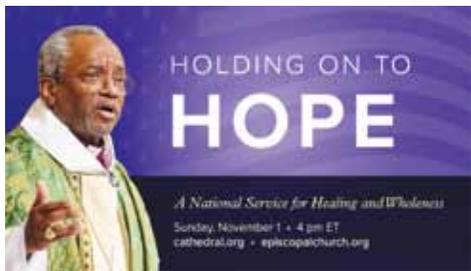
Curry will offer “wisdom and encouragement,” along with the Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest, and Valarie Kaur, a Sikh filmmaker and speaker. Curry will also preach earlier that day at the cathedral’s All Saints’ Day Eucharist at 11 a.m. Eastern time.

In statements to Episcopal News Service, Curry and cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith spoke of the renewed importance of the cathedral as a space for Americans to unite in the presence of God, even if they are physically separated. Washington Bishop Mariann Budde will lead the service along with Hollerith and Spellers.

“Washington National Cathedral, for our nation, has been a place to gather for prayer: at the death of presidents, after terrible tragedies like 9/11, and in moments of joy and hope for our na-

tion and our world,” Curry told Episcopal News Service. “As the people of the United States cast their votes for the office of president and many other offices throughout the land, we gather to pray

to the God who is the Creator of us all. We pray, in a sense, on our knees before our God that we might learn to stand holding each other’s hands as the children of God.” ■



Paul-Gordon Chandler elected 10th bishop of Wyoming

The Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler was elected on Sept. 19 to be the 10th bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming. Chandler succeeds Bishop John S. Smylie upon his retirement in 2021.

Chandler is the rector of the Anglican Church in Qatar (the Church of the Epiphany & the Anglican Center) in the Persian Gulf, a church that hosts 85 other church congregations of varying sizes, in addition to its own.

Serving as an appointed mission partner with the Episcopal Church,

he is an author, peace builder and art curator. He grew up in Senegal, West Africa, and has lived and worked around the world in leadership roles with the Episcopal Church, faith-based publishing, the arts and Christian relief and development agencies.

He is also the founding president of Caravan, an international peace building nonprofit closely associated with the Episcopal Church that uses the arts to build sustainable peace around the world and which has held several strategic interreligious art exhibitions throughout Wyoming.

Chandler was elected on the second ballot out of a field of three nominees.

— Diocese of Wyoming



Chandler

OBITUARIES

Former Central Gulf Coast Bishop Charles Duvall

Bishop Charles Farmer Duvall, retired bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, died on Oct. 8, 2020, in Columbia, S.C., at age 84.

Duvall graduated in 1957 from The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. Upon graduation, he married to Ann Warren (Nancy) Rice of Charleston, S.C., before attending Virginia Theological Seminary, where he graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1960.

Duvall served three churches in South Carolina from 1960 to 1962: Holy Trinity in Grahamville, the Church of the Cross in Bluffton and a small mission on Hilton Head Island. In 1962, he became the rector of St. James (James Island) in Charleston. Between 1970 and 1977, he served as the rector of Holy Trinity Church in Fayetteville, N.C., after which he became rector of the Church of the Advent in Spartanburg, S.C.

In November, 1980, Duvall was elected bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast and was consecrated the following spring by Presiding Bishop John Allin. He served as bishop of the Central Gulf Coast for twenty years, retiring in 2001.

Known as a storyteller, Duvall emphasized the teaching office of the bishop. He recorded a series of ten Bible stories titled “Biblical Stories Retold to Tickle the Ear and Touch the Heart.”

Duvall had a lifelong connection with Kanuga, the Episcopal camp and



Duvall

conference center near Hendersonville, N.C. He attended camp there as a boy, led youth conferences there early in his ministry and as a bishop was a popular chaplain for summer guests for many years. He served on the Kanuga board of visitors and was at one time chairman of the board of directors.

Duvall served on numerous boards and received recognition for his accomplishments from many. The School of Theology at the University of the South, where he served on the board, and Virginia Theological Seminary both awarded him a doctorate of divinity. He also served as the chairman of the board of trustees for the Episcopal Media Center, which joined with Day 1 Ministry to become the Alliance for Christian Media during his tenure. In addition, he served on the board of St. George’s College in Jerusalem.

His survivors include his wife of 63 years, Nancy Rice Duvall, a daughter and two sons. He is also survived by six grandchildren.

— Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

Former Missouri Bishop William (Bill) A. Jones

Bishop William (Bill) A. Jones, Jr., former bishop of the Diocese of Missouri, died on Oct. 11 at the age of 93.

Jones was a native of Memphis, Tenn. He was ordained the eighth Bishop of Missouri in 1975 and served as bishop until 1992.

“I join with the people of the Diocese of Missouri in giving thanks for the life, work, and ministry of the Rt. Rev. William “Bill” Jones,” said Bishop Deon K. Johnson, eleventh Bishop of the Diocese



Jones

of Missouri. “Bishop Jones served as the eighth Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri during a period of significant change in the Episcopal Church. His pastoral presence and good humor went well beyond his tenure as Bishop Diocesan.”

Following General Convention’s approval in 1976 to ordain women, Bishop Jones ordained the first woman in the Diocese of Missouri. He also worked to expand lay involvement in the diocese, establishing the Lichtenberger Society to provide spiritual opportunities for lay people. Bishop Jones re-established the Bishop and Council model and continued the diocesan tradition of responding to social needs. Under Jones’ leadership, the diocese began a new companion relationship with the Diocese in Nigeria. That relationship led to many visits, establishment of programs and longtime friendships.

The bishop and his wife, Margaret Loaring-Clark Jones (Maggie), had four daughters. Jones retired in 1992 and the couple moved east, settling in Kennett Square, Pa. His wife Maggie died last February.

“I was fortunate enough to chat with Bishop Jones after my election and again after my ordination & consecration. I greatly appreciate his deep wisdom, profound insight and his willingness to support me ‘as his bishop,’” said Johnson.

“Bishop Jones now joins with that glorious band of saints who have entered into a nearer presence with the Eternal God, and we give thanks for the tremendous impact his life and ministry has had in shaping who we are as followers of Jesus in this time and place. May Bishop Jones rest in Christ’s peace and rise in glory.”

— Episcopal Diocese of Missouri

Former Colorado Bishop William Frey

Former Bishop William C. Frey, the eighth bishop of Colorado, died on Oct. 11 in San Antonio, Texas, age 90.

Frey was born in 1930 in Waco, Texas, was ordained in 1956 in the Diocese of Colorado, served as missionary bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Guatemala from 1967 to 1971 and was elected in 1972 as bishop of the Diocese of Colorado, where he served until 1990.

In 1985, he was one of four candidates for presiding bishop in 1985 when Bishop Edmond L. Browning was elected to the position. He left the episcopacy to become dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.

Frey retired to the San Antonio area in 1996 but used his gifts for reconciliation and healing to serve as assisting bishop for the Diocese of the Rio Grande after its bishop, Jeffrey Steenson, resigned to join the Roman Catholic Church.

Frey later became interim rector of Christ Church in San Antonio, the largest congregation in the neighboring Diocese of West Texas, at a time of crisis after a large faction left to form an independent Anglican church.

Frey’s wife, Barbara, died in 2014. He is survived by their five children, Paul, Mark, Matthew, Peter, and Suzanna, as well as numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Two of his children, Paul and Matthew, followed him into the Episcopal priesthood, and continue in active ministry in Texas and Colorado.

— Episcopal Journal



Frey

AROUND THE CHURCH

Panel finds Albany (N.Y.) bishop broke church law on same-sex marriages

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Bishop William Love, of the Diocese of Albany (N.Y.), violated his ordination vows and the Episcopal Church's canon law when he banned same-sex marriage in his diocese in 2018, a disciplinary hearing panel found in a decision issued Oct. 2.

The unanimous ruling, conducted under the church's Title IV disciplinary process, refutes Love's arguments — articulated by his counsel at a virtual hearing in June — that Love had not committed a canonical violation by prohibiting clergy from using the same-sex marriage rite approved for churchwide use by General Convention in 2018 because it was not a proposed revision to the Book of Common Prayer.

The decision does not stipulate what consequences Love will face. The panel will schedule another hearing for Love and the church to offer proposals and

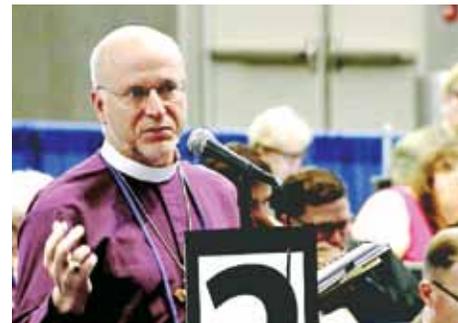
will then issue an order, which could involve suspending or deposing Love — essentially stripping him of his ecclesiastical authority. In a letter to his diocese, Love said that hearing “will be scheduled within the month.”

“While I am very disappointed and strongly disagree with the decision of the hearing panel ... they have issued their judgement,” Love wrote. “Unfortunately, given the nature of this case, I have no reason to believe that appealing the hearing panel's decision would result in any different outcome.”

“Whatever the final outcome, it will severely impact not only me and the ministry entrusted to me as bishop of Albany, but it will also seriously impact the life and ministry of the diocese. I continue to pray that somehow God will use all of this for his purposes.”

Through the diocesan office, Love declined a request for additional comment.

The hearing panel is composed of



Photo/ Episcopal Church video

Bishop William Love of the Diocese of Albany tells the 2018 General Convention that passing a resolution on same-sex marriages would force him to violate his ordination vows.

Rhode Island Bishop Nicholas Knisely as president, Assistant Bishop Jennifer Brooke-Davidson of the Diocese of Virginia, the Rev. Erik Larsen of the Diocese of Rhode Island, Melissa Perrin of the Diocese of Chicago and retired Southern Virginia Bishop Herman Hollerith IV.

At the June hearing, the panel heard arguments from representatives of Love and the Episcopal Church. They did not dispute the facts of the case — or the theological validity of same-sex marriage — but debated whether Love's actions had violated church canon law.

The church, represented by lawyer Paul Cooney, argued that Love, by directing his clergy to continue complying with a diocesan canon prohibiting participation in same-sex marriages, had violated General Convention Resolution B012, which stipulates that “provision

will be made for all couples desiring to use these [same-sex] marriage liturgies in their local congregation.”

The Rev. Chip Strickland, who represented Love and also serves as the Diocese of Albany's chancellor, argued that Resolution B012 does not hold canonical status and, therefore, Love had not committed a canonical violation. Strickland asserted that authorized trial rites like the same-sex marriage liturgy in question only have canonical status if they are proposed revisions to the Book of Common Prayer, and that B012 does not fall under that category.

The hearing panel disagreed, saying the “plain language of the resolution” makes it a proposed revision to the Book of Common Prayer, even if it lacks “the magic words” explicitly identifying it as such. B012, the panel said, is canonical and therefore mandatory. By ignoring this mandate, Love violated church canons and his ordination vows.

The panel also refuted Love's argument that B012 is inconsistent with the Book of Common Prayer, which still defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman in its catechism and marriage rubrics.

The preface of the marriage rite in the Book of Common Prayer, the panel said, only applies to that particular rite and not the additional rites authorized by General Convention, and the rubrics to the catechism describe it as “an outline for instruction” that is “not meant to be a complete statement of belief and practice.” ■

California priest removed from ministry due to misuse of funds

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A priest in the Diocese of California has been barred from priestly ministries for four years over allegations that he misused more than \$200,000 of his parish's money over the past decade.

The Rev. Matthew Dutton-Gillett had served since 2009 as rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park, between San Francisco and San Jose. He is accused of spending church money on himself since 2011, which the congregation discovered in April and notified police.



Dutton-Gillett

California Bishop Marc Andrus placed Dutton-Gillett on paid leave while the diocese hired Evidentia Consulting to conduct an investigation into the full extent of the priest's spending.

“The money came from the parish's operating account which comes directly from donated funds,” junior warden Steve Andrew told the Mercury News last month. “We are a volunteer charitable organization and we work completely on donations. We're just so deeply saddened, shocked and surprised by the breach of trust between Matthew and the parish.”

The congregation officially removed him as rector on Sept. 4, and last week it turned over results of the consultant's investigation to police, according to an Oct. 3 email to the diocese from Andrus.

Andrus, whose diocese encompasses the San Francisco Bay area, also announced reaching an agreement with Dutton-Gillett regarding disciplinary action under Title IV of the Episcopal Church's canons. Under the agreement, Dutton-Gillett's ministry will be restricted under Andrus' supervision, and he isn't allowed to serve “in any church capacity

that involves the management of funds.”

Dutton-Gillett also agreed to engage in “repentance, restitution and amendment of life,” including returning the money taken from Trinity Episcopal Church, Andrus said. He has paid back at least \$52,000 so far, according to the Mercury News.

“At the end of those four years, taking into account his conduct during the period of restriction, I may remove him from the priesthood or modify, sustain or remove the restrictions on ministry,” Andrus said.

Dutton-Gillett, son of a United Church of Christ minister, was ordained as an Episcopal priest in 1992 in Ladue, Mo. He later served in Sycamore, Ill., and Farragut, Tenn., before accepting the call to rector in Menlo Park, according to a biographical summary that has been removed from Trinity Episcopal Church's website.

He called this “a painful time” for him and his family in a statement earlier this year to the Mercury News. “I have a deep love for the Trinity community, and they for me, and I know that this is painful for them, as well. I regret that deeply,” he said.

Despite his removal as rector, Dutton-Gillett was allowed to maintain his health insurance through the end of this year and temporarily remain living in the church's rectory with his family. Those accommodations were made “out of concern for his family's welfare,” Andrus said.

“I am grateful to the vestry of Trinity, Menlo Park, for its leadership during this difficult time, and especially to the parish's priest-in-charge, the Rev. Thomas Traylor, for his steady and experienced guidance,” Andrus said. “Trinity is continuing its ministry as a Christ-centered community, committed to its mission in the community and hopeful about its future. I bid your prayers for the people of the parish, for Matthew, and for his family.” ■

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law or any church canon, and though it is unusual, it's not unprecedented. Former three-term U.S. Sen. John Danforth, a Missouri Republican, was also an Episcopal priest, though he never served a parish.

Jackson's race is not particularly heated, but the simultaneous U.S. Senate and presidential elections are, and although the law is clear on what clergy can and cannot say from the pulpit, some clergy say it's hard to know where the line is when it comes to social media.

While some Episcopalians see political engagement — especially in a presidential election of unprecedented importance — as a moral imperative, others firmly believe in keeping religion out of politics and vice versa. That's created a moral and legal quandary for some clergy as they wade through the swamp of social media: Exactly how political can they get? Do endorsements cross the line? And is it possible to separate their personal politics from their clerical role?

There are countless complicating factors, but there are some basic standards that apply to all churches; the Internal Revenue Service's regulations governing tax-exempt organizations, often referred to as the Johnson Amendment, prohibit churches from participating in political campaigns, as Presiding Bishop Michael Curry explained in a sermon during the House of Bishops meeting on Sept. 16:

"The Episcopal Church does not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates for elected office. And there is good reason for that. First, in the United States, tax-exempt, religious and charitable organizations are by law prohibited from such endorsement, support or opposition to candidates," Curry said.

However, Curry added, that does not mean Episcopalians — even clergy — should not be publicly involved in political discussions. In fact, he suggested, civic engagement is part of living out the Christian faith. The key, he said, is not to cling to partisan divisions, but rather to follow one's conscience and look to the examples of Jesus' public ministry.

"There are good and faithful followers of Jesus Christ who are Episcopalian. Some are Republican, some are Democrat, some are independents, some liberal, some centrist, some conservative. And just as we must respect the right of every citizen to cast his or her own vote according to the dictates of their conscience, so we must do so in the church," Curry said. "But it's important to remember that partisan neutrality does not mean moral neutrality."

That idea was further discussed during a webinar hosted by the Episcopal Church's Office of Social Justice and Advocacy Engagement on Sept. 30 titled "From the Pew to the Public Square: Preaching, Politics, and Justice."

One of the featured speakers, the Rev. Mark Jefferson of Virginia Theological Seminary, encouraged attendees not to be shy about taking on political topics, but not to latch onto partisan divisions either. Political labels, he said, may be easy to define, but they do not line up with Jesus' ministry.

Preachers, Jefferson said, should avoid

"engaging in the definitions that envelop our world: Democrats, Republicans. ... All those things are being called into question by the Gospel. Jesus calls all these structures into question."

Clergy who choose to wade into political issues must proceed with caution because of legal and practical implications. The Johnson Amendment remains on the books and in effect, according to the Justice Department, despite President Donald Trump's false claims that he "got rid of it" with an executive order in 2017.

The Episcopal Church's Washington, D.C.-based Office of Government Relations, which advocates for nonpartisan policy positions adopted by General Convention, suggests that if clergy endorse candidates, they should do so in their personal capacity and make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of any institution. It also offers the Vote Faithfully Election Engagement Toolkit to help churches discern what they can and cannot do.

But when it comes to social media, the line between personal and institutional is sometimes unclear. Although some clergy may see a clear line between Twitter and the pulpit, others may see Twitter as a pulpit. Dioceses have come up with different approaches to political statements on social media, but many have reached a similar conclusion: It's best not to address political specifics on social media, but if you do, keep it on your personal account.

Christopher Hayes, chancellor for the Diocese of California, says churches are still struggling to adapt to the gray area that social media presents. In the past, it was much easier to differentiate the use of personal resources and church resources. Now, he says, it's best to make that separation explicit.

"I would strongly recommend to clergy that they have a separate personal social media account from any account that they use for official church purposes," he told ENS, "so that they can maintain a separation that will allow them



Photo/Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS

The Rev. Susan Russell celebrates the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage on June 26, 2015, in the General Convention worship hall before the daily Eucharist.

to participate, if they wish, in political discussions online without involving the resources of their church and creating questions about whether the church has been involved in a political campaign."

But even though that may prevent some of the more serious legal problems, clergy who are politically outspoken are still tak-

ing a risk, Hayes said.

"I think most clergy are pretty well aware that entirely aside from the tax exemption issues, it can be potentially alienating to some segment of their communities for them to be involved in a way that even a minority of their congregation might disagree with."

The Rev. Joe Jenney, who serves St. Andrew's by the Lake in Harrisville, Mich., says he always keeps politics outside the church door.

"I would absolutely never endorse any candidate or party in my church," Jenney said. "My congregation knows I am a conservative, and I have private political discussions with both the liberals and the conservatives in my congregation. But we don't try to convince each other to change views."

On his personal social media pages, though, Jenney is open about his political convictions.

"I know members of my congregation see my posts and that's fine," he told ENS. "I respect their views and hope they respect mine. I just never want to express political views in my church except in private one-on-one conversations."

The Rev. Susan Russell, assisting priest at All Saints Church in Pasadena, Calif., sees it differently; she hopes that by freely sharing her political views, she can build bridges across partisan divisions instead of deepening them.

Russell is known for her outspoken presence on social media; on her Twitter account, she frequently criticizes Trump and Republicans and promotes Democrats "because at this point, the values that I'm seeing from that political party align with what I believe [is] how I'm supposed to live out my faith in the world," she said.

For Russell, expressing political convictions in this moment is a matter of personal integrity and a way to model civil discourse. She also serves as canon for engagement across difference in the Diocese of Los Angeles — a position established as part of a diocesan initiative to bridge societal differences in 2019 — and finds it unhelpful to shy away from any talk of politics.

"I think it's important for me to be willing to talk about what I believe and why I believe it in order to model how it's possible, regardless of where you stand on an issue or a candidate ... that we can have respectful dialogue across those differences," she told ENS. "How do we demonstrate that it's possible to talk across difference if we're not willing to articulate what those differences are?"

Still, she says she follows All Saints' internal guidelines about not using church platforms to advocate for personal views. In one of its few instances of action on the Johnson Amendment, the IRS investigated All Saints over a sermon given by a former rector two days before the 2004 presidential election, in which he discussed Christian approaches to voting but did not endorse a candidate.

"I would never preach about a candi-



Courtesy photo

The Rev. Kim Jackson speaks to a man after washing his feet.

date," she said. "We do not allow electioneering at All Saints in any way on any partisan issues. We do take positions on initiatives and propositions and will continue to do so. I think there is an important bright line in terms of advocating from the pulpit or through the institutional church on a candidate because that gets us into a whole different dark place of having organized religion co-opted for partisan politics."

Russell is one of a number of priests on Twitter who regularly express strong political opinions; while some do not include their parishes and titles in their bios, others do. Some make it explicitly clear that they are only expressing personal views, while others mix political statements and theological ones. And although all clergy must follow the IRS regulations, some must abide by diocesan rules as well.

Some dioceses — like Rochester and Southwest Florida — include provisions on political speech on social media in their diocesan communications policies. But many don't have hard and fast rules.

The Rev. Dorothy Massey "d'Rue" Hazel, canon for vision and ministry development in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina, says her diocese has no specific policy on political statements on social media, but treats these things on a case-by-case basis. Personally, Hazel thinks it's wise for clergy to avoid them, whether on personal or official accounts.

"If an account is private, what does that mean? Does it mean that just the people you like in the church are part of that or people who aren't even involved in the church are a part of that?" she said, adding that whenever she posts something that could be considered political, she includes a link to the Episcopal Church's official position on the subject.

The Diocese of Olympia is an example of a diocese that does have a policy about getting political online. Diocesan staff may not use official email accounts to participate in any political campaign for or against a particular candidate or promote "personal positions or agenda not associated with one's position as an employee of the diocese." In the diocese's social media guidelines, users of accounts that represent the diocese or its congregations are urged to avoid those same topics.

Josh Hornbeck, the diocese's canon missionary for communications, says those social media guidelines are "not hard and fast rules for what they can and cannot say on social media," but principles to keep in mind. ■

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citizen to cast his or her own vote according to the dictates of conscience, so we must do so in the church, the body of Jesus Christ. That is how it should be.

The Bible says we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, not one political party. But it's important to remember that partisan neutrality does not mean moral neutrality. Partisan neutrality bidden to us by human civil law does not mean moral neutrality, because we are bidden to obey the royal law of almighty God. And this may be where our text from Acts helps us.

When Luke says, "the first book," he's referring to the Gospel, but notice what he does so skillfully. Ancient tradition says that Luke was a physician. But in this text, he sounds more like Luke the lawyer.

Luke is suggesting that the Jesus we see in the Gospel, what he did and what he taught, is precedent. It is the precedent for how those who would follow him will act and live in their days and in their times. Just as precedents are critical to the law, the precedent of Jesus is critical to the life of those who would follow him in the first century or in the 21st century.

When Jesus says that the entire law and will of God is summed up in the words, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself," that's precedent.

When Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan about somebody who helps somebody else because that person, that man was a human child of God created in the image of God, that's precedent.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes ("blessed are the poor ...") are the precedent for what it means to follow in the way of Jesus in the first century or the 21st century.

The task of the church in the first century or 21st century is to live by the precedent, to bear witness to the precedent and lift up the values of the precedent of Jesus in our time.

So what can we do? Well, we can vote as individuals. We can help others to register and to get to the polls and cast their vote. We can encourage others to vote as their conscience leads them. And I know someone is probably thinking, that's true but what does that have to do with Jesus Christ?

What does voting have to do with the Gospel? What does voting have to do with being a Christian?

An election for public office is not a popularity contest. It's a contest of ideas about how to shape the future of a community, nation and maybe even a world. It's a contest, a debate, a discernment of moral values and their relationship to public policy.

Voting is an act of moral agency. It is an act of moral discernment and decision. It is how a community or a nation decides how the moral values that it holds and shares shape public policy and the lives of people. The children of God. It is salutary to remember that partisan neutrality does not mean moral neutrality.

The vote is sacred and important for all people, regardless of your religious tradition or your politics or your nation-

VOTE faithfully

ality. The vote, as an act of moral humanity, is so important that people have given their lives for it.

If you don't believe Michael Curry, ask the people of Belarus right now. Ask the American martyrs who sacrificed, gave their lives, gave that last full measure of devotion so that people might have the right to vote.

America's soldiers have fought to defend freedom. Many of them have given their lives and many of them live with wounds and the scars of war. And one of the freedoms they defended was the freedom, the right, and the responsibility of the vote.

John Lewis in his last published writing before his death said, and I quote, "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent that you have in a democratic society," end quote. There actually is in the New Testament an example of this model of living for followers of Jesus.

You'll find it in the writings of St. Paul in the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters of Romans. I don't mean to suggest that Paul voted; he didn't. He was a Roman citizen, but he lived not in the time of the Roman Republic, but in the time of the Roman Empire. But Paul in Romans 13 specifically identified the teachings of Jesus with how he would live his life in both civil society and in Christian community.

In the 13th chapter of Romans, he speaks about the role of government. And then he quickly shifts from speaking about the role of government to the role of the citizen and then the role of the Christian, who is a disciple in the empire.

He says, "You have to pay taxes to whom taxes are due, and an honor to whom honor is due." And then he says, "But owe no one anything except to love one another. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law."

Partisan neutrality was not the same as moral neutrality in the first century and it is not today. The royal law of love is the fulfillment of the law and the will of God. It is the ultimate standard, norm and guide for following the way of Jesus in any society, in any time. With grace to aid and conscience to guide, each of us must discern and decide what love of neighbor looks like in our lives, in our actions, in our personal relationships and in our social and public witness. What did Jesus do?

The vote is vitally important, but it's not enough. The wounds and the divisions in American society are so deep that even an election by itself cannot heal them. The murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others has exposed the death-dealing depth of racism and white supremacy deeply embedded in the soil and in the soul of America.

Two deputy sheriffs in Compton, Calif. were deliberately shot as they sat on duty in their car. Then a group of people tried to block the entrance to the hospi-

tal where they were being taken, shouting, "Let them die." Those two sheriffs are children of God. George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor are children of God. We cannot go on this way.

In 1858, as divisions in this nation over slavery, born of racism, would lead to a civil war, Abraham Lincoln gave a speech warning the nation, quoting the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

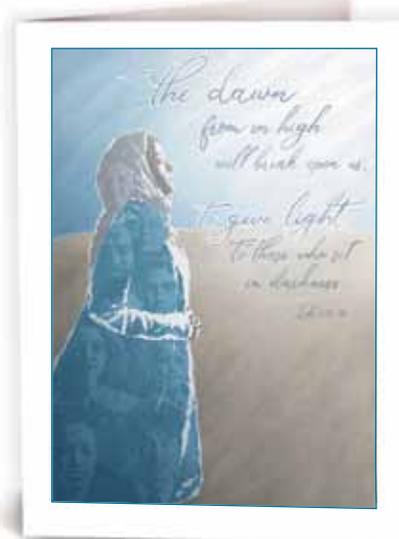
I am not suggesting that we are on the verge of a civil war, but we must not underestimate the danger of the divisions that we are in. These divisions are dangerous, injurious to democracy itself. We must, and I believe we can, find a better way.

I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, because I believe he has shown us that better way. I believe that the way of unselfish sacrificial love can show us the way of repentance, the way to repair the breach. The way of reconciliation that ultimately can lead us to the beloved community, but it's not easy.

This is long distance work. There are no quick fixes because the wounds are so deep, but we need not feel enslaved by fate. We are not people of fate. We are people of faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. Nothing can defeat God or stop God's cause of love. We can do this.

Jesus has shown us the way; it is the way of unselfish, sacrificial love. And that way can make room for us all. ■

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NEWS

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The Episcopal Church's finances are relatively stable, Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer Kurt Barnes told the committee, thanks in part to cuts made by departments of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, or DFMS, the church's corporate entity. The DFMS also received a \$3 million loan from the federal Paycheck Protection Program that could be converted into a grant if the church succeeds in meeting the program's criteria, such as keeping workers on the payroll and maintaining salaries.

The 2021 budget estimates \$45.9 million in income and \$47.1 million in expenses. Despite a single-year deficit, the church budgets on a three-year cycle, with surpluses and deficits balancing by the end of the triennium.

Since it remains unclear whether General Convention will be held in 2021, departments separated about \$3.8 million in convention expenses, to be put in reserve. For the remaining expenses, church planners are assuming a gradual return to pre-pandemic spending levels but will make cuts if income doesn't match projections.

Even so, several Executive Council members raised concerns that some dioceses and congregations face a bleaker financial outlook, which they said should be reflected in the 2021 budget. A proposal to include up to 3% in cost-of-living adjustments for DFMS staff members was singled out for scrutiny.

"How do I vote to pass this when I know other people are suffering?" Louis Glosson, a member from the Diocese of San Diego, said when the budget was proposed for a vote.

Bishop Ed Konieczny agreed.

"In these difficult times, we have dioceses and we have congregations that are unfortunately laying people off, have already told staff members that there will be no cost-of-living raises for them," said Konieczny, who retired this year as bishop of Oklahoma. "I just think it sends a very poor message to the rest of the church."

The Rev. Mally Lloyd, who chairs the Finance Committee, noted that the budget will allow senior church officials to reduce next year's cost-of-living raises if the financial picture worsens by the end of this year. She also emphasized that the committee chose to add \$1 million in diocesan relief through the assessment waiver process to fully fund grant programs that benefit dioceses.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry also spoke in favor of the proposed budget, including the cost-of-living adjustments and the promise of additional diocesan support.

"This council is putting forth \$1 million in relief for our dioceses through the assessment waiver process," Curry said.

After other members questioned how the cost-of-living adjustments would look to others around the church, Ex-



Photo/ENS

Clockwise from bottom left, the Rev. Anne Kitch of the Diocese of Newark, North Carolina Bishop Suffragan Anne Hodges-Copple and Andrea McKeller of the Diocese of South Carolina sing "I Have Decided to Zoom With Jesus" during the final day of Executive Council's meeting on Zoom.

ecutive Council voted to move into executive session, which closed the rest of the debate from public view. No reason was given for that motion, though Diane Pollard, a member from the Diocese of New York, said she was "uncomfortable" continuing the discussion with DFMS staff present.

Executive Council remained in executive session for 28 minutes. After returning to open session, Curry requested a brief break, and when members returned from the break, they approved the 2021 budget without further discussion. The approved budget included the DFMS adjustments of up to 3% and the additional \$1 million for assessment waivers.

Executive Council also approved a new round of grants from several church programs. United Thank Offering will award nearly \$450,000 to 26 projects addressing the effects of COVID-19. Eleven grants totaling \$365,000 were approved for church planting.

And about \$87,000 in "rapid response" grants will support an additional 16 ministries aimed at promoting racial healing as part of the church's Becoming Beloved Community initiative. The first round of 17 grants totaling \$100,000 was approved in June after the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

"The amount of grant applications we received was wonderful and overwhelming and telling of just how deeply committed people of the church are to doing this work," the Rev. Edwin Johnson told the Finance Committee. Johnson serves as chair of the Presiding Officers' Advisory Group on Beloved Community Implementation, which received 89 applications for the two rounds of grants.

In another financial matter, Executive Council, which includes Honduras Bishop Lloyd Allen as a member, approved an emergency financial assistance plan for the Diocese Honduras, which cited hardships caused by the pandemic. The plan will forgive \$163,000 in church loans to the diocese and provide an additional \$75,000 if the diocese fulfills certain requirements, including selling a storage facility and catching up on its pension payments.

Executive Council also reviewed and endorsed churchwide guidelines drafted by the Archives of the Episcopal Church on updating gender references in church records to reflect sensitivity to the transgender community.

And Executive Council approved the latest move in the ongoing efforts to find a new home for the church archives, now based in Austin, Texas. Until a permanent location can be determined, the archives will seek a five-year lease on an interim site. Potential locations and terms of the lease were discussed in executive session and not identified in the final resolution.

Executive Council, which serves as the church's governing body between meetings of General Convention, has 40 voting members, including the presiding bishop and House of Deputies president, as well as additional nonvoting members, such as the Episcopal Church's finance director.

Twenty of the voting members — four bishops, four priests or deacons, and 12 laypeople — are elected by General Convention to six-year terms, with half of those members elected every three years. The other 18 are elected to six-year terms by the Episcopal Church's nine provinces, with each province sending one ordained member and one lay member.

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and the healthier churches are getting healthier," Ferguson said.

Declines continue to be strongest in the Northeast and Upper Midwest. Province I, which covers New England, saw the worst year-over-year attendance decline at 4.4%; in the Diocese of New Hampshire, it fell 15.6%, the worst of any diocese. The worst declines in active baptized members came from Wisconsin, where the small dioceses of Eau Claire and Fond du Lac lost 27% and 18.4% of their members, respectively.

Ferguson said those could be symptoms of larger demographic and social trends in the U.S.

"I think in the Northeast, it's largely secularization, whereas I think in the Upper Midwest, it's part of that population flight," he said. "It's really hard. The Upper Midwest is having a rough time demographically."

Declines tend to be slower in the South and West, mirroring population trends, and some dioceses there saw minor growth. Dioceses outside the U.S. vary dramatically. Colombia, for example, showed the strongest growth in attendance and membership of any diocese, while Honduras is declining sharply.

The one bright spot in the data is the continued increase in pledge income. Despite declining membership and attendance, average pledges and total pledge and plate income were up; after a small drop from 2017 to 2018, total pledge and plate income increased 1.7% from 2018 to 2019, though that was slightly less than the rate of inflation.

However, even that presents a problem going forward, according to Zscheile.

"The fact that fewer people are giving more money is not a sustainable trend over the long term," he said.

2019 will now be the last year of this particular iteration of the parochial report,

Barlowe indicated that Executive Council likely will schedule another meeting in November to discuss various pressing issues, including General Convention. In the meantime, Executive Council at this month's meeting passed amendments to its bylaws aimed at making online meetings more productive, while affirming that physical meetings are preferred.

The amendments will require committees to meet at least once before each full Executive Council meeting to discuss proposed resolutions and submit those resolutions at least 15 days in advance, so they can be translated into Spanish in time to be reviewed by all members.

"These amendments take seriously our commitment to operating as a bilingual body," Russ Randle, a member from the Diocese of Virginia who serves on the Governance & Operations Committee, said when presenting the amendments. They passed despite some concerns that the changes could create additional burdens for the committees.

"I think one of the things we can be mindful of is, it's OK to experiment and live with something and see if it needs to be refined," Curry said. ■

the oldest continuous gathering of data by The Episcopal Church. With some adjustments in methodology and definitions, the report has measured membership since 1880 and Sunday attendance since 1991. Even before COVID-19, efforts were underway to redesign the parochial report, and the onset of the pandemic made that even more urgent. For 2020, parochial reports will only measure Sunday attendance from Jan. 1 to March 1 and include new narrative questions to help track "opportunities, innovations and challenges." After 2020, the new permanent parochial report format may include additions or changes.

Church leaders have said that including narrative sections allows parishes to describe the less quantifiable ways in which they are serving God and their communities, and that membership and attendance numbers alone don't paint a complete picture of the church.

"Churches are doing amazing stuff and facing some really incredible challenges," the Rev. Chris Rankin-Williams, chair of the House of Deputies committee that has been working on revisions to the parochial report, told Executive Council on Oct. 10. "As a rector, my concern is not primarily with a report that tells me what happened but is something that the leaders of my church can use to make decisions for the future," Rankin-Williams said.

Ferguson says that although numbers like Sunday attendance don't tell us everything, they are important for assessing the reality of the church's situation. He hopes that future reports don't brush that aside.

"My real fear is, I don't want a tool that just normalizes decline — which, frankly, I just see everywhere, this normalization of decline," he told ENS.

"If you have tons of folks coming to your free laundry, that's great. ... But if you're still losing 25% of your congregation, well, then in a few years, you're just going to be a laundromat." ■

ADVENT RESOURCES

Episcopal materials available to enrich Advent experience

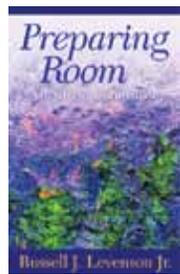
Nov. 29 is the first Sunday of Advent, the Christian season of spiritual preparation before celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

By Episcopal Journal

New and updated Advent resources for individuals, congregations, dioceses and communicantes of faith are available in many locations, including www.episcopalchurch.org, www.churchpublishing.org, www.forwardmovement.org, www.episcopalrelief.org. Here is a selection.

BOOKS

Preparing Room: An Advent Companion



The Rev. Russell J. Levenson, Jr. explores the biblical context for Advent in this series of contemplations.

The beginning of the Christian story comes together from many hands. In the four Gospels, Mark makes no mention of the events leading up to and surrounding the birth of Jesus. John points back to Genesis. Most of the historical pieces come primarily from Matthew and Luke. Levenson writes that the Scriptures together are the key to telling the story of the season.

Allusions and references to other Scriptures are accompanied by brief meditations so that readers may step more deeply into the Advent story and find its meaning and impact for their own lives. Available from www.churchpublishing.org.

Expectant: Advent Meditations

The Rev. Anne E. Kitch offers a short meditation for each of the 30 days of the season, from the First Sunday of Advent through Christmas Day. In the spirit of expectancy, each meditation focuses on seeking and seeing God in the everyday of our ordinary lives, based on a psalm that corresponds to the daily office for the season of Advent. Available from www.churchpublishing.org.

Waiting & Watching: Advent Word Reflections

Several authors, including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, the Rev. Scott Gunn and Richelle Thompson of Forward Movement and Virginia Theological Seminary Dean Ian Markham, contribute to this collection of daily devotions for Advent.

Drawn from the weekly Scripture readings, they offer an opportunity to pause, wait, and watch for the Christ child.

The reflections are part of a larger

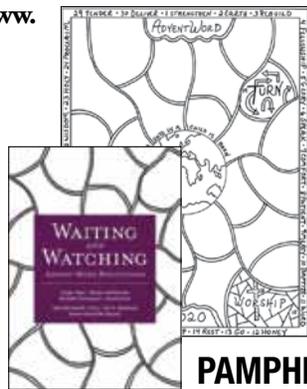
initiative called AdventWord, a global community praying and walking together during the holy season. Hosted by Virginia Theological Seminary and in partnership with Forward Movement, AdventWord invites people to read and respond to each day's word.

In addition, each day features a doodling prompt by artist and Praying in Color author Sybil MacBeth. Available from www.forwardmovement.org.

POSTER

Waiting & Watching: Advent Word Poster

A companion to the book "Waiting & Watching: Advent Word Reflections," this poster by Sybil MacBeth allows users to create an individual Advent calendar. The poster is part of the #AdventWord initiative, which invites reflection and prayer on a particular word as Christians wait and watch for Jesus.



PAMPHLETS

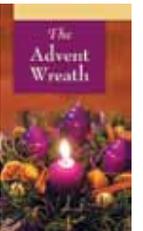
How to Keep Advent

The four weeks of Advent are intended as a time of preparation for the mystery of Christmas. This pamphlet contains suggestions for observing this rich season: lighting an Advent wreath,

displaying a crèche, decorating a Christmas tree, quiet and reflection, gifts and giving to those in need.

The Advent Wreath

This introduction to the Advent wreath provides an insightful history of its meaning, includes instructions on how to use it, and offers family blessings to be used during the weekly wreath lighting. Both pamphlets available from www.forwardmovement.org.



GIFTS

Gifts for Life

Episcopal Relief & Development's 2020 Gifts for Life catalog is now available. Users may "buy" such gifts as a goat, chickens or disaster relief kits for communities worldwide, on behalf of themselves or in honor/memory of a loved one. Available at www.episcopalrelief.org.

Equal Exchange

This fair-trade vendor of coffee, tea, chocolate and other items supports small farmers in the U.S. and around the world. Choosing the "partners" drop-down menu, then "interfaith partners," then "Episcopalian," supports Episcopal Relief & Development. Available at www.equalexchange.com. ■



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FEATURE

El Camino Real Episcopalians continue jail and reentry ministries despite pandemic

By Sharon Sheridan
Episcopal News Service

Locked up in Elmwood Correctional Facility in Santa Clara County, Calif., Renee Lopez was a little annoyed when fellow prisoner Jack Fanning signed him up for a religious class without asking him.

Today, he couldn't be more grateful.

Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church in Saratoga, which led the class, continued to support Lopez, 43, after his release three-plus years ago. As soon as he could, he joined Saint Andrew's. He was confirmed into The Episcopal Church and now serves on the vestry and as part of the leadership team for the church's Stepping Stones Gathering, a reentry ministry for those formerly incarcerated that Fanning co-founded after his own release.

"Without that community, I [would] quickly go back to doing the things I was doing before," Lopez said. "This community has given me the life that I envisioned when I was locked up."

Providing support and the chance for transformation for men like Lopez and Fanning is a key element of service ministries at Saint Andrew's. For the past seven months, that work has continued with participants inside and outside Elmwood despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting suspension of in-person worship and jail visits.

Elmwood is part of the Santa Clara County ("Silicon Valley") jail system, the fifth largest in California with a capacity of 4,500 prisoners.

Pre-pandemic, Saint Andrew's led weekly worship and Bible study for men inside Elmwood. The Rev. Peggy Bryan, the church's associate rector for outreach and Stepping Stones leader, provided pastoral care. Parishioner Katy Dickinson, Education for Ministry coordinator for the Diocese of El Camino Real, facilitated classes in the country's first jail-based EFM program. When prisoners were transferred from Elmwood to a state prison, the church commissioned them as "ambassadors of the gospel" and provided continuing encouragement and Christian formation through letters, phone calls, packages and visits.

"There's a whole lot you can really do inside to engage them and preach a lesson in love," Bryan said. "They hear the message of hell, brimstone and judgment [from others]. We bring them a whole different picture."

But that wasn't enough, she said. "I want to see their lives transformed when they get out. That's the hard part. It's too

easy just to focus on the people inside. ... Let's do what's hard, and let's get them involved in our lives outside in our ministry, in our parish. Let's do whatever we can to walk with them to real transformation."

They began inviting former prisoners to attend the church. They deepened connections with the men and their families. On Oct. 13, 2018, they launched the "gathering," a satellite worship service offered in partnership with Grace



Photo/courtesy of Peggy Bryan

Renee Lopez stands on a log in Jewel Lake, Calif. After leaving the Elmwood Correctional Facility in Santa Clara County, Calif., he joined Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church in Saratoga.

Baptist Church in the urban corridor of San Jose, significantly closer than suburban Saint Andrew's to the halfway houses and other places where the men lived.

The \$98,000 program is launching as an independent nonprofit called Hope Inside/Out that incorporates Stepping Stones and hopes to add more services, including reception centers to house former prisoners. It also has applied for a \$40,000 New Episcopal Communities Harvest grant.

About 30 people — former prisoners and people in recovery, members of both churches and some college students — were attending the service in San Jose each Sunday when the pandemic forced the service online. Now, 40 to 50 attend, including men who connect to Zoom via 15-minute phone calls from the jail and one former prisoner deported to Mexico.

Leaving Elmwood, Fanning, now 51, couldn't wait to reconnect with Bryan and with Cathy Holley, who played guitar during the jail worship services. He first met them in 2016, worshipping in a mop closet — "they called it a multi-purpose room, but it smelled like dirty mops."

"Because I lived in a dorm setting, that was my way to get some sense of peace in my heart," he said. "Along the way, my faith grew. The hope grew."

When he was released and came to Saint Andrew's, the community embraced him. "I'm a young man that has tattoos every place, and I don't normally fit anywhere in today's 'society,' especial-

ly in a faith community," Fanning said. "That was so big, to be able to fit without any exceptions."

He joined the church's efforts to launch Stepping Stones and find an accessible worship location. The goal was to offer a place of compassion, community, family and spirituality, and to maintain connections with men in jail, so that, once released, "they know where their feet can land," he said.

After spending time repeatedly behind bars over the last 20 years, Daniel Martinez, 51, appreciated being connected to a supportive community outside, he said in an interview via Zoom from Elmwood before his release this summer.

"Being in jail, though you're with many people, you're alone many times," he said. Saint Andrew's support "keeps us thriving. It keeps us knowing that there's a world of people out there that want to help people such as ourselves."

Housed in a dorm with 40-some men, Martinez and other prisoners studied the Bible daily using materials supplied weekly by Saint Andrew's and held evening prayer circles. "It's just what keeps us from that boiling point," he said, noting that COVID-19 added to their stresses. "So many uncertainties; this is what keeps us together."

Anticipating his release after 16 months in jail, he looked forward to continuing his Saint Andrew's connection, which is, he explained, "a strong support system and a foundation that's needed in order for me to go in any good direction."

"I'm always at the verge of tears now, and it's not tears of disappointment but for joy," Martinez said. "It's having people care for you and understanding what that means. ... I got lost for a while. I'm learning just to reach out and ask for help, and it feels good."

The men inspire each other.

"A lot of us have done time together for years," said Richard Nunez, 40. "We've all seen each other at probably our best and our worst. So even one person doing better and doing well, it holds a lot of clout. ... I saw Jack get better. I saw Renee get better. I wanted to do better. It's like each one of us was able to get through to the other one."

"Peggy and Cathy and everyone else ... who came in there and ministered to us taught us that we were loved, that we weren't forgotten, and we could turn this whole thing around," Nunez said. "So when I got out, I wanted to come to Stepping Stones to show other people the same thing."

Even when he started using drugs

again, "they were still by my side," he said. "They were still checking on me." Ultimately, he quit using drugs and went through a rehabilitation program. Today, he's part of the Stepping Stones leadership team and works for a caterer and a drug and alcohol residential program.

For Bobby, Stepping Stones constitutes a second family. (His last name is withheld to protect his safety in jail.)

"I can't tell you in simple words how it has helped me. I can only say that it has saved me," he said in a Zoom interview from Elmwood. Stepping Stones brought him from "a very dark place ... to the light."

He participates in the Sunday online worship and studies with others behind bars. The only way to show his gratitude is to keep the program going in Elmwood while the volunteers can't come in, he said. "We're just filled with so much love, so much hope. Without Stepping Stones, I don't know where we would be."

Volunteers find love and community as well.

Gerry Chartrand, who provides healing prayers during worship, said she was "scared to death" the first time she entered the jail. "After my first visit, I felt like I had gone to a beautiful, wonderful church filled with loving people and I've loved every bit of it."

Volunteer Christine Clifford's son is incarcerated elsewhere.

"It's terribly isolating to have your loved one go to jail. It puts you in Oz. It's not like you can go to your neighbor and say, 'What did you do?' in these circumstances, Clifford said. "It's really important that you can find people that can walk you through. To be able to find people like Jack and Renee and Richard, who can give me a hug ... and say, 'He's going to be OK, he's going to find his way,' — those things are just incredible."

Stepping Stones has led to celebrations — both typical liturgical occasions, such as the baptisms of Clifford and Fanning and confirmation of Lopez — and less-typical ones. Because of the COVID-19 shutdown, Lopez never went to court to see a judge bang a gavel to signal his release from probation.

"I feel like I missed out," he said. But two weeks later, on his birthday, the Stepping Stones community surprised him with a visit from a county superior court judge, who performed the gavel dropping during the group's Zoom worship service.

"I've never been so emotional," Lopez said. "I felt so loved in that moment, that this community went out of their way to give me that moment."

Friends who attended "were crying," he said, telling him, "Those people love you."

Concluded Clifford, "Family comes in all sorts of forms, and we're just really blessed that we found one another in this space." ■

FEATURE

Arizona priest brings church to people via 'pop-up' ministry

By Tony Gutiérrez
Episcopal News Service

In the driveway of one of her parishioners, and with a cotton swab in her gloved hand, the Rev. Holly Herring applied holy oil to several Episcopalians, administering the anointing of the sick. For many, it was the first time they'd received any sacrament since COVID-19 forced churches throughout the country and the world to go on lockdown.

Among them was cancer survivor Bill Coleman, a parishioner at Trinity Cathedral in Phoenix, where Herring serves as canon precentor. Although it wasn't the Holy Eucharist, for him, "it's another form of contact. ... That's the thing I miss the most about going to church."

Before receiving the sacrament, Coleman sought one-on-one counseling from Herring as they sat in socially distanced camping chairs placed outside her car. Since many churches are either still closed or limiting participation, Herring started "Pop-up Pastor," an initiative to bring the church to the people.

"We've got a lot of people in our community, and I know a lot of people in the communities of my colleagues, who really are very isolated," Herring told Episcopal News Service. "Zoom is great; telephone calls are great; emails are great; all of these things that we use as resources to connect with people, they're wonderful in a time of pandemic, [but] they don't speak to the need to actually see each other's faces in real time."

The ministry's name derives from the pop-up tent she sets up behind her car and her pastoral role. The visits are not intended to be long-term or limited to Episcopalians; she wants to invite people to reconnect with their communities and faith, whatever tradition that may be, and refer them to those communities.

"I started thinking about how food trucks go into neighborhoods and feed people," Herring said. "I thought, 'Why am I waiting for the office to open? I should be out in the neighborhood like a food truck, feeding people in body, mind and spirit.'"

So far, Herring has set up shop in the Ahwatukee area in south Phoenix, outside of the cathedral in downtown Phoenix and to the north near Scottsdale.

"It was really a joy to see even the few people who came here today," said Carolyn Warden, a member of Trinity Cathedral, who, along with her husband Jim, hosted Herring for a soft launch of the Pop-up Pastor on Aug. 30 outside their home. "We need each other. We miss each other. Moving forward with this ministry, once this pandemic is better understood and we're able to be a little

bit more mobile, I still think that there's a place for this."

Jim and Kay Shumaker, also Trinity parishioners, were among Herring's first visitors seeking spiritual support. The couple from Sun Lakes, both in their 80s, have been unable to visit their son and his family during the pandemic because their age makes them more vulnerable to the virus and their daughter-in-law has an autoimmune disorder.

"We're really isolated from family, and we chatted about that," Jim Shumaker told ENS. "Holly shared her experiences, and we commiserated back and forth."

Kay Shumaker admitted that at one point, they had to get out of the house and "snuck out and didn't tell any of our kids" to take a short vacation in northern Arizona.

"It was at that point we just had to get someplace where it was cool, and we had to get away from the four walls of the house," she said. "But then you feel guilty. So then you talk about guilt."

"She feels guilty," Jim Shumaker chimed in. "I said, 'Hey, let's do this.'"

Drawing on her experience as a hospital chaplain, Herring allows time and makes space for people to arrive at their own solutions. She asks them how they're going to care for themselves and allow others to care for them, and how they're planning to "reconnect to the world in a world that has changed while you've been away."

"Pastoral care is about listening intently," Herring said. "Someone needs for me to say, 'I hear you. I see you. How would you solve that?' and then to let them solve it and go, 'You know, that sounds like something that's feasible. Why don't you try that?'"

The Pop-up Pastor grew out of the virtual ministries Trinity set up when the pandemic began in mid-March. Herring has chanted Compline every night and has invited laypeople to lead virtual morning and evening prayers online. Many parishes in the Diocese of Arizona have offered services online, and the diocese has highlighted one in English and one in Spanish at a different church each Sunday.

"I really miss being present in the same space," said Courtney Ellish, a member of All Saints' Church in central Phoenix. "I have done a few Zoom things and watched services online. There's something that virtual space



Photos/Tony Gutiérrez/ENS

Left, The Rev. Holly Herring, left, canon precentor at Trinity Cathedral in Phoenix, is joined by Bishop Jennifer Reddall of the Diocese of Arizona, during the "Pop-up Pastor" mobile ministry outside the cathedral in downtown Phoenix.

Below, The Rev. Holly Herring offers spiritual counseling to Jim and Kay Shumaker during her "Pop-up Pastor" mobile ministry.



lacks, and that's being present with somebody whom you can actually feel their presence rather than just see them."

Ellish and her family have known Herring since 2014 when she served as a priest at All Saints'. Ellish told Herring that she'd just returned from moving her 15-year-old son Nolan, who served as an acolyte when Herring got married, to an Episcopal boarding school in Austin, Texas, where he's a sophomore.

"We talked about some good things, some bad things that are going on, and some things that I asked her for some

prayer for," Ellish said. "Mother Holly also knows the rest of my family. She's kind of a special person in our family." ■

Tony Gutiérrez is a freelance journalist based in Cave Creek, Ariz.



Photo/Courtesy of Holly Herring

The Rev. Holly Herring's dog, Siena (named for St. Catherine of Siena), tests out the pop-up tent for her person's "Pop-up Pastor" mobile ministry.



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FAITH AND THE ARTS

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

By Pamela A. Lewis

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

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

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

From his canvas-packed studio at the Mana Contemporary Center in Jersey City, N.J., the 24-year-old African-American figurative artist turns out large-scale paintings like those that Renaissance and Baroque-era European artists typically produced.

However, the common themes of old master paintings have also strongly inspired Ballon, a Jersey City native and graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. He traces to early childhood his first encounters with these works' depictions of mythological heroes, and, more specifically, biblical characters and saints. Over the last several years, Ballon has used old master techniques from celebrated works to draw attention to the challenges facing Black Americans.

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

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

In 2013 and 2014, he received the Young Arts awards (presented by the National Young Arts Foundation in Miami), and since 2014, his work has been included in several group exhibitions in this country and in Sweden.

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

in stained glass and sculpture. As a high school student, he studied the works of Michelangelo and other great painters of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

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

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

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

Representations of what is now often termed the "Black body" in European art have been scant and large-

ly peripheral. Black figures, frequently unidentified, were relegated to the margins, in the background of paintings, or portrayed in servile roles.

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

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

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



narratives of faith and redemption.

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

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

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

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

With an economy of gesture and expression the artist gives his attention to hands in *Called* (2019), where another young man



Photos/courtesy of the artist

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



(again, the artist), wearing a baseball cap, sits on a damaged set of steps.

He is interrupted from counting the money he holds in each hand by a white jacketed but faceless figure who

holds a Bible in his right hand while pointing to the young man with his left. Looking up, the young man points to himself, as if to ask, "Who, me?" Inspired by Caravaggio's *The Calling of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600), the work represents subtly yet powerfully the decisive moment when the soul is summoned.

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

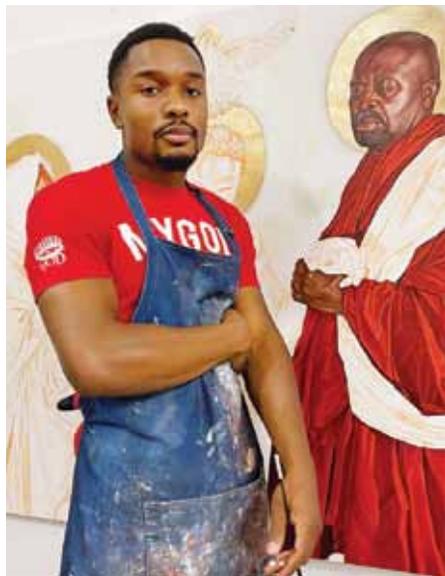
Mary in Prayer (2018), based this time on Francisco de Zurbarán's *The Young Virgin* (1632-33), is a nearly full-length figure work and one of Ballon's most explicitly devotional images. The open book (suggesting the Scriptures) on Mary's lap and her hands positioned to receive the Holy Spirit place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

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

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

Ballon is part of a small but growing group of artists who have returned to representing the human form. His models are friends, family, and members of his immediate community, and in his view, the figure expresses most effectively all that can be expressed

continued on page 14



Photo/courtesy of Tyler Ballon

Tyler Ballon is seen in his studio.

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Presiding bishop shares stories from life and ministry in new book

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's latest book, "Love Is the Way," was released on Sept. 22, and like his 2018 book, "The Power of Love," it emphasizes Christian teachings, particularly Jesus' command to love one's neighbor, as a powerful force for unity and healing in a troubled world.

Whereas the earlier book was a collection of notable sermons, including the one Curry preached at the U.K. royal wedding in May 2018, "Love Is the Way" takes a more autobiographical approach to the lessons of his faith. Curry illustrates core Christian beliefs and applies them to today's social context by mining personal stories, from his early childhood in Buffalo, N.Y., to his work as a parish priest in Baltimore to his time as bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina.

Curry, who was elected presiding bishop in 2015, also describes key mo-

ments in recent church history, including the internal debate over same-sex marriage, the church's values-based political advocacy and its support of the Standing Rock Sioux in their opposition to an oil pipeline in North Dakota.

Curry spoke with ENS by phone from his home in North Carolina, where he now spends much of his time, since his normally dizzying travel schedule has been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. The following interview has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity and length.



Photo/Reuters

The Rev. Jim Wallis, second from left, and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry lead fellow clergy in a vigil titled "Reclaiming the Integrity of Faith During Political and Moral Crisis" as they walk to the White House in May 2018.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preaches in July 2017, at the 145th Niobrara Convocation at Red Shirt Table, S.D.



Photo/David Paulsen/ENS

ments in recent church history, including the internal debate over same-sex marriage, the church's values-based political advocacy and its support of the Standing Rock Sioux in their opposition to an oil pipeline in North Dakota.

"The purpose of this book is to explain what the way of love looks like, even as we walk it in a world that feels at times closer to a nightmare than to the dream," he says in the introduction.

Curry spoke with ENS by phone from his home in North Carolina, where he now spends much of his time, since his normally dizzying travel schedule has been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. The following interview has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity and length.

ENS: Your previous two books have been on the theme of Christian love, but this new book is quite a bit different than the last. Why did you write this book and why now?

Curry: This book really came out of a number of people saying, "You know,

I'm here to say there is power in the kind of love that is unselfish, even sacrificial, that seeks the good and the well-being of others as well as the self — enormous untapped power in that kind of love that can help both to give us hope in troubling times and to help us find

our way and navigate our way through. ENS: There's a passage in which you note that church is the only society that doesn't exist for the good of its members. Curry: Yeah, that was a [Archbishop of Canterbury] William Temple quote. ENS: How do you see the role of the church, both for its members and looking outward? Curry: Well, again, Jesus said the supreme law is the law of love. He was very clear about that, Matthew 22. There can be no debate about that. The New Testament was absolutely clear about that: to love God and love the neighbor, that is what the will of God calls for.

What is love? The love most frequently talked about in the New Testament is "agape" love, which is a kind of love that is not selfish. It actually seeks the good and well-being of others as well as the self, but it's not a selfish kind of love. It's giving, not always taking. If that is the case, and we who are the church are a Jesus movement of people who have committed their lives to the way and teach-

ings of Jesus of Nazareth, then love must be the dominant chord of the music, of the life of we who are the church. That means that we by definition are a community of people who are bidden to love, to live for the good and the well-being, not of the institutional church, not of ourselves, but for the world for which Christ died.

ENS: You also say at one point that we live in a world of selfishness.

Curry: And it's not working out very well for us.

ENS: Some chapters in the book apply that love to the public sphere and politics. In reaction to the church's advocacy, some people say that it's not the church's business getting involved. How would you respond?

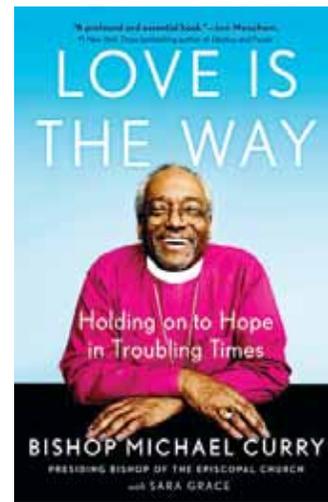
Curry: You know, last week, when I preached at the House of Bishops meeting about the role of the church in the time of an election, one of the things I said then is the church must always maintain partisan neutrality. We don't tell people how to vote. That's not our job. Everybody must make that decision based on their own conscience. But partisan neutrality does not mean moral neutrality. The church must always be a moral voice for what is good, for what is kind, for what is just, for what is loving. That's the nature of the church. That's

Jesus of Nazareth. When he was in a conversation about love and someone asked him who's my neighbor, he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. That was a moral declaration about how we need to live both together interpersonally and as a society, and in a society, the way things get adjudicated is in the political world, the public square. There is a separation, and should be, of the church and partisan politics, but not the morals of public policy.

ENS: Do you find it harder to get those messages across in today's world given how polarized American politics in particular has become?

Curry: Not necessarily. One of the things we must do is to find where is there common moral ground? Where are there values, ideals, moral principles that we share that we can then build on in terms of developing public policy? And that's where there may be great overlap between progressives and conservatives, or whatever the various sides or factions are. Because we actually do share moral common ground.

Some years ago when I was in North Carolina and we were attempting comprehensive immigration reform, I was in a number of conversations with legislators, members of Congress, and one of the things I would say to them often — most of them, at least in North Carolina, were professing Christians — and I said, that means we follow Jesus Christ. And



that means we follow the Jesus Christ who in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." How does the policy that we have do to others what we would want someone to do to us? That's just a simple question. How does this public policy or this action, how does this reflect the values that Jesus of Nazareth taught us in the parable of the Good Samaritan, showing

compassion and mercy to someone else? Or how can we shape it in a way that it does reflect that, that both you and I can agree on? I'm trying to be nonpartisan and to actually argue that we've got moral common ground. Not on everything, but we've got moral common ground on a lot more than we sometimes think. We can build on that.

ENS: In a chapter talking about the Episcopal Church's decision in 2015 to offer marriage rites for same-sex couples and the negative reaction of some of the provinces of the Anglican Communion, you say some of that reaction was based on a perception of a kind of American imperialism and not just on that issue. Do you think that dynamic still shadows the Episcopal Church's interaction with other provinces, as we look ahead to the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 2022?

Curry: Well, we all have to reckon with the histories of our countries and our cultures. And so we who are Americans, we have a burden that we have to bear. Other people from other countries have burdens that they have to bear; that's true for all of us. And we have to acknowledge that. My approach, whether it's the Anglican Communion or differences in the church, is that it's important to learn how to both kneel and to stand at the same time. To kneel in real humility, to know that I'm not God. This is the best that I can do with the light I've received. And I've got to honor and respect the fact that you differ with me on whatever the issue or concern happens to be, and I've got to kneel before you as my brother, my sister, my sibling, and honor the image of God that is in you because you, like me, are a child of God.

And then it's also important to stand with integrity for whatever it is you happen to believe. And I've learned, I'm still learning, that it's important to both

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BOOK REVIEW

Renewing our citizenship, faithfully

By Kate Beeby

Exhausted by our political circumstance? Terrified as our brokenness, selfishness and crass disregard crushes the cornerstone of our democracy into unstable footing? Maybe we need to get away. Perhaps Canada — though it's not clear that our friendly neighbors to north will have us.

Perhaps times like this call for another kind of journey. I've read that the act of pilgrimage is a prayer — costly, time-consuming, arduous — a purposeful and sacred expedition. The bishop of the Diocese of Texas, C. Andrew Doyle, expresses his autobiography in a scant, yet compelling, six words: “Met Jesus on pilgrimage, still walking.”

In his most recent book, “Citizen, Faithful Discipleship in a New World,” he invites us on another trek in this critical election year. Here, Doyle illuminates how Christians must work to repair a broken nation, a broken world, even our broken dissociated selves. If we might be reluctant to go with him on the expedition, Doyle reminds us that “the wilderness is a place of formation.”

Doyle's narrative outlines an ambitious overview of political theory and a compelling range of theological voices, making a case for faithful discipleship in a partisan world. His argument is as tightly woven as Kevlar, with footnotes.

His thesis is that educated people in wealthy, democratic, Western nations are toxically attached to notions of individuality and self-interest, confining themselves to a detached and desolate wilderness far from God's “garden social

imaginary,” a relational place of love and plenty where all God's people, all God's creation, thrive together.

However, Doyle is clear that his book isn't a prescription for a magic pill, it's no how-to manual, nor a map that tells us how to get from here to there. However, it offers hope as we citizens struggle to find our way forward.

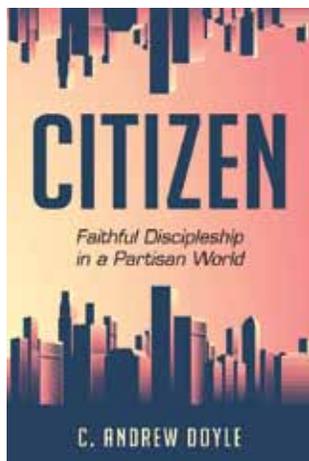
There are aspects of this work that are challenging. It is not entirely clear for whom it was written: Academics? Theologians? Seminary students? Other bishops? Priests? Mere mortals? And in its narrow focus on politics and government, “Citizen” barely touches the human brokenness reflected in all our institutions, like our corporations and the church.

Looking at our own faith tradition, one need only watch the coronation episode of “The Crown” to sense old and dark forces at work. Daily, I am reminded

to hold the things of this world lightly, in particular our institutions, because human agency requires constant confessional humility, by God's grace, we are offered another opportunity that we might try again.

Doyle is also writing as the leader of a diocese covering nearly 50,000 square miles, with more than 77,000 members, in a state that while increasingly diverse and progressive, secessionist sentiments are still openly courted. It would seem to be a daunting landscape in which to preach, teach and shepherd the faithful. But Doyle reminds us that this is nothing new for God's people.

In her recent essay for The New York Times, “Don't Give Up on America,” Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Marilynne Robinson reminds us that America is an idea based on human equality:



Citizen: Faithful Discipleship in a Partisan World

By C. Andrew Doyle
Church Publishing, Inc.
272 pp., \$22.95

“We are asked to see one another in the light of a singular inalienable worth that would make a family of us if we let it.

The ethic in these words should be the standard by which we judge ourselves, our social arrangements, our dealings with the vast family of humankind. It will always find us wanting. The idea is a progressive force, constantly and necessarily exposing our failures and showing us new paths forward.”

With her gracious words, Robinson urges us onward in a secular way. In “Citizen,” Doyle holds a mirror to our otherworldly nature as children of God. Christians must first renew our faith by

turning from the resounding gongs and clanging cymbals of national identity, divisive hegemonies, hyper-fractured individualism, and toxic rhetoric, away from fear, towards love. Then we might begin again to live into our baptismal covenant.

Doyle shows us that “God's garden imaginary is not a human project, but a reality that we can taste when our lives are aligned with the life of God and we are committed to the cultivation of virtue.” From the bishop's lips to God's ears and straight into our hearts and souls. ■

Kate Beeby is an essayist and children's Christian educator.

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kneel and stand at the same time. And that if we all do that and engage each other, kneeling in real humility before each other and before God, and yet being honest and up front and clear about what we stand for or what we believe and hold, the fact that we have knelt before each other creates the space where we can stand together with our differences.

ENS: Let's talk a little about preaching. You describe in the book that your more emotive style differed from the preaching style of your father, an Episcopal priest, partly because the church culture has since changed to encourage more of the preacher's “authentic voice” to come through.

Curry: I remember my father telling me, when he was in seminary they were told that displays of emotion are signs of lack of intelligence and that a preacher must give a learned discourse. That's the way the church was; that's the way clergy were trained. Now this would have been in the late '40s, early '50s. It was a different time. By the time I went to seminary, people were saying, you need to find what is your voice in the pulpit. It was Phillips Brooks who said preaching is the communication of truth through the medium of human personality. You need to communicate the truth of the Gospel as you understand it through the modality of who you are. That was a change that probably started in the 1970s in Episcopal seminaries and ecumenical seminaries all across the board, and so that freed me to learn to be me in the pulpit in ways that are authentic.

I remember Daddy telling me at one point — because my grandfather was a Baptist preacher, my father's father — I remember my father saying, “You preach

like your granddaddy did. He was a revivalist.” And then he stopped and said, “That's fine. Just always make sure it's you and not a show.”

ENS: One other thing that you note in the book is that not only are you the first Black presiding bishop but you also were the first Black diocesan bishop in the South. And you mention in high school reading writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including James Weldon Johnson, who wrote the hymn “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” also known as the Black national anthem. What meaning do you take from that hymn?

Curry: Well, there's a lot! One of the verses, it speaks of “the lessons the dark past has taught us.” And then it says, “facing the rising sun of a new day begun, let us march on until victory is won.” Notice the pattern. The lessons the dark past has taught us, and then facing the rising sun. What you have in the genius of that hymn is a recognition that you can't ignore the past, and this is a message I think for all of us, white, Black, brown, Indigenous, Asian, all of us, everybody, that part of our past is dark, part of our past is filled with pain. The point is not to wallow in it but to acknowledge and face it and then learn from it, and then turn in a new direction and together, for all of us, together to work to right any wrongs, to repair the breach and then to work at the work of real reconciliation and creation of the beloved community. That's right there in that hymn. The message of that hymn — which I had to memorize as a kid, and we sang it all the time, sang it in church on various occasions — what I realized is that that hymn was teaching a worldview where you're charged with living a life in such a way that you help this world and our society to learn from a dark past and turn to work for a new day. ■

BALLON continued from page 12

in life. As was true for these painters from Europe's past, composition, vivid color, light and gesture are his currency.

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

But more importantly, Ballon is contributing meaningfully to the growing

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

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

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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Ohio church's 'Homeless Jesus' sparks call to police – and conversations about poverty

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Bay Village, Ohio, a western suburb of Cleveland, welcomed the opportunity to display a sculpture known as “Homeless Jesus” on its property for seven weeks this fall because the congregation thought it would spark conversations about how society treats and cares for the marginalized.

Did it ever.

On Oct. 12, minutes after the sculpture was installed facing a city park's well-traveled pathway, the Rev. Alex Martin received a visit from a police officer inquiring about the sculpture: Authorities had received a call alerting them that someone was sleeping on a bench — mistaking the sculpture for a real person.

“Bay Village is a small tight-knit community where people genuinely care about each other,” Martin said in an interview with Episcopal News Service. “I have every reason to believe that the call was made out of genuine concern and compassion.”

The officer simply inspected the sculpture and its plaque and then chatted with Martin about it, but since then, the story has been picked up by news outlets in the Cleveland area and beyond, including Vice News and CNN. Much of the coverage so far has focused on the decision to call police, but Martin said the purpose of the sculpture is a

broader one.

“The goal of the statue, the sculpture there, is to not only raise awareness about homelessness and extreme poverty but also to remind us that we are all created in God's image and we have a Christian obligation to stand with the outcast and marginalized,” said Martin, who has served St. Barnabas as priest-in-charge for two years.

It's not all surprising that someone mistook “Homeless Jesus” for a real person. The sculpture is deceptively realistic. Its subject is depicted lying on a bench and wrapped in a blanket, with only his bare feet poking out. His identity is revealed by his wounds, from the spikes used to affix Jesus to the cross.

The original sculpture was created by Canadian artist Timothy Schmalz, who is Roman Catholic, as a representation of Matthew 25:40: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

St. Barnabas was offered a version of the sculpture to display through Dec. 1 by Community West Foundation, which is loaning it to various churches in the area.

Community West Foundation is the largest provider of services to people suffering from homelessness in Cuyahoga County, which encompasses both Bay Village and Cleveland. St. Barnabas also has an ongoing partnership with St.



Photo/Alex Martin

The sculpture “Homeless Jesus” has been installed on the property of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Bay Village, Ohio, since Oct. 12 and will be there through Dec. 1.

Luke's Episcopal Church in Cleveland to support its ministries serving people living on the streets or struggling with poverty.

After his initial tweet about “Homeless Jesus” was retweeted more than 28,000 times, Martin followed up this week with a message inviting community members to donate money to a fund that St. Barnabas will use to support the work of both Community West Foundation and St. Luke's. As of Oct. 16, that campaign had raised about \$1,000, with most of the donations totaling \$5 to \$15.

“The sculpture speaks to people, and it draws strong reactions,” Martin told ENS.

That hasn't just been the case at St. Barnabas. Schmalz's various renditions

of “Homeless Jesus” have the power to turn heads, and perhaps open minds, wherever they are installed.

In 2014, St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Davidson, N.C., hosted one of the sculptures, provoking a mix of reactions, including at least one call to police. Another neighbor wrote a letter to the editor of a local news website saying the sculpture “creeps him out,” according to an NPR report.

St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Buffalo, N.Y., purchased a version of the sculpture for \$33,000 and installed it in a downtown park in 2015, sparking a local controversy.

“There are some who are totally opposed to it. One particular person said ‘Jesus is not homeless,’” lay leader Michael Bonilla told a local public radio station at the time. “If you read the Scripture, Jesus did not have a home.”

The effect is particularly poignant in more affluent cities and neighborhoods where residents don't often come face to face with the problem of homelessness, as is the case for St. Barnabas' “Homeless Jesus.”

“In a neighborhood like this, it's jarring to see someone sleeping on the bench, and it's forcing us to have conversations that we might not otherwise have,” Martin said. And if it makes people uncomfortable, “homelessness ought to make us uncomfortable.” ■

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NEWS

Diocese of South Dakota holds convention ‘virtually in person’

By Lauren Stanley
Diocese of South Dakota

When the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota held its annual convention on Oct. 10 it didn't look like any other convention that had preceded it.

Instead of gathering at a hotel or the First United Methodist Church in Pierre, as it had in years past, and instead of having 350-400 people present, in the year of coronavirus, the diocese went where it had never gone before: online.

Like so many other dioceses across the country and around the world, an in-person convention could not be held. South Dakota is tied with North Dakota for highest infection rate per 100,000 people in the nation, so the idea of meeting in person for the 136th Convention was a non-starter.

In mid-July, as the coronavirus pandemic raged throughout the country, diocesan bishop Jonathan H. Folts consulted with diocesan leaders via Zoom to discuss what to do with the two-day convention scheduled for late September. By early August, the decision had been made to take convention online.

Going online, Folts told the diocese prior to the meeting, would keep everyone safe. Six sites across the diocese,

which encompasses the entire state, were chosen, and special rules were set allowing only for delegates, or alternates taking their place, to attend, along with assistants to handle the technical details and to serve box lunches.

Safety procedures were outlined, including the mandatory wearing of masks, social distancing at each meeting site, health checks at the door, and the continual use of hand-sanitizer and bleach wipes throughout the day. Special health instructions were created for the preparation and serving of food, along with instructions for how to vote remotely from each site.

“Whereas I know that other dioceses are conducting their conventions 100% virtually,” Folts said, “I haven't heard of any diocese meeting ‘virtually in person.’ Even if we had the resources to conduct an all-virtual convention, a number of our regions are not privileged to have good or reliable internet service. So, if we couldn't all meet in person — and if we all couldn't meet virtually — this was the next best option to bring us together and to stay within our canons.

“Often, the only thing you can plan on in South Dakota is that nothing will

your plan. So you have to be remarkably flexible — and, with God's help, our people are.”

By convention time, the Cheyenne River Reservation site had to be dropped

Going online and meeting remotely “was a great idea because it helped keep us safe, and it was a good way to see each other again.”

“Some of us,” he said, “haven't seen each other in seven to eight months, so it was a nice way to visit with each other.”

Geboe added that “economically, it was better, because before you had to travel and spend money, but we didn't have to do that this time. Maybe in time, we can perfect this, and just do it this way. It might save us money doing it this way all around. It worked out well for our first time. We got all the business done in one day. We didn't have to go up the night before and have banquets. We had our communion service, and everything went well. It was very well organized.”

“There were definitely concerns about what to do if one of our sites lost signal,” Folts said, “and I give our Worship Committee high marks for their creativity. If a host site went down, they were given five to 10 minutes to get their signal back. If that failed, they would need to call in on the Zoom phone line. We put our convention within the context of a Eucharist service, and all the assigned liturgical leaders had back-ups in case we lost them electronically. We had con-celebrating priests at the other four host sites who were softly praying the Eucharistic prayer along with me, and we gave them instructions for what to do should our signal be dropped, namely... ‘Speak up and go on!’”

The diocese was able to hold convention this way by using a grant from the St. Mary's Leadership Board, a group that provides scholarship assistance to students and supports youth formation, to purchase the necessary microphones and projectors, which will then be used for other on-line meetings and training sessions.

“Because of the COVID-19 virus,” Folts told the convention, “this new equipment became more than just a wish or an idea — it became a necessity — and it has become a genuine blessing. For many of our events, people have to travel a number of miles to attend — and we also are very dependent upon the weather. So having this technology and equipment will therefore widen our ability to meet and offer diocesan-wide programs, and especially those regarding Christian formation.”

He added, “Initially, when we were faced with the challenge of COVID-19, we were shocked and stunned. But we reached deep inside of ourselves. We made use of the faithful resiliency and tenacity that God has given us. We believed in God, we continued to follow Jesus, and we trusted each other.” ■

The Rev. Lauren Stanley is superintending presbyter, Rosebud Episcopal Mission (West).



Trinity Episcopal Church, Pierre, was one of five sites for the Diocese of South Dakota “virtual in person” convention.

because of COVID concerns, and several other sites experienced a drop in participants when various clergy and delegates were quarantined due to COVID exposure, or decided to stay home due to pandemic worries. In the end, 111 delegates attended, down from the usual 190. There were no vendors, no displays and no visitors allowed.

In his convention address, Folts, focusing on Romans 12:12 — “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer” — praised Episcopalians in South Dakota for keeping their focus on God's mission.

“Our participation in God's mission is where our true focus lies,” he said. “Living into Jesus' Great Commandment — loving God and loving our neighbor — that is our focus. Living into Jesus' Great Commission — worshipping God, making new Christians, forming new Christians, and transforming God's world! — that is our focus. COVID-19 and all that it entails? That is not our focus. It is part of our current picture. But it is not — and I pray to God that it never will be — our focus.”

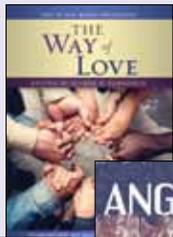
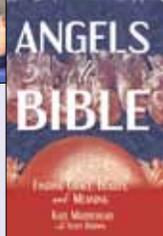
The bishop emphasized various ways in which South Dakota Episcopalians have overcome pandemic difficulties to continue to serve God's people, through online and radio services, taking the sacrament and prayers to the people — and seeing Church membership actually grow as a result — and by making videos of “virtual mission trips” to keep in touch with mission teams that were not able to travel this year.

“What has happened,” Folts said, “is that our clergy and the people of our congregations ... have found ways in which to worship God and to follow Jesus despite COVID-19. They have found ways to share fellowship and to stay in relationship with each other despite COVID-19. They have found ways to form their people and they have continued to transform their communities.”

Rosebud Episcopal Mission Senior Catechist Erroll Geboe, who served as master of ceremonies at the Bishop Jones Building in Mission, liked the online format of convention.

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