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'WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST'

Epiphany, traditionally marked on Jan. 6, celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles. It is also known as Three Kings Day, commemorating the visit of the Magi (or Wise Men) to the Christ child. This watercolor on textured wove paper by British artist John Flaxman (1755-1826) is a design for a marble bas relief. The watercolor is in the Paul Mellon Collection at the Yale Center for British Art.

Photo/Yale Center for British Art via Wikimedia Commons

Baptizing child of early enslaved Africans helped tie Episcopal Church to slavery's legacy

Photo/National Park Service

The enslaved Africans taken to Virginia in 1619 had been captured at sea by British privateers and sold for supplies at Point Comfort before most of them were brought inland to Jamestown.

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

Following this year's commemorations of the 1619 arrival of enslaved Africans to the Jamestown colony, there is at least one anniversary to come that is worth remembering for how it ties the Episcopal Church to the legacy of slavery.

Sometime in the first five years after those Africans were traded to the colony for food by an English pirate who had captured them on the high seas, the infant son of two of the original "20 and odd Negroes" was baptized in an Anglican church in the area, according to the colony's 1624 census records. Those records say the son of "Antoney Negro and Isabell Negro" was baptized with the name of his family's owner, William Tucker. It was the first documented baptism of an African baby in English North America.

Baby William's baptism likely took place in the Anglican church near his master's plantation on the Hampton River in an area where the Kecoughtan tribe lived. The church was known as Elizabeth City Parish, which is still active today as St. John's Episcopal Church in Hampton, Va.

The church's willingness to perform such baptisms "tells me that sin is very real and that blindness is very real, and we can extend baptism, which is freedom offered us through the power of the Holy Spirit and at the same time, maintain and develop and make thrive a system of chattel slavery," Diocese of Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright said in an interview with ENS.

The sin of the church's approval of and participation in slavery, Wright said, had its roots in Cape Coast on the western shore of Ghana, which was a nexus of the transatlantic slave trade. He recalled a March 2017 trip there during which he toured the dungeons where captured Africans were held before being forced onto ships bound for North America and the Caribbean.

Standing in those "dank, dark places," Wright realized that "just above those dungeons was the Anglican chapel where people said basically the same words that we're saying now in our Episcopal churches every Sunday." It is believed that many Africans were forcibly baptized before they were taken to the Americas.

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In El Paso, border ministry assists Mexicans fleeing violence

By Lynette Wilson
Episcopal News Service

An informal tent city has taken stake in Cuidad Juárez, Mexico, alongside the entrance to the Santa Fe Street Bridge, one of three bridges that connect the sprawling northern Mexico border city to El Paso, Texas.

In recent months, Mexican families fleeing rising violence perpetrated by drug cartels in the country's south have arrived at the U.S. southern border seeking protection in the United States via the asylum system. Unlike Central American asylum-seekers, who have been arriving steadily at the U.S.-Mexico border for more than a year, there's no "official" system for handling the surge in Mexicans seeking the same protection from violence and persecution.

Photo/Lynette Wilson/ENS

Tent cities have taken stake at the foot of the three bridges on the Juárez side of the U.S.-Mexico border where Mexican nationals are waiting to claim asylum in the United States.

"The people who are living out on the streets by the ports, they are all Mexican; there is no established system to deal with

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CONVERSATIONS

Two paths, one faith

By Sharon Sheridan

TRAVELING THE NIGHT before Thanksgiving, I opened my e-mail to the news that Louie Crew Clay had gone home to God.

I often said that Louie was the most Christian man I knew.

A white, gay Southerner who married a black man and launched the organization Integrity to support and push for full inclusion of LGBT people in the Episcopal Church, he suffered more than his share of life's slings and arrows. But however much they vilified him, he countered his critics with grace and wit. He demonstrated how to love one's enemies. And he steadfastly signed his messages: Joy anyway!

Predictably, tributes soon appeared across Facebook and listservs from all corners of the church he had served as a member of Executive Council, a six-time deputy from the Diocese of Newark, Integrity founder and tireless advocate for social justice.

Everyone, someone commented, had a Louie story. I could tell several, from when I first encountered him when I began working as a church reporter in the 1990s to when he sent me a gift for my 2018 ordination to the transitional diaconate.

Some of my favorite memories of this former English professor involve poetry. At the 2009 General Convention, he joined in a poetry slam, giving, as I wrote for the Convention Daily, "an animated reading of two poems from his collection 'Quean Lutibelle's Pew' (the 'Quean' is his alter ego, he explained), adopting an auctioneer's stance for 'Lutibell Goes to an Auction' and crossing himself solemnly and invoking the Trinity as he began reading 'Lutibelle Imitates a Strait Male Prayer.'

"'God, I can't pray just now,' laments the praying man. 'Some people/have been saying/that you/might not even be a real man,/might be instead an androgynous mutation. … It was difficult enough/when those black children/started coloring you black./Before long/even sissies will be saying/that you lisp/or go about in drag.'"

Seven years later, I was thrilled to participate in a poetry night in honor of his 80th birthday. And I was both surprised and touched when he greeted news of my progress through the ordination process with not only delight but also an admonition to keep writing poetry. When I visited his church in Newark in 2017, he inquired during coffee hour what poems I was working on.

Through the years, Louie's voice projected in the halls of General Convention and beyond. But he also had a knack of encouraging other voices, including mine.

As I thought and read about Louie, and prayed for his husband and the many others who loved him, I received word of another death during that Thanksgiving weekend.

He was not a public figure, so I'll just call him John to protect his family's privacy. While Louie's obituary made multiple churchwide publications, Google reveals no obituary for John. I learned of his death by chance, while visiting the church of one of his relatives and hearing his name in the prayers.

I met John when he began attending the church I belonged to when I started seminary. Many in the church were well-off or solidly middle class; but John inhabited a lower economic stratum.

It's long enough ago that I've forgotten the details, but I know he faced challenges. I recall some level of housing and employment instability. I don't think he had a car. His voice certainly did not echo across the diocese, let alone throughout the wider church.

And yet, what stands out in my memory of John is not so different from how I viewed Louie.

He was a Christian. He was kind. He served his church.

While John lived locally, he faithfully attended worship. He willingly pitched in when we needed tables moved or other assistance around the facility. He attended our first-ever parish-wide weekend retreat. The last time I saw him, he was visiting my friend at her church during Christmastide two or three years ago.

Two different men. Two very different spheres of influence.

And yet, I saw the spirit of Christ within them both.

One had what I imagine was a small and quiet funeral. The other's memorial service will, I suspect, be a standing-room-only life celebration by people gathered from across the country.

And yet, the same God welcomed both home, inviting both equally to the heavenly banquet, just as God invites us all to the same Communion table each week.

We each receive a portion of talents and challenges; we steward the one and battle the other as best we can. In the end, it is the faithfulness and integrity of the journey, not the sphere of influence or scope of worldly accomplishment, that matters.

I doubt they met on earth. But I like to picture Louie and John meeting now, and going in to sit at the banquet together: unequal in life circumstances, but equally loved children of God.

Joy anyway, my friends. Joy always. ■

The Rev. Sharon Sheridan Hausman is priest associate at Christ Episcopal Church in Newton, N.J.

Louie Crew Clay, champion of LGBTQ inclusion, dies at 82

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Louie Crew Clay, a longtime advocate for the full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the Episcopal Church, the founder of Integrity and a former member of the House of Deputies, died on Nov. 27 at age 82 with his husband by his side, according to the Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton, a close friend.

Known as Louie Crew until he took his husband's name in 2013, he was remembered across the Episcopal Church as a tireless trailblazer for sexual

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Louie Crew Clay, right, celebrates his 80th birthday with his husband, Ernest Clay.

Photo/Cynthia Black

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

FIRST OF ALL, you have to understand that Louie Crew Clay, whose obituary is above, was born in 1936.

When he was, say, 20 in 1956, the age when his straight counterparts would be finding romantic partners and looking toward marriage, homosexuality was illegal in many states, including Alabama, the state of his birth.

The American Psychology Association listed homosexuality as a mental disorder, and police raids on gay bars in many cities were common. The word "gay" was not generally used to refer to homosexual people. Most religious denominations condemned homosexuality as sinful.

"Being gay for me meant being terribly alone, always having to wear a mask, constantly justifying even to myself my lack of sexuality by saying that I thereby won some spiritual compensations," Clay wrote in the essay "Growing Up Gay in Dixie."

He left the Baptist church of his youth to become an Episcopalian at age 25, "and though the form of worship was more pleasing, the needs of my body and personality to be reconciled were still not met."

The gay-liberation movement of the 1960s galvanized Clay's ebullient personality. He came out of the closet in 1973 and married his partner, Ernest Clay, in 1974, although the marriage had no legal standing.

Always, he pushed against boundaries. As a white man from the South, he married a black man and they were together (and legally married in 2013) until his death. He simply couldn't see why racial prejudice should keep them from falling in love.

He refused to tamp down the more colorful aspects of his persona, writing under the names of various alter egos: Li Min Hua, Quean Lutibelle and Dr. Ddungo. He simply couldn't see why his creativity should bow to attacks by homophobes.

Turning his critical eye on his church, he simply couldn't understand why gay people should be denied the love of Christ, the gospel and full participation in their church.

It's a different world and a different church now. Thank you, Louie. ■

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NEWS

Office of Government Relations prepares to launch civic-engagement initiatives

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Nov. 3 marked the one-year countdown to the U.S. presidential and congressional elections, and the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations (OGR) is gearing up for a year that's expected to see even more vitriol in public discourse than in the rancorous 2016 election. And as debates over the church's role in politics have intensified, so have OGR's efforts to facilitate civil, respectful discussions about political issues across partisan boundaries.

The OGR, based in Washington, D.C., directly across the street from the Capitol and the Supreme Court, advocates for policy positions based on General Convention and Executive Council resolutions. It also educates and engages Episcopalians on those policy positions through the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which sends out action alerts for those looking for opportunities to get involved.

Over the past few years, OGR has been busy in the halls of Congress representing the church's positions on a wide variety of specific issues: refugee resettlement, drilling in the Arctic, gerrymandering, gun control and many more. As the election approaches, it's focusing on ways that people can engage with these issues in a productive way, cast informed votes and ensure fair representation in Congress.

In addition to its usual advocacy work, OGR is "kicking off a civic engagement initiative that we're breaking down into three parts," said Alan Yarborough, OGR's church relations officer.

The first part focuses on the 2020 Census, which will take place in the spring. The Episcopal Church is an official partner of the census, which means OGR is working directly with the U.S. Census Bureau "to encourage people to take the census because we want the count to be as accurate as possible," Yarborough told Episcopal News Service.

Census data is used to determine how government funds and services are distributed, so an accurate census count is necessary to ensure fair representation in government.

"The U.S. Census has profound impacts on not just our electoral system, but also how over 100 federal programs, and many other state and local initiatives, allocate funding and other resources to best serve the population," Yarborough explained. And frequently, the groups needing those resources most are the hardest to count.

"Evidence shows that faith-based communities often have some of the closest connections to communities that are hard to count," Yarborough said, which is why the Census Bureau is working with the Episcopal Church and other religious groups to spread the word. Within the next few weeks, OGR will start releasing an educational series on the census, explaining why it's important and how it will work.

The second part is election engagement, which has long been a component of OGR's work. This includes resources like the Vote Faithfully Toolkit, a guide for congregations that covers registering voters, getting voters to the polls and advocating for voting rights. It's not a primer on specific issues or candidates, and OGR emphasizes that it is an entirely nonpartisan endeavor. The IRS prohibits churches and other nonprofit organizations from campaigning for or against particular candidates. However, churches are allowed to involve their members in advocating for policies they support, and to help them get registered to vote.

The toolkit also offers liturgical resources that can be incorporated into a service to remind people of the moral importance of voting and allow for prayerful consideration of the topics at hand. The 2020 version of the Vote Faithfully Toolkit will also be released within the next few weeks, Yarborough said.

The third part is a new and expanded multi-week curriculum on civil discourse. Last year, recognizing how difficult it has become to have a political discussion in good faith with someone who holds different views, OGR developed a five-week group workshop that creates a framework for productive dialogue. Grounded in prayer and Scripture, the curriculum establishes an environment of mutual respect and guides participants through political discussions in ways that foster learning and understanding, rather than the kind of divisive, emotional arguments that have become more common.

"Civil discourse is a key component of our engagement in 2020. We want to equip Episcopalians, and all people, to be able to engage across political differences, especially with our fellow parishioners and community members," Yarborough said. "We hope that the civil discourse curriculum can help Episcopalians to listen, to be aware of how their own messages are heard, and to allow us all to enrich our own thinking about different political perspectives and policy proposals."

In OGR's dealings with politicians, the response to its civil discourse efforts has been encouraging.

"The Office of Government Relations is well placed in the church to help us to speak across political difference," the Rev. C.K. Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond the Episcopal Church, told ENS. "In our meetings with legislators and policymakers in Washington, we have heard and seen the need for civil discourse. And we know that need extends across the country where many of our parishes and communities are already engaged in this crucial work."

Photo/David Paulsen/Episcopal News Service

The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations is preparing for a contentious election season.

The new civil discourse curriculum will be an expanded version of last year's, plus a few advanced sections, such as a training for facilitators. There will also be a video version and an online platform that allows individuals to take the course on their own, rather than as part of a parish group.

Although part of the idea behind the civil discourse curriculum is that it's a framework that people of all political persuasions can unite behind, there has been some pushback on the concept of "civility" itself. On social media, some Episcopalians have reacted negatively, arguing that calls for civility are not an effective way to respond to an administration and political movement that embrace lies and white supremacist ideology and make threats of civil war.

Yarborough says he understands that view but draws a distinction between civil discourse and the mere idea of civility.

"We focus on civil discourse because it is useful when we are already in — or want to be in — conversation with our neighbors. It doesn't apply in all circumstances, and it doesn't mean we stop advocating for justice in all the ways we can. Civil discourse is a tool, and like any tool, it's appropriate for certain applications. It's not a prescription for solving any and every disagreement or injustice, but it is useful for leveraging our diversity in thought, perspective and identity to give us the best shot at solving problems in our society." ■

OBITUARIES

The Rev. Donald Nickerson

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Donald Nickerson, who served as the Episcopal Church's executive officer of General Convention from 1986 to 1998, died Dec. 9 at the age of 80.

Nickerson, a lifelong New Englander, lived with Parkinson's disease for 33 years. In retirement, he and his wife, Susan Martin, continued to attend services at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brunswick, Maine, where Nickerson had served as rector in the 1970s and 1980s.

"He was a pastor's pastor and mentored hundreds of people to be leaders of the gospel, both within and beyond the church," Maine Bishop Thomas Brown said in a diocesan news release announcing Nickerson's death. "It is not too much to say we've lost a giant."

Nickerson was appointed executive officer and secretary of General Convention in 1986 by Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning and the Very Rev. David Collins, president of the House of Deputies.

While the position of secretary dates to the first General Convention in 1785, executive officer was a relatively new role, tasked with keeping records and administering governance of the church during its triennial gathering and the years between General Conventions, including through the work of Executive Council. Nickerson was the church's second executive officer.

Photo/Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Donald Nickerson celebrates the Eucharist in 1998.

"Don served with distinction as secretary and executive officer of the General Convention during some of the most challenging times in the life and governance of the church," said the Rev. Michael Barlowe, the current executive officer. "He mentored many of today's senior leaders of the Episcopal Church, and was known for his fairness, civility, and wisdom."

Nickerson grew up in Massachusetts. A graduate of Springfield College and Berkeley Divinity School, he was ordained in 1964 as a curate at Trinity Church in Newton Centre, Mass. and later served as rector of Christ Church in North Conway, N.H., before moving to Maine in 1974.

He also served as a deputy or alternate at six General Conventions, from 1970 until his appointment as executive officer, and he was elected to Executive Council in 1982. As executive officer, Nickerson also served as registrar of the Episcopal Church, and in that role he participated in more than 100 bishop ordinations, according to the Diocese of Maine.

Nickerson's funeral is scheduled for Dec. 28 at 11 a.m. at St. Paul's in Brunswick. A private burial will follow at Kearsarge Cemetery in Kearsarge, N.H. ■

Margaret Morgan Lawrence

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Margaret Morgan Lawrence, a longtime lay champion of The Episcopal Church's peace and reconciliation work, particularly through her advocacy on behalf of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, died Dec. 4 at 105.

Lawrence

Lawrence was born in 1914 in New York but grew up in Mississippi and spent much of her life resisting and triumphing over barriers based on racial and sexual discrimination. Her father was an Episcopal priest and her mother a teacher, and in 1932 she received a scholarship from the National Council of the Episcopal Church to attend Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where she was the only black undergraduate student at the time, according to a family obituary.

She later earned her medical degree from Columbia University on her way to a long career as a doctor specializing in child psychiatry in Rockland County, N.Y. While attending Columbia, she met and married Charles Lawrence, who later served as president of the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies, from 1976 to 1985.

In 2003, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship honored Margaret Lawrence with its Sayre Award for her contributions to the organization and "her journey as a peacemaker and a speaker for justice," Janet Chisholm, president of the organization's executive board, said at the time.

"She has struggled against racism and sexism to be the accomplished child psychiatrist that she is," Chisholm said, while also noting Lawrence's participation in peace pilgrimages in England during the Anglican Communion's Lambeth Conference of bishops, held about every 10 years.

Lawrence also was a prominent lay leader in the Diocese of New York. Her papers, along with those of her late husband, have been donated to the Archives of the Episcopal Church.

"Along with the leadership they brought to the wider Episcopal Church, Charles and Margaret Lawrence were giants in the history of the Diocese of New York for over half a century," New York Bishop Andrew Dietsche said in a written statement. "They were pivotal in the leadership which this diocese brought in the raising up of church leaders among men and women of African descent, and in the rise of women to the top tiers of the church."

Lawrence is survived by her three children. The family is planning a memorial service for next year at Emmanuel Church in Boston. ■

CLAY continued from page 2

minorities and outcasts, a prolific author and a devoted husband and friend.

Clay was born Erman Louie Crew Jr. in Anniston, Ala., on Dec. 9, 1936. Having earned a doctorate in English, he taught at preparatory schools and universities in the United States, England, Hong Kong and China throughout his career, most recently at Rutgers University until his retirement in 2002. In 1974, he married Ernest Clay, though the marriage was not legally recognized until 2013.

Photo/Cynthia Black

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings and Louie Crew Clay at the Integrity Eucharist during the 2015 General Convention.

Also in 1974, while teaching in San Francisco, he called Grace Cathedral to ask if they could help him connect with other gay Episcopalians and heard "derisive laughter" in response. Determined to change the church's attitude, in November of that year, he published the first edition of a newsletter called Integrity, a forum for gay and lesbian Episcopalians to connect, organize, express themselves and support each other.

"The Christian Gospel is for all persons," he wrote in the first issue. "For too long has our beloved church neglected its historic mission to bring the Gospel to gay people. Instead, we have typically been treated as the lowest of God's creation, too vile even to be mentionable. The hour has come for us gays to recognize that the only gift that our church has to offer us is the all-precious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The newsletter rapidly grew into a national nonprofit organization dedicated to full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the Episcopal Church, with an official presence at every General Convention since 1977. Though it has experienced organizational turmoil in recent months, Integrity's advocacy efforts are credited with securing the most significant victories for LGBTQ Episcopalians, including official support for their access to the sacraments of holy orders and marriage.

Clay also served six terms in the House of Deputies, representing the Diocese of Newark, and one term on Executive Council. He was a pioneer in using the internet to spread information throughout the church and beyond.

"Louie was social media before there was social media," the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, said at Integrity's 40th anniversary celebration during the 2015 General Convention.

Clay served on numerous boards, committees and task forces, including the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, General Convention's Committee on Social and Urban Affairs and Standing Commission on Health and Human Affairs, and the Diocese of Newark's Standing Committee.

A prolific essayist and poet, Clay documented over 2,600 publications of his work, including the 2015 anthology "Letters From Samaria: The Prose & Poetry of Louie Crew Clay."

On social media, Clay was remembered as "a holy troublemaker," "a great light," "giant of justice" and a "gift to the church."

"Louie changed the face of the church with his gentle spirit and fierce convictions," Jennings wrote on Facebook. "He loved the Episcopal Church too much to let us stay the way we were. Thanks to his resilient witness, we are more just, more faithful and look more like the kingdom of God. On behalf of the House of Deputies, I extend my heartfelt condolences to Louie's husband, Ernest, and to all who mourn."

A requiem service will be held on Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020, 10 a.m. at Grace Episcopal Church in Newark, N.J. ■

AROUND THE CHURCH

Brokenleg named officer for racial reconciliation

The Rev. Isaiah Shaneequa Brokenleg has been appointed staff officer for racial reconciliation for the Episcopal Church, a member of the Presiding Bishop's staff.

Brokenleg will work to catalyze and organize Episcopal efforts to embrace and practice "Becoming Beloved Community," the church's long-term commitment to racial reconciliation, healing and justice. She will support networks of regional leaders and coordinate church-wide efforts, especially around StorySharing, pilgrimage, anti-racism training and liturgical resource development. Brokenleg will work with Rev. Chuck Wynder, staff officer for social justice engagement.

Brokenleg

"We are thrilled to welcome Rev. Brokenleg — a seasoned, deeply soulful leader who is respected across our church and beyond — to now coordinate the church's deeper engagement with Becoming Beloved Community," said the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, canon to the Presiding Bishop for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care.

The Rev. Melanie Mullen, director of the department of reconciliation, justice and creation care, said, "Rev. Brokenleg is an inspiring teacher, researcher, and lover of the people of God, and she brings just the wisdom and expertise we hoped for in this position."

Mullen noted that there were more than 40 qualified applicants for the position. "Racial reconciliation is central to the church's calling, and many capable leaders are emerging in all parts of the church to inspire and lead us on new pathways to healing," she said.

Brokenleg begins her new position on Jan. 6, and can be reached at sbrokenleg@episcopalchurch.org. Learn more about Racial Reconciliation in The Episcopal Church at https://episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community.

Brokenleg is an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (Sicangu Nation). She is a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota, where she grew up, and the place she calls home.

Brokenleg has a master of divinity from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and a masters of public health from the University of Minnesota. Prior to the priesthood, she worked as a clinical epidemiologist and served Indian Country in the Great Lakes region.

In her church life, Brokenleg has served in multiple ministries as an acolyte, vestry member, member of her church's social justice project, priest, and an Education for Ministry mentor. Rev. Brokenleg has served the larger Episcopal Church in several capacities, serving on the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism, the Standing Commission on Health, and most recently as a member of the Task-Force on Communion Across Difference.

Her cultural background provides a rich source of wisdom for this ministry. Brokenleg believes that we are all related ("mitakuye oyasin"), and that the Gospel calls us to be "good relatives" to one another. Having grown up on the Rosebud reservation, she has experienced and witnessed the devastating effects of historical/generational trauma, colonization, and racism. As a winktè (Lakota two-spirit), she is called to be a healer and move our communities in the direction of positive change, in the direction of reconciliation, toward living in right-relationship with one another. She strives to live out her calling through her work, our church, her art, and in her life.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Becoming Beloved Community grant recipients announced

Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

The Episcopal Church's Executive Council at its fall meeting awarded 42 Becoming Beloved Community grants totaling $350,600 to catalyze the church's work of racial healing, reconciliation and justice.

Allocated by the 79th General Convention, the grants are intended to build capacity and increase Episcopal parish, diocesan, and agency engagement in four primary fields: telling the truth about our churches and race, proclaiming the dream of Beloved Community, practicing Jesus' way of healing and reconciliation, and repairing the breach in institutions and society.

Two types of grants were awarded: Seed Grants, geared for groups launching new projects and/or evolving the scale of an existing project; and Impact Grants, for growing capacity, impact, and reach of communities and institutions already working to advance racial justice, healing, and reconciliation.

Recipients of major Seed Grants included the Diocese of Kentucky, the Ethnic Studies Academy in Des Moines (Diocese of Iowa) and the Charis Community in Charlottesville, Diocese of Virginia.

Recipients of major Impact Grants included the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing in the Diocese of Atlanta, the Episcopal Farmworkers Ministry in the Diocese of North Carolina and the Center for Reconciliation in the Diocese of Rhode Island.

A full list of grant recipients is at **www.episcopalchurch.org.**

Questions about the Becoming Beloved Community grants may be addressed to the Rev. Edwin Johnson, chair, Presiding Officers' Advisory Group on Beloved Community Implementation, at padreedwinj@gmail.com or the Rev. Meg Wagner, chair, Advisory Group Grants Subcommittee atmwagner@iowaepiscopal.org. ■

EYE20 venue change, theme, registration details released

The venue for the 2020 Episcopal Youth Event (EYE20) has been changed to the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). The location remains within the Diocese of Washington and the dates, July 7-11, 2020, are unchanged.

"I couldn't be more thrilled with the potential to grow the Episcopal Youth Event in size and reach on the UMD campus," said Bronwyn Clark Skov, director of Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adult Ministries. "Campus staff have been gracious and the EYE planning team is eager to live into the space creatively and faithfully."

The theme for EYE20 is "Unite! ¡Unámonos!" The planning team chose this theme at their October meeting.

"It was a blessing to sit with this team of young people as they engaged and contextualized the guiding Scripture for EYE20, Matthew 11:29," said the Rev. Abi Moon, EYE20 team chaplain.

"Recognizing that we are 'yoked together' as a community through God's mercy and grace, the Planning Team discerned a call to action for all EYE20 participants and those who will journey alongside them, to 'Unite! ¡Unámonos!' Unite as people of the 'Jesus movement.' Unite as a people following the Way of Love."

Youth participants in EYE20 must be enrolled in high school during this school year and must have turned 15 or be no older than 19 by the event start. Current freshman who are 14 will have an opportunity to attend EYE2023 as the Episcopal Youth Event is on a three-year cycle. No other youth will be permitted to attend EYE20.

Registration for EYE20 is offered to provincial, diocesan, congregational, and other Episcopal organizational delegations as long as all EYE20 participation and chaperone criteria are met.

Registration preference is given to diocesan delegations. As such, registration will open for diocesan delegations on Monday, Jan. 6 at 9 am EST. Registration for other delegations will open on Monday, Jan. 27 at 9 am EST.

Registration is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Delegations should be prepared to register as soon as possible after the assigned date.

For more information: **https://events.episcopalchurch.org/eye/** Questions? Contact Bronwyn Skov, eye@episcopalchurch.org.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

NEWS

Christians who serve migrants attend Border Ministries Summit

By Lynette Wilson
Episcopal News Service

The steel border fence separating Nogales, Ariz., from Nogales, Mexico, follows a rolling hill, and depending on the slope, residents can sit on their porches and watch life unfold on either side.

It was the mayor of Nogales, Mexico, who in 1918 initiated a 6-foot wire fence separating the two cities, and countries, in a transborder "good fences make good neighbors" cooperative spirit.

One hundred years of history ensued. Families living on either side crossed over: adults to work and shop, children to attend school. Up until a few years ago when the United States installed steel mesh between the slats, families would gather at tables set on either side and share meals, passing homemade foods through the fence.

Not anymore. A teenager's death precipitated further separation.

In October 2012, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent Lonnie Swartz fatally shot 16-year-old José Rodríguez through the fence, the Rev. Rodger Babnew said as he pointed to a single-story concrete building on the Mexico side that features a mural memorializing the teen.

Babnew, a deacon serving St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Nogales, Ariz., is also a co-convener of Cruzando Fronteras, a Diocese of Arizona border ministry that, along with ecumenical partners, provides shelter, food, medical care and other assistance to migrants and asylum-seekers on the Mexico side of the border.

On Nov. 21, opening day of the second annual Border Ministries Summit, Babnew and a caravan of Episcopalians and other Christians drove 70 miles from Tucson to Nogales to see the border wall.

Photo/Lynette Wilson/ENS

A section of the border wall cuts a line between Nogales, Ariz., and Nogales, Mexico.

In all, 200 people attended the summit from Nov. 21-23 at Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church in Tucson.

Summit participants learned about the 1,954-mile U.S.-Mexico border and its history, the U.S. immigration system, the impact of U.S. foreign and trade policy on societies and economies in Mexico and Central America, and the various ministries carried out by dioceses and churches along the border.

Plans are underway for

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Mexican asylum-seekers seeking the protection of the United States," said the Rev. Cristina Rathbone, who for three months while on sabbatical has served the Diocese of Rio Grande in El Paso as a bridge chaplain, accompanying families as they wait their turn to claim asylum and holding daily English and art classes for children.

"By the three ports of entry there are three tent communities, and the people there, more than two-thirds of them have families, have self-organized," she said. "They have created unofficial community-based lists; the people at the top of those lists go up to the ports of entry and seek permission to ask for asylum from the border patrol agents every two hours, 24 hours a day, and almost always are turned away with the same refrain, 'there is no room.'"

Earlier in the year, the Trump administration implemented Migrant Protection Protocols, a policy commonly referred to as "Remain in Mexico" that requires asylum-seekers to wait in shelters in Mexico while their credible fear claims are processed. The policy and others like those brokered with individual countries, El Salvador for example, were designed to deter asylum seekers.

The protocols, however, do not apply to Mexican asylum-seekers who have congregated in tents; President Trump has characterized immigrants and migrants as "murders" and "rapists." Though cartels have exploited the chaos at the border to their advantage, some migrants are fleeing cartel violence in their communities.

During a homily delivered at the second annual Border Ministries Summit held in Arizona, Rathbone shared some of the stories she's heard while serving at the border.

"Hundreds," she said, "a grandfather shot in the stomach and then slashed by a machete and left for dead after seeing a murder he shouldn't have seen. A father who was sent photographs of his murdered son's lifeless and tortured body by his son's own murderers. And, just yesterday, a mother sobbing on the sidewalk, showing me photos of her husband in an open coffin — murdered in her own home a week ago.

"All of these people, who are also Jesus himself, and many thousands more — including the most vulnerable among us: pregnant women, unaccompanied minors and members of the LGBTQ community — are being denied their right — supposedly upheld by both U.S and international law — to apply for asylum in this country. And all are waiting at our ports of entry, nonetheless, because still they believe in the hope that is — or used to be — the United States of America.

"'Truly I tell you,' Jesus says. 'Just as you do to one of the least of these, you do to me.'"

Episcopalians are providing humanitarian aid to migrants and asylum-seekers and, where possible, support to law enforcement officers in their parishes and communities, all along the 1,954-mile U.S.-Mexico border. The Diocese of Rio Grande, which includes the entire state of New Mexico and far West Texas, stretching from El Paso down through the Big Bend regions, includes 40 percent of the southern border and has been working on both sides.

Photo/Lynette Wilson/ENS

The Rev. Cristina Rathbone, right, and the Rev. Lee Curtis discuss strategy on the Santa Fe Street Bridge between Mexico and the United States.

In Juárez, the diocese has provided assistance to the Rev. Hector Trejo who serves as vicar of three Anglican churches in the Diocese of Northern Mexico.

"When the buses were coming through, we in the Diocese of the Rio Grande, were caring for the people that were coming off the buses and helping them get resettled. When the U.S. government started the remain in Mexico policy, instead of those buses coming into the Diocese of the Rio Grande, people were just put on the buses and driven across into Juárez and left on the street in Juárez," said Rio Grande Bishop Michael Hunn. "But we felt that those are folks who are trying to come to the United States, and we think that that is our responsibility to try to help and care for them."

For some in the United States it may seem the most recent wave of migration has ceased, but that's not the case; it's just less visible, Hunn said.

"It's not true that the migration has stopped," said Hunn, whose office is based in Albuquerque, N.M. "It's just that the people are on the other side of the border now. And, so we were able to work with and leverage our existing relationship with Padre Hector Trejo … He opened up immediately one of his churches to serve as a shelter."

Trejo has now opened the doors to two of his three churches to serve as shelters, with assistance from Rio Grande and the wider support of its borderlands ministry.

In August, when the Rev. Lee Curtis became Rio Grande's canon to the ordinary based in El Paso, shelters were the urgent need.

"We were serving mostly Cuba nationals; this was just as the 'Remain in Mexico' policy took effect," he said. "So the task was pretty clear: build up shelter, support the Cubans as they're waiting in Mexico for their 'credible fear' interview. Then when they get their 'credible fear' interview, they're released by CBP [Customs and Border Protection] back to the U.S. and we've done our job."

One of the other major challenges, though, is that almost as soon as faith-based and other humanitarian workers get a handle on the situation, it changes.

"The second we feel like we have figured out the shape of migration in Juarez it changes, whether through U.S. policy or where folks are coming from," said Curtis.

"In late September, early October, we were down to about 15 Cuban asylum-seekers, and then the Mexicans started coming from southern states and they've started sleeping around the bridges. … It's a guess as to when CBP will be letting people over. So, they have been staying by the bridges because they don't want to miss an opportunity to cross."

Some of the families have been living in tents in Juárez for two months; as the weather gets colder some are sleeping in shelters, returning to the bridges in the morning to take their places in line. And for some, the long wait can result in being sent back to the very communities they've fled, as Rathbone pointed out in her homily when she told the story of a woman with five children who'd fled after the cartel tried to kill her oldest son. They were denied asylum. The likely outcome if they return home, the mother told Rathbone, is that her sons will be forced to choose between joining the cartel or death.

"It's important to remember that these Mexican asylum-seekers are the people in the small pueblos and the big towns and the enormous cities who are saying no to the violence and the drug cartels of Mexico. These are the people whose lives are being threatened and many of them ended because they are refusing to join the criminal enterprises," said Rathbone.

"They are determined to protect their children from that because they are small business owners, because they are taxi drivers, because they are people who have been preyed on by the cartels. So they're, in fact, the very opposite kind of people they're being characterized as being by the president and many others, these are the brave, law-abiding pillars of their communities who have been forced to flee their communities, by the violence that at the moment is on the upswing in Mexico again." ■

NEWS

LEGACY continued from page 1

Baptism's implications for slavery was later institutionalized in the law of the Virginia colony. Many Anglicans were members of the Virginia Assembly in 1667 when it declared that even if "by the charity and piety of their owners" slave children were baptized, "the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedome." The law permitted the baptism of slaves and their children because it would help spread Christianity in the colony. The preamble of the legislation noted that the law was meant to free slave owners from any doubt about their baptized slaves' status as property.

The U.S.-based Episcopal Church developed out of the Anglican Church in the 1780s after the British surrendered to the colonists at the end of the Revolutionary War.

Despite the sin Wright sees in the church's motivation for William Tucker's baptism, he said he also finds "a lot of power" in a story that could help all Episcopalians understand that African Americans have been part of the church since the beginning, despite the discrimination they often face there.

"So often in the Episcopal Church, African Americans can feel like guests, even though we have been members of

Photo/David Paulsen/ENS

William Tucker's baptism likely took place in the Anglican church near his master's plantation on Virginia's Hampton River in what was then an area where the Kecoughtan tribe settled.

this church since 1624. There's something about William's baptism that pops that bubble of feeling like a guest in your own home," he said. "This has been our home — for better, for worse, for all of its blemishes and all of its blessings — this Episcopal Church has been our church from 1624."

Wright said he wishes that white Episcopalians and those of color could know about William "and that [that] could somehow create more of a connection between us."

In addition, acknowledging the church's past sins can allow Episcopalians to posthumously confer the Baptismal Covenant's promise of respect for the dignity of every human being, Wright said. "Even down the long hallway of time, what some of us are attempting to do with the memory of 1619 and going forward is to say that despite what people did to black and brown people, you were here, you were a person made in God's image and you had dignity, even if you were not treated that way at the time," he said. "That's a gift to give both to the dead and the living."

The Episcopal Church has been reflecting on its Jamestown legacy since at least 2007, when the church marked the 400th anniversary of the 1607 establishment of the colony and the Anglican Church's presence. "This place reeks with the origins of the slave trade in this land," then-Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said in June 2007 during a Eucharist marking the occasion. "That history is not yet fully redeemed, even though the church which sanctioned slavery was instrumental in its dismantling."

The work to which Jefferts Schori called the church in 2007 continues. Today the descendants of slaves and sharecroppers — including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry — and slave owners sit in the House of Bishops. They worship together in churches, some of which were built by slaves. Some seminarians and other students study on campuses built with slave labor and the financial fruits of the slave trade. One of them, Virginia Theological Seminary, has set aside $1.7 million for a slavery reparations fund.

Two dioceses, Long Island and New York, have pledged to set up reparations funds. Georgia Bishop Scott Benhase recently announced the creation of the St. Anna Alexander Center for Racial Reconciliation & Healing, contributing 3 percent of the diocesan endowment to the effort and calling on all endowed congregations to contribute at the same level. The Diocese of Maryland is continuing to study the issue of reparations.

This year the Episcopal Church joined with people across the country to remember the events of 1619. Such commemorations are important, the Rev. Charles Wynder Jr., staff officer for social justice and engagement, told ENS, because "we stand with our bodies as witness in these types of memories." At least one more Episcopal Church commemoration at Jamestown is planned for next year.

Bishop Marc Andrus, of the San Francisco-based Diocese of California, told ENS that he traces his family's roots in North America to Jamestown. Four hundred years ago Thomas Andrus, a 12-year-old boy who might have been an orphan, was snatched off the streets of London, likely by members of a religious order. He arrived on a ship with about 99 other boys in 1620 and was forced into indentured servitude. Thomas Andrus survived Jamestown, but Andrus said about 70 percent of the boys who arrived with him died.

Thomas worked off his indenture and was freed. Within 100 years of Thomas' arrival in Jamestown, his descendants had moved to Louisiana. By the early 19th century they were prosperous rice buyers and brokers. The stigma of indenture and the poverty that the young Andrus experienced in 1620 and thereafter "was all erased and it would be as if it never happened." It is a far different fate than that of the descendants of most if not all of those "20 and odd Negroes" who were forced to come to Virginia in 1619, Andrus noted.

The Episcopal Church must not forget its Jamestown legacy, Andrus said, urging Episcopalians to consider becoming what is called a culture of remembrance in Germany, where the Holocaust is remembered so that its horrors are not repeated. The 2008 documentary "Traces of the Trade" is an example of Episcopalians trying to foster a memory culture, he said. In the film, Katrina Brown tells the story of her ancestors in the DeWolf family, the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history and also a prominent part of the Episcopal Church. James DeWolf Perry was the Episcopal Church's 18th presiding bishop.

Prompted in part by the film and a 2006 General Convention resolution that also urged dioceses to collect information on the church's complicity in slavery, the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination, and the economic benefits the church derived from slavery, the Episcopal Church apologized for its role in slavery.

The effort to collect information has been uneven. For instance, Andrus said his diocese's work "was not always smooth sailing; there were people who said that really doesn't apply to us" because California was officially a free state. However, people persevered, he said, and the diocese reported its findings in 2012. ■

The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg retired in July as the Episcopal News Service's senior editor and reporter.

FEATURE

Diocese of Fort Worth evangelism campaign seeks out those wounded by the church

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Slogans like "All are welcome!" and "God loves you — no exceptions!" are a common sight at Episcopal churches, but one diocese is expanding on those messages and making them more specific, targeting those who need to hear them most.

In October, the Diocese of Fort Worth in Texas launched an evangelism initiative "aimed at the unchurched, the dechurched, those wounded by the church, those who sometimes are told that God hates them," with a website as its centerpiece: godlovesall.info.

"God doesn't hate. God loves all," it proclaims on its homepage, and its pages focus on topics associated with division and exclusion in American Christianity, with headings like "LGBT," "Racial Justice" and "(Re)Marriage." The pages explain the Episcopal Church's views on these topics and what the church — especially the Diocese of Fort Worth — is doing to address them. The site also features video testimonials from clergy and parishioners with titles like "Women priests? Yes, women priests" and "Will God love me if I'm gay? Yes."

> **"What is God asking us to risk in order to better communicate … to the community in which we live?"**
>
> **— The Rev. Kevin Johnson**

"Come in. Sit awhile. Explore. It's safe here," the homepage concludes.

The website is the brainchild of the Rev. Kevin Johnson, priest-in-charge at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Arlington, Texas. Disappointed by the negative and exclusionary forms of Christianity that garner so much of the public's attention — especially in his region — Johnson decided to counter those messages with the Episcopal message of unconditional love and acceptance.

"I have become convinced, especially during my time in this particular parish, that the Episcopal Church has gifts that a lot of people in the world yearn to receive, but they don't even know they exist, especially in our cultural context in north central Texas, which is very conservative," Johnson told ENS.

Some of the most influential Christian ministers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area preach messages of hatred, claiming that "God hates you because you're gay or God hates you because you're a woman in power," Johnson said.

"There are too many people in our world who are being told right now that God sees them as an abomination or is ashamed of them in some way, that they have to change a core part of their being to be loved by God. … There are lots of people we're talking to who have been chased out of their home by their parents because they're gay or they're transgender. Those are the people who desperately yearn to hear the good news that we carry. And that means having the courage to stand up and risk being vulnerable with that message."

That message — "God doesn't hate" — might seem innocuous, but it's more controversial than one might expect, and that's precisely why it was chosen as the theme of the website.

"We had to wrestle back and forth with this phrase a lot," Johnson said. "But we finally decided to risk using the phrase 'God does not hate you,' which is really in your face for good-mannered Episcopalians."

"We got a lot of pushback at that," said Katie Sherrod, the diocese's communications coordinator. "Episcopalians don't say things like that, that bluntly. 'God doesn't hate!' And rightly so, we all recoil from the word 'hate.' … But when that's been actually said to you — 'God hates you, God hates who and what you are' — you hear that phrase, 'God doesn't hate,' in a whole different way."

"We're all comfortable talking about God's love," Johnson added. "I mean, that's just our cultural norm. But pointedly saying 'God does not hate' carries tangential messaging that directly counters a lot of the public messaging that gets put out over the airwaves in our region."

And it seems hatred is increasingly less of an abstract concept and more of an action, making it all the more necessary to counter it with a message of love. Sherrod and Johnson have seen it firsthand.

"Texas has the highest rate of murdered transgender [people of any state], and Dallas is the epicenter of that," Sherrod told ENS. "So we were seeing real life-and-death consequences to that message that God hates you. And then you have a man who drove from Dallas to El Paso to shoot immigrants, Hispanic people in a Walmart. We were being hit in the face with murderous results of that message that God hates you. And it just became more and more urgent for us to get this message there."

Johnson wanted to reach people directly, especially people who might not want to walk into a church, so Johnson asked the diocese for funding to do marketing and outreach.

"At the local parish level, we've kind of test-driven the practice of raising community awareness about our values, practices and gifts in very purposeful, straight-up marketing ways. We're really not afraid to say we have a good product that people want," Johnson said.

Bishop J. Scott Mayer got on board, and it developed into a broader evangelism campaign, but "our main goal is not to get people in our pews," Sherrod explained. "Our main goal is to show people how to have a closer relationship with God — hopefully in and through the Episcopal Church, but if that doesn't happen, we're fine with that. If they find God through anything we tell them, that's fine with us."

Photo/Diocese of Fort Worth

A group from the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth at the Tarrant County Gay Pride Parade in Fort Worth, Texas.

The website was completed in time for the Fort Worth Pride parade, at which a group from the diocese passed out cards with the URL.

"As a road test, it was astonishingly successful," Sherrod said. "People were very moved by that message."

"We all got matching T-shirts that say 'God doesn't hate' with the URL on it. We had banners, and then at the booth, we interacted with people … and that gave us the opportunity to talk and look people in the eye directly and give them a business card with the URL on it and just say, 'Hey, you might want to go check this out,'" Johnson said.

Johnson and Sherrod said they've gotten vitriolic responses to the website from other Christians and some criticism from within their own diocese, although the diocese's painful history has given its members some crucial perspective.

Even its most traditional, conservative members know what it feels like to be rejected and excluded by the church. In 2008, a majority of clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of Fort Worth voted to leave the Episcopal Church and join the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone (located in South America) over doctrinal differences on topics like same-sex marriage and the ordination of women.

Now there are two entities calling themselves the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth: the original diocese associated with the Episcopal Church and the breakaway group that is now part of the Anglican Church in North America.

That breakaway group claimed some of the Episcopal diocese's properties, including the original building of St. Alban's, the parish in which Johnson grew up and which he now leads. The congregation has been worshipping in a theater ever since.

"The folks got kicked out of their church because they were, as I like to gently say, they were too spiritually generous," Johnson said. "So we're in this crazy context, which allows for risk and vulnerability."

"A lot of people here know what the phrase 'wounded by the church' means because of the split we went through. So even very privileged white people in our pews have some sense of what that means," Sherrod added.

For Johnson, the risk and vulnerability the diocese has experienced lend themselves well to evangelism and have made this campaign stand out.

"This was different because it really started out with a question that I've never seen [being asked], which is, What is God asking us to risk in order to better communicate our unique share of the good news to the community in which we live?"

One thing the diocese has risked by undertaking this campaign is discomfort among its more conservative members, but the bonds forged in the aftermath of the split have proven able to withstand that discomfort.

"There are still people uncomfortable with it," Sherrod told ENS. "But they're willing to live in that zone of discomfort. Because they get it. … We've had a lot of people here who've learned to be uncomfortable with stuff for the last 10 years. We have conservatives in our pews who have stayed with us even though they're a little uncomfortable with some of the stuff the church is doing. But they feel loved in their parishes, and so they're hanging in there."

Aside from the kind of in-person advertising they did at the Pride parade, the diocese has been promoting the website through targeted Facebook ads and hopes to reach even further into the community with grant funding.

"As we move toward 2020, we're thinking bigger," Sherrod said. "I mean, why not? We're hoping for billboards, for banners in downtown Fort Worth, … with movie screen ads, things like that, because we're becoming increasingly confident that the place we're sending them is a place that they will feel safe and comfortable being." ■

NEWS

Integrity president resigns amid mounting criticism

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Gwen Fry resigned Nov. 25 as president of Integrity USA — the nonprofit organization dedicated to LGBTQ advocacy within The Episcopal Church — as the organization's volunteer board faces members' accusations of mismanagement and lack of transparency.

Photo/Integrity via Facebook

The Rev. Gwen Fry at the 2015 General Convention.

Fry, in a letter posted on Integrity's new website, cited "a great deal of change in my personal life," including severe medical issues in her family and a cross-country move. Fry was elected to a three-year term in June 2018, but late that year went on medical leave, which Integrity didn't announce until July 2019. She did not return to her work as president until September 2019.

"As you can imagine, it has been a stressful time," Fry wrote. "None of this was happening, or even a remote possibility, when my name was put forward for nomination to be elected president of Integrity USA. After prayerfully discerning where I am in life, I have decided that it is important to focus on my family, which is why I'm resigning as president of Integrity USA."

In an interview with the Episcopal News Service, Fry said her resignation had nothing to do with the criticism she and the board have faced in recent months.

"Family is the most important, and if I'm spending so much time focusing on that, it really wouldn't be fair to the Integrity organization moving forward," Fry said. "So it was a very difficult decision to make. But I have all the faith in the world in the current new board."

Fry's term has been marked by a string of board resignations, most recently secretary Lindsey Harts on Oct. 20, and the board has filled all those vacancies with appointees who will serve until the next regular election in 2021, in accordance with Integrity's bylaws. Fry's departure leaves Kay Smith Riggle, vice president for local affairs, as the only remaining elected board member.

The bylaws specify that if the presidency becomes vacant, a new president is elected to serve until the next regular election by the Stakeholders' Council.

Under the bylaws, the Stakeholders' Council "shall meet at least once each calendar year," and its members must elect a chair and a vice chair. However, neither of those things has happened under the current administration. Instead, on Nov. 15, Fry announced on Facebook that the board had appointed Bruce Garner, a former two-term president, as "interim Stakeholders' Council chairperson." The validity of that appointment has been disputed by some Integrity members, who have pointed out that the bylaws do not allow the board to make an appointment to fill a vacancy in that position. That responsibility falls to the vice chair of the Stakeholders' Council, which is vacant because those elections were never held.

In a post on Integrity's website, Garner outlined the process for electing a new president of Integrity. The Stakeholders' Council accepted nominations through the end of 2019. A list of candidates was to be released by Jan. 3, 2020. Ballots will be issued in late January, and the new president is to take office on Feb. 1.

The board is currently reaching out to the members of the Stakeholders' Council, said the Rev. Frederick Clarkson, treasurer of Integrity.

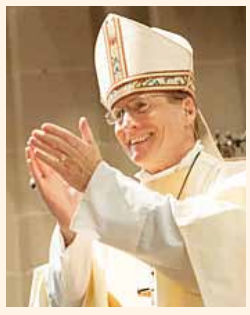
Clarkson told ENS he is "sorry to see Gwen resign" but understands her decision, and he stressed the importance of showing respect in difficult circumstances.

Despite questions raised by members about how Integrity should — or even whether it can — continue, Fry said she believes it is still needed and must go on.

"Unless and until every parish in The Episcopal Church is open and affirming to the LGBTQIA community, there's always work to do," Fry said. ■

Pittsburgh bishop announces retirement

Pittsburgh Bishop Dorsey W.M. McConnell announced Dec. 4 that he plans to retire in the spring of 2021, after leading the diocese since 2012. "We have been through so much and accomplished so much, in what seems to me the twinkling of an eye," the bishop wrote in a letter announcing his plans to the diocese, which numbers about 8,600 members among 36 participating congregations.



McConnell

McConnell said he would remain in charge until April 24, 2021.

When he was installed, McConnell became the first permanent bishop after a period of division and rebuilding that began when a former bishop, many clergy and their congregations left the diocese and the Episcopal Church.

During McConnell's tenure, most of the outstanding legal disputes with the former members were resolved. A settlement concerning property use was hailed locally and nationally for the way it recognized the validity of each others' claims and set a structure for building new relationships.

On social issues, McConnell placed an emphasis on racial reconciliation. His "Church Without Walls" launched a series of grassroots interactions between members of predominantly white congregations and those of historic African American heritage.

Within the church locally, the bishop has sought to strengthen the preparation for ministry for both clergy and the laity, principally by helping shape the Anglican-Episcopal Studies track at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and also through the diocese's program of lay formation.

McConnell's latest initiative involves a multiyear process aimed at restructuring diocesan governance and encouraging parishes in their efforts in communication, new lay-led ministries and in knowing the needs of their local communities.

The Pittsburgh diocese will begin a discernment and search process for the next bishop. The diocese plans to hold a special diocesan electing convention on Nov. 21, 2020, with the consecration of the new bishop on April 24, 2021.

Following his retirement, McConnell and his wife, Betsy, plan to reside in New Hampshire.

— Diocese of Pittsburgh

FEATURE

Western Massachusetts backpack ministry offers supplies, support for women released from jail

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A small Episcopal congregation in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts is helping female prisoners adjust to life back in the community after their release with backpacks full of supplies and expressions of support.

In three years, the "Love in a Backpack" ministry at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ashfield has assembled and distributed more than 100 backpacks for women released from the Franklin County jail in Greenfield and a women's prison in Chicopee. Organizers and volunteers hope to expand the ministry in the future as they enlist other churches and community partners to join in the effort.

Photo/Diocese of Western Massachusetts, via video

Backpacks filled with supplies await distribution to women being released from prison, part of the "Love in a Backpack" ministry of St. John's Episcopal Church in Ashfield, Mass.

Some of the women, after completing their sentences, are released with nothing to help them start rebuilding their lives, coordinator Mary Link told ENS. The backpack "gives them something they can say is theirs," though the personal connections sometimes are even more important than the physical items.

"It helps them in that scary moment when they're going back out, that somebody somewhere has faith in them," Link said.

St. John's, with an average Sunday attendance just under 30, has long been active in organizing and supporting community ministries in Ashfield, a town of about 1,700 people. An initial grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts allowed the church to hire Link part time three years ago to coordinate those efforts, which included a drive to collect soap and paper products for a food pantry and outreach to low-income single mothers who may feel isolated living in the hill towns of Western Massachusetts.

The backpack ministry, meanwhile, continues to grow and flourish, with help this year from a $5,000 diocesan grant.

The seed for the ministry was planted a few years back when senior warden Susan Todd learned of the struggles of prisoners re-entering society, sometimes needing to start from scratch obtaining basic supplies like toothpaste and shampoo. A group from St. John's visited the Western Massachusetts Regional Women's Correctional Center in Chicopee to learn more.

"Our understanding was there were more services for men when they got out than for women," Link said. "That may be changing, but certainly we're making a difference in that."

What started as an effort to assemble toiletry bags quickly grew to include a wide range of items, all stuffed into backpacks that could be easily taken home by the newly released women. Members of the congregation donate some of the items, and Link buys additional supplies as needed: personal care items, snacks, socks, a Bible, a stuffed animal or doll, poems, prayers, a journal and pens.

Volunteers meet about three times a year to fill the packs for distribution, and "no two backpacks are ever the same exactly," Link said.

The congregation takes special interest in the "reading, writing and reflection" components, Link said, and each pack includes a personalized note — often written by a 90-year-old woman from the congregation who finds it hard to leave her home but enjoys contributing messages of hope and support to the backpacks' recipients.

"These are women who've had a lot of trauma in

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SUMMIT continued from page 6

a third annual Border Ministries Summit to be held in San Diego, Calif., in 2020.

From Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego, Episcopalians are providing humanitarian aid to migrants and asylum-seekers and, where possible, support to law enforcement officers in their parishes and communities.

Historically, adult males made most of the attempts to cross the border, but in the last five or six years, families, women and unaccompanied minors — many fleeing violence in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala — have begun making the journey.

It's not uncommon to see the border wall, which in most places is vertical steel slats, cutting a line through cities and small towns along the border. The border region extends 60 miles north of the wall into the United States where border agents make random stops at checkpoints along interstates and highways. Most migrants and asylum-seekers entering the United States make their way to destinations further beyond the border, reuniting with family and friends in other parts of the country.

"We're inviting folks to recognize that the migrant journey just doesn't stop at the border; it continues as people step into our immigration process. We are called to continue to walk with, serve and be transformed by migrants as they journey through the process," the Rev. David Chavez, Diocese of Arizona missioner for border ministries and a summit convener, said in a conversation with ENS.

Anglican and Episcopal bishops gathered at the conference issued a statement at the summit's end recognizing the Americas' shared history and the human desire for a safe, violence-free, economically viable life.

"We … acknowledge that North and Central America have a long history which we share, before the current nations existed. We have been bound together by shared cultures, languages and economies. We are in this situation together and we have been for centuries," the statement read.

"To the migrants we want to say we gathered here with you in our hearts. We see you, we hear you, and we wish to stand with you in our common search for security, dignity, justice, and community.

"We also acknowledge that we are all seeking safety from violence and a peaceful way of life for our families. We stand against all criminal activity, the drugs which addict and enslave people, and those who would prey upon others through sex trafficking, kidnapping, and other forms of oppression."

The bishops, representing the dioceses of Texas, Arizona, Rio Grande, Los Angeles and San Diego, recognizing the diversity of political ideologies among Episcopalians, stressed that Matthew 25 calls Christians to welcome the stranger.

The first border summit took place in November 2018 in El Paso, Texas, at a time when migrant caravans from Central America arrived regularly at the U.S.-Mexico border in what became an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

During a border summit session on Nov. 22, U.S. Border Patrol Tucson Sector Chief Roy Villareal, who joined the Tucson sector last March, acknowledged that the federal agency didn't have the capacity in its detention centers and was not equipped to handle the humanitarian crisis at the border.

Photo/Lynette Wilson/ENS

The Rev. Rodger Babnew of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Nogales, Ariz., leads summit attendees on a tour of the U.S.-Mexico border in Nogales.

The U.S. Border Patrol Tucson Sector covers 262 miles of border, which is patrolled by 3,900 agents. On Nov. 22, Homeland Security announced it would expand the Trump administration's Migrant Protection Protocols program to the Tucson sector. The MPP, commonly called "Remain in Mexico," requires asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico, some in shelters, some on the streets, while U.S. officials process their cases.

The effects of the Remain in Mexico program are visible in cities along the border. Across the downtown bridge connecting Brownsville, Texas, to Matamoros, Mexico, the tent city that housed 20 or so families in May has grown to more than 200 tents, said Tatiana Hoecker, who volunteers with migrants in the Diocese of West Texas.

President Donald Trump campaigned on anti-immigrant rhetoric and, since taking office, has banned immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries, gutted the federal refugee resettlement program, implemented policies separating families at the southern border, cut aid to Central America and imposed the Remain in Mexico restrictions.

On Nov. 22, bishops and clergy serving in El Salvador and Mexico outlined the dangers their citizens face: the high rates of violence, death, femicide, gangs and cartels controlling territories and the governments' failure to protect citizens.

It's critical that churches in the United States and churches in Central America and Mexico make connections and work together, said Western Mexico Bishop Ricardo Gómez Osnaya, during a presentation describing the violence in Mexico and shifting migration routes.

Twenty of the Diocese of Arizona's churches, including Grace St. Paul's in Tucson, which is involved in the sanctuary movement, have ministries serving migrants. ■

FEATURE

As Americans become less religious, the role of chaplains may grow

By Alejandra Molina
Religion News Service

The Rev. Donna Mote regularly accompanies military personnel escorting the caskets of fallen service members through Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, where she serves as a chaplain at the busiest airport in the world.

Mote is the first person to greet the escorts once they step off the plane. She stands shoulder to shoulder with them while Delta Honor Guard members march with flags of the five military branches. She stays with them through their layover at the airport. She's there for support. In many cases, the escorts are grieving because they knew the deceased.

When it's time to go, Mote helps with check-in at the departure gate, walks down the jetway, and once the remains have been confirmed, she heads up the airplane stairs with the escorts to bid them farewell.

Mote extends her hand for a proper handshake, but she's often embraced with a big hug, followed with a "thanks, chaps" or a "thanks, padre."

"These are among the highest compliments I've ever received for any ostensibly religious work anywhere," said Mote, an Episcopal priest.

Photo/courtesy of the Rev. Donna Mote

The Rev. Donna Mote, right, a chaplain at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, prays over a coffin with a military escort for the life and service of the deceased. They also pray for wisdom and courage for the escort in completing the sacred duty.

Chaplains like Mote have long been familiar faces at airports, hospitals, colleges, military bases and other places. They do ministry in the midst of everyday life — dabbing ashes on Congress members' foreheads during Ash Wednesday services, supporting students in crisis at universities. It's also not uncommon to see them in homeless shelters or in New York's subway stations.

In simple terms, a chaplain is a person who performs ministerial duties apart from a parish. And as fewer people identify with a specific religion or attend religious services, Americans may be more likely to meet a chaplain than a local clergy person at a congregation.

That's why the newly formed Chaplaincy Innovation Lab at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., aims to explore how chaplains are adapting to their changing circumstances.

Cadge

"They're very much below the radar," said Wendy Cadge, founder of the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab. "This group of people is sort of rising and taking on new responsibilities."

The lab, which formed in 2018, hosts events that deal with chaplaincy within Buddhism and other religions, in prison and in secular settings. It also offers resources to those exploring careers in chaplaincy.

Cadge said a national survey she led at Brandeis University found that 20% of the American public had worked with a chaplain or had been contacted by one in the last two years.

"To me, that number is surprisingly high," she said. "It suggests the need for more understanding."

The lab's website helps highlights institutions that offer degree programs and specializations in chaplaincy. It also notes the requirements for certain sectors, such as the training necessary for federally employed chaplains in the Army or in federal prisons. There is no standard training for chaplains working at the nonfederal level, according to a Chaplaincy Innovation Lab report.

The lab aims to better grasp that landscape.

"We really wanted to begin to look at who are they, how did they get there, what do they consider professional in terms of their work and how do we begin to bring them together," said lab cofounder Trace Haythorn.

The Chaplaincy Innovation Lab helped organize panels about the state of chaplaincy during the recent American Academy of Religion meeting.

Lance Laird, an assistant professor at the Boston University School of Medicine, took part in one of the panels, which documented the experiences of Muslim chaplains in the United States.

Through online surveys of 85 people from across the U.S., Laird found that Muslim chaplains were highly educated, with nearly 80% having obtained a graduate-level degree. Most (67%) identified as men and three-quarters of the Muslim chaplains served both Muslims and non-Muslims. The top three sectors where the chaplains served were health care, corrections and universities.

Laird

Laird also shared personal anecdotes of Muslim chaplains.

He spoke of a chaplain who offered support to a Buddhist woman before she went into surgery. He encouraged her to pray and embraced her when she asked for a hug. He helped put the woman at ease, but wondered if he had betrayed his faith by embracing the woman.

Laird recalled another chaplain, who read Christian Scripture about Jesus with a white Catholic woman who was initially hesitant to receive guidance from a Muslim woman wearing a hijab. In that case, the Muslim chaplain sought common ground by talking about visiting the Vatican and working alongside Catholics. Eventually, the woman allowed the chaplain to read from the Gospel of Matthew during her stay in the hospital. Laird said the woman's daughter told the chaplain her mother expressed how much she enjoyed her visits.

"We also see patients crossing boundaries to receive care from someone they perceive as a sometimes dangerous 'other,'" he added.

Through interfaith spiritual care offered by Muslims, Laird said, patients or staff have found a new appreciation of Islam and Muslims as a "healing force."

To Mote, the chaplain at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, onlookers may think that "anybody could do what I do," she said.

While anyone can greet and escort, Mote said, not everyone can be present in the moment, whether that means being comfortable in silence or engaging in a thoughtful conversation.

It's about "learning to be present without pushing your own agenda," she said. ■

BACKPACKS continued from page 10

their lives, a lot of chaos, a lot of upheaval," Sister Mary Quinn, a reentry coordinator at the Chicopee facility, said in a diocesan video about the backpack ministry. "A lot of them don't have a safe place to go when they leave here. A lot of the women literally have nothing. So it's a wonderful gift to them and blessing to them, but also for them to know that the community cares about them."

Jen Brzezinski, the caseworker at the Franklin County jail, echoed Quinn's comments in an interview with the Greenfield Recorder for a recent story about the ministry.

"There's a huge need, and the women who receive one are so grateful," Brzezinski said. "They don't have a lot. They're headed into the unknown, and that can be really scary."

Before the backpacks are given to the jails for distribution, they are blessed at Sunday Eucharist — a profound moment for the congregation at St. John's, the Rev. Vicki Ix, vicar at St. John's, told ENS by email.

"Over time, we have been led deeper into the issues impacting women as they leave prison. Our eyes have been opened to the vulnerabilities of transition," Ix said, adding that the congregation is planning a forum on the topic in March. "We hope each woman feels God's love in a backpack, but equally important, we want to advocate for their place among us and for the systemic change needed to fully welcome them back."

In most cases, the congregation never hears from those who receive the packs, though sometimes the women write notes of thanks, saying it was helpful "knowing somebody cared," Link said.

Her goal in the coming year is to partner with enough businesses, schools, churches and other organizations to increase the ministry's capacity so that it can fill about 80 backpacks a year, based on jail officials' estimates for the number of women in greatest need of that assistance.

"Love in a Backpack" is focused on the needs within the local community, but Link has a kit with information and a packing checklist that she distributes to churches and other organizations outside the immediate area to help them start their own backpack ministries.

As coordinator, Link's work typically ranges from three to 10 hours a week, depending on what needs to get done. She described it as a "retirement job," and while she brings her own faith to the work as a Quaker, not as an Episcopalian, the cause is one she finds personally and spiritually fulfilling.

"We're all people of faith," she said. "Even though I'm not an Episcopalian, it's so wonderful to be able to work with other people of faith … doing things out of a sense of mission and faithfulness." ■

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Actor Mark Ruffalo blends film and faith-fueled activism in 'Dark Waters'

By Emily McFarlan Miller
Religion News Service

Photo/Mary Cybulski/Focus Features

Bill Camp, left, as Wilbur Tennant and Mark Ruffalo, right, as Robert Bilott in "Dark Waters," a Focus Features release.

Actor Mark Ruffalo said he's had a hard time melding his activism with storytelling.

Then Ruffalo encountered the story of the people of Parkersburg, W.Va., who were exposed for decades to "forever chemicals" produced by DuPont, one of the world's largest corporations.

And he was moved by attorney Robert Bilott's 15-year battle to bring DuPont to justice, putting his family, his career and his health at risk for others.

"In a moment in time where the stories that we are being told are so cynical and the stories we hear all the time are like 'people are just horrible people' and 'just be as selfish as possible' and 'no one's doing anything for the greater good, really; it's all personal gain,' I believe in a different reality than that," Ruffalo said.

"I believe our heroes, real heroes in the world, are the ones who are like Rob Bilott. And so I just thought it was a story that we needed to see and hear at this particular moment in time, and it really suited where I was in my career to be able to bring something like this to life."

That's the real-life story behind the film "Dark Waters," which opened in wide release over the weekend.

Ruffalo produced the film and stars as Bilott. The story follows the attorney from defending chemical companies to taking them on after he is approached in the late 1990s by a farmer from his hometown who believes waste produced by the local DuPont plant is killing his cattle.

The movie also gets faith-fueled environmental activism right, according to Cassandra Carmichael, executive director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

Throughout the film, Bilott and farmer Wilbur Tennant's Christian faith is portrayed matter-of-factly as a part of their lives.

Their depictions rang true for Carmichael, who works on environmental activism with Catholics, evangelical Christians, mainline Protestant Christians, Jews, members of the black church and Orthodox communities.

"From a faith perspective, we often try to carry the water for others, to help them when they need help, whether that's building the stage for their voice or being an advocate when their voice can't be heard or getting into the trenches with them and fighting injustice," she said.

"I think we also work really hard to shine a light on stories that need to be told from communities and individuals that are often not heard."

> **"I think we also work really hard to shine a light on stories that need to be told from communities and individuals that are often not heard."**
>
> **— Cassandra Carmichael**

Ruffalo said during a call with faith leaders last week those depictions were intentional.

The actor recalled being approached by a man at a summer camp who questioned why Hollywood makes so many films that are hard on Christians. And he wanted to honor what is a serious part of "the reality of these people," he said.

In one scene in "Dark Waters," Bilott (as played by Ruffalo) frets over the cost of Catholic school for his sons as the ongoing lawsuit against DuPont takes a toll on his career, resulting in several pay cuts.

In another, his wife, Sarah Barlage Bilott (played by Anne Hathaway), assures him, "You saw a man hurting and you did the Christian thing — you helped him."

Both Bilott and Tennant are depicted attending church — not at climactic moments in which a sermon ties together the movie's message in a neat bow, but sitting with their families, singing hymns like "You Are Near," with its quiet assurance: "Lord, you have searched my heart, / and you know when I sit and when I stand. / Your hand is upon me protecting me from death, / keeping me from harm."

In the call with faith leaders, Bilott, who is Catholic, pointed to the late Tennant as his motivation for taking on the lawsuit against DuPont.

Tennant, the lawyer said, was "convinced that if people just see the facts and just see what's actually happening, the truth will come out, and people will do the right thing."

"Despite all of the legal wrangling over the years, I really do believe when people see the information, when people are given access to the facts, that people will do the right thing at the end. It may take a while. But I still believe that," he said.

That inspired Ruffalo and helped him to portray Bilott, the actor said.

So did his own diverse faith background, which he said not only motivated him to take on the role of Bilott and to produce "Dark Waters," but it has also grounded his activism over the years.

Ruffalo grew up with "a good part of the Middle East basically in my household," he said: Catholicism, a Baha'i father, a "born-again Christian" grandmother.

Later, he studied under famed actress and acting teacher Stella Adler, who was Jewish. Adler "really believed in the Talmudic principle of questioning and being aware," he said, and she taught him that the responsibility of an artist is to lift up the voices of people who aren't heard and to tell their stories.

Adler also introduced him to an idea he attributed to playwright George Bernard Shaw: "People should have to pay to go to church, and the theater should be free."

That's the moral, ideological and spiritual power of storytelling, he said. It transcends politics and ideologies and connects audiences to a common humanity.

"And so those teachings inspired me," Ruffalo said.

"I mean, those were heroes. Those were people who were doing things for other people at great sacrifice because they were the right things to do, and they were community-centered, and they were conscious of those around them, and there was a spiritual dimension to it — an important spiritual dimension to it."

Their example of "righteousness" and "care for community" led him into activism and social justice, he said.

Ruffalo identifies as an activist for the environment, for peace and for social justice — The New York Times has called him "the actor's activist."

He's spoken out against natural gas drilling in rural New York, delivered solar trailers to the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota during the action against the Dakota Access Pipeline and

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

Harry Potter Day at San Francisco cathedral combines fun, magic and theology

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Based on the number of excited children who showed up to Harry Potter Day at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral on Nov. 16, you might find it hard to believe that the last book in the series was published 12 years ago. About 80 children — far more than the cathedral staff initially expected — from around the Bay Area came to make wands, play Quidditch and learn how prayer can fend off scary feelings.

And given the day's focus on the overlap between J.K. Rowling's books and the Christian worldview, you also might find it hard to believe that in their heyday, the books faced fierce opposition from some fundamentalist Christians who claimed they were satanic. In 2006, the American Library Association named the Harry Potter books the most challenged of the 21st century up to that point because so many parents had tried to remove them from libraries on the grounds that they were anti-Christian and dangerous to children.

Photo/Matthew Woodward

About 80 children participate in Harry Potter Day at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

Photo/Mike Scrutton

Photo/Mike Scrutton

Left, different materials for making wands are available at Harry Potter Day.

Below left, the flags of the four houses of Hogwarts (Slytherin, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Gryffindor) hang in the nave of Grace Cathedral.

Caren Miles, the Diocese of California's associate for faith formation, never saw it that way.

"I just remember reading the first book before I even heard that folks were getting upset about it; the baptism analogy hit me so hard over the head that I didn't think anyone would have a problem with it. [The Christian imagery] seems so blatant to me!" said Miles, who organized this first-ever Harry Potter Day for the cathedral, which is the seat of the Diocese of California.

Rowling, a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church, has said that the parallels between her books and the Gospels are intentional, although she rarely delves into more details. The only explicit connection to Christianity is the appearance of Biblical passages on two gravestones in the final book, but readers have long observed allegorical elements in the stories.

"To me [the religious parallels have] always been obvious," Rowling told an interviewer in 2007. "But I never wanted to talk too openly about it because I thought it might show people who just wanted the story where we were going."

Some of Rowling's own faith journey is hidden in the books, Miles said.

"I love to tell kids the trivia that most of them don't know — even the ones who know every little bit of trivia — which is that Harry receives his Hogwarts [acceptance] letter on his 11th birthday because that's the day that J.K. Rowling was baptized," Miles told Episcopal News Service.

"There are so many examples of — not only faith, but that idea of life and resurrection coming through death, especially in the seventh book," Miles said, citing a particular scene that has been commonly interpreted as a vision of the afterlife in which Harry talks face to face with a dead character.

"There are so many great role models in the books. Even Draco Malfoy ends up making a turn. Snape obviously makes a huge turn," Miles went on, referring to two characters who are initially portrayed as villains but prove to be more complex. "So it's this [sense of] redemption."

Miles first organized a Harry Potter Day almost 20 years ago, when she was working for the Diocese of Dallas, and said it's a great way to attract the young families that churches are so eager to reach.

"It was that idea of trying to have something for families mainly in the diocese, but also something they can invite friends to as an easy entry into The Episcopal Church," Miles told ENS. It shows parents who might be unfamiliar with the church that "we are fun, we are silly, your kids can run around and be themselves and be kids!"

Harry Potter Day was a mix of fun and more serious topics, of religion and Potter lore. It started with morning prayer, followed by "Defense Against the Dark Arts," which in the series is a Hogwarts class in repelling curses and creatures like the boggart, a manifestation of one's worst fear. In the books, this is done with a Patronus — a sort of spiritual guardian in the form of an animal. On Nov. 16, the children learned that prayer can be its own kind of Patronus when fear becomes overwhelming.

Then it was time for Quidditch, the sport described in detail in the series that is played for real by enthusiasts.

"We had a college Quidditch team come and teach them Quidditch in the plaza," Miles said. "The Bay Area Breakers came, brought all the equipment, and were willing and young enough to run around with small kids all day."

That was followed by a wand-making class, in which the kids could choose the materials for the wand based on parts of their personalities.

"It's kind of fun to be able to talk about spiritual gifts in that way, to talk about what are the things that you have that we can amplify as good," Miles said.

And since Hogwarts students take Potions classes, the children then learned about another kind of supernatural transformation: the Eucharist. The Rev. Kyle Oliver, who has developed a set of cards that break down elements of the liturgy to explain them more fully, "walked the kids through the entire Eucharistic prayer, explaining all of the little magic pieces," Miles said.

"And then we had a closing Eucharist and a group photo. Everybody went home happy!"

Photo/Mike Scrutton

The Bay Area Breakers teach kids how to play Quidditch.

In her sermon at the Eucharist, the Rev. Lindy Bunch, priest in charge at Trinity St. Peter's in San Francisco, focused on Dobby, a lowly enslaved elf who ends up making the ultimate sacrifice to save Harry and his friends. She connected his story to Romans 8, which talks about how Christ frees all from bondage and ends with the famous passage: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God."

"We're not teaching them that there are bad things in the world. They already know that," Miles said. "But we're giving them tools and emotional help to stick together, to fight, [to] hope. We're giving them hope." ■

FAITH AND THE ARTS

N.T. Wright explains the world of the New Testament in new book

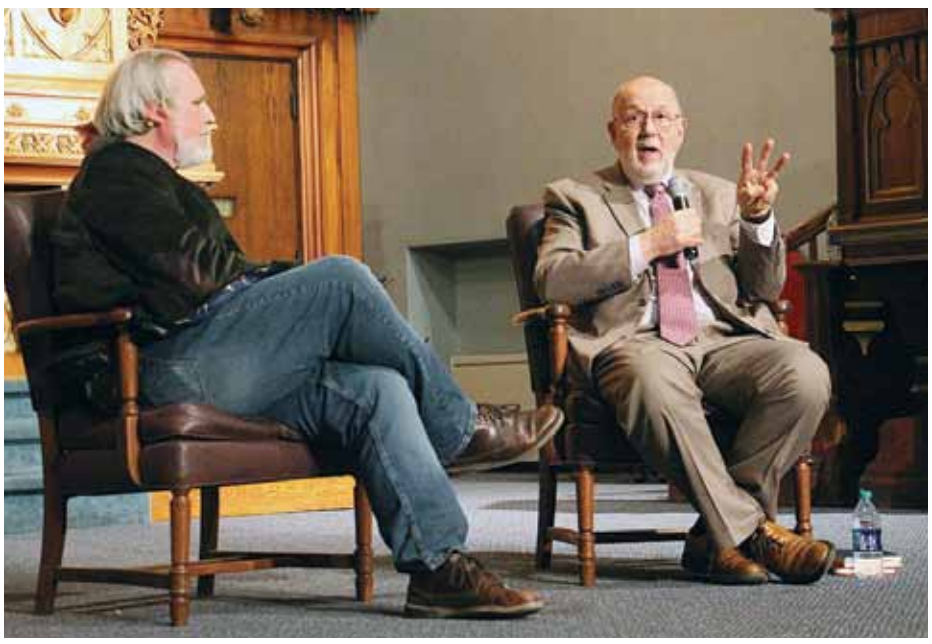
By Emily McFarlan Miller
Religion News Service

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright has spent most of his life teaching people how to study the New Testament.

And the most important thing, he says, is getting the context right.

Without that context, it's "fatally easy for people to distort bits of Christianity,'" Wright said.

"If we ignore the context, we can make the New Testament stand on its hind legs and dance around the room and play to our tunes — and that that has always been the case, no doubt," he told Religion News Service in a recent interview. "But the correction is always to go back to, 'What was the context?'"



Photo/Emily McFarlan Miller/RNS

Scholar and author N.T. Wright, right, speaks with Covenant Presbyterian Church of Chicago pastor Aaron Baker.

Wright, a retired Anglican bishop and now chair of New Testament and early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, is author more than 80 popular and academic books about Christianity and the Bible. The latest — co-authored with fellow scholar Michael F. Bird — is "The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians."

The book is meant not just for students getting an introduction to the New Testament, but for any Christian feeling stuck reading Scripture, said Wright. As if the book's nearly 1,000 pages aren't enough, there's also a workbook and a series of lectures — available online or on DVD — filmed in such locations as Jerusalem and Rome.

Wright hopes to help readers to avoid "the false antithesis of fundamentalism and liberalism, of left and right and all the rest of it," he told a packed sanctuary at an event promoting the book Tuesday (Nov. 19) at Covenant Presbyterian Church of Chicago.

As an example, he pointed audience members to what he calls the "absolutely vital but usually misunderstood" theme of the kingdom of God in Jesus' teachings.

Many Christians look to the kingdom of God as an escape in the next life and are hesitant to upset the status quo in the here and now, leaving that to politicians and social workers, he said. Others believe Jesus and his followers expected the kingdom of God to be the literal end of the world, and since they were wrong about that, they must be wrong about other things, reconstructing those things for themselves in ways that have "often led to quite radical theology."

"So you can see those misunderstandings playing out, particularly in America, in a sort of culture wars battle of some people becoming more and more conservative and thinking that that's their Christian obligation and other people becoming more and more radical and thinking that actually that's the only thing that's left to do with Christianity," he explained to RNS.

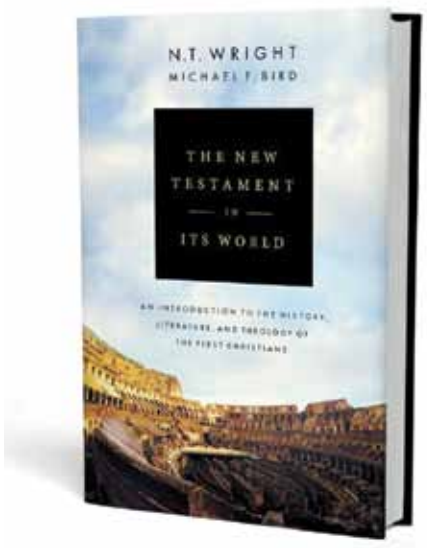
Both progressive and conservative Christians misunderstand what Jesus meant when he said the "kingdom of God is at hand," he said.

"Actually, the kingdom of God at hand means God's kingdom coming in unexpected ways on earth as in heaven — not away somewhere else and not destroying earth, but transforming it."

Wright's comments resonated with Robbie Nagle, 27, a children's pastor who traveled from Brantford, Ontario, to hear the scholar speak in Chicago.

Nagle said he recently preached a sermon at his nondenominational church that was inspired by Wright's interpretation of the kingdom of God.

He said that he told the congregation that "we need to be about social justice



because Jesus is king, and his kingdom is a kingdom of justice."

Nagle had read one of Wright's earlier books, "Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church," about a year ago. He wanted to better understand the New Testament to teach it to children, he said.

The book ended up transforming the way he looks at Scripture, he said.

"Because his heart is so pastoral, even the most academic stuff he writes is very 'how does knowing this change the way you live?' — which makes it easier to access as far as academic work goes," Nagle said.

Candace Kyles, 35, of Chicago, first encountered Wright's work in a course about the Gospel of Mark at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School outside Chicago. She's now a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago. But she said that readers don't need to be academics to understand Wright's work.

"He's not super lofty. I think he's really accessible to even a layperson," she said. ■

DARK WATERS continued from page 12

championed green energy on the board of The Solutions Project. Recently, he's lent his voice to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in the United States and Canada on social media and raised awareness of so-called forever chemicals, not just through "Dark Waters," but also an accompanying website, fightforeverchemicals.com.

"I really wanted to, at this phase in my career, use that celebrity to highlight these kinds of stories and these communities that unjustly had these issues happening to them and without any choice of their own," he said.

Forever chemicals like those depicted in "Dark Waters" have been linked to health problems such as birth defects, thyroid issues, liver and kidney damage and cancer, according to NRPE.

And the film doesn't present those problems as solved.

"You come out of that movie and you're like, what are we going to do?" said Carmichael of NRPE.

"It's this motivational film, which I think can be really beneficial as we try to raise awareness within the faith community," said Carmichael. "I personally like to give folks the sense of hope that we can do something about it and make some changes … in our personal lives, in our communities and also on the policy front to combat these things, these injustices that we find ourselves in."

It's a cause the executive director believes people of faith can get behind because of their concern not just for what they view as God's creation but also for vulnerable communities who are most affected by environmental injustice — children, communities of color, communities with lower incomes.

NRPE has produced a discussion guide for "Dark Waters," which includes prayers, reflections from both Jewish and Christian Scriptures and next steps to take — like contacting policymakers or minimizing the use of packaged foods and nonstick cookware that can contain forever chemicals.

Photo/Mary Cybulski/Focus Features

Mark Ruffalo stars in "Dark Waters."

More than just the story of forever chemicals, or one lawyer's fight against them, Ruffalo said, the film also tells "a bigger story about how we're going to go forward from here, knowing what we know."

"We're living in a time of revelations," he said. "We see now what our world is and what our world has been, and now we collectively have to make choices about that together." ■

NEWS

At U.N. climate conference, Episcopal delegation urges nations to act swiftly and justly

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

As the impacts of the climate crisis become more dire with each passing year and the catastrophic future scientists predicted decades ago inches closer to reality, governments have still not taken the actions necessary to protect humanity. Instead of declining, emissions of greenhouse gases have been increasing. And while nations are being warned that the commitments they have already made — such as the Paris Accord — are not enough to ensure a livable future and must do more, the Trump administration has chosen to abandon that agreement.

It was a bleak backdrop for the United Nations Climate Conference, known as COP 25, held Dec. 2-13 in Madrid. But a delegation of Episcopalians representing Presiding Bishop Michael Curry brought a Christian perspective to the summit, grounded in hope yet committed to substantive action. They shared the church's views on the sanctity of creation and humanity's moral duty to care for it, as well as the dangers facing the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

> **"We continue to be surprised and encouraged as national delegations at COP look to faith bodies as the place civil society nurtures hope and progress."**
>
> **— The Rev. Melanie Mullen**

The delegation's objective was "to build relationships — and to do lots of listening, praying and meeting with global leaders because of our commitment to God's justice and sustained vision for the earth," said the Rev. Melanie Mullen, the church's director of reconciliation, justice and creation care. "We are not alone as religious bodies in this forum — along with ecumenical partners, Episcopalians are expressing our commitment to living a public faith and witness in the world."

25, or the 25th Conference of the Parties, is critically important because it is seen by many as the last chance to amend the current insufficient emissions commitments to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The U.N. has established that benchmark as the recommended limit, beyond which humanity runs the risk of inflicting "increasingly severe and expensive impacts" on itself. Based on today's commitments, emissions will be twice what they should be by 2030, missing the 1.5-degree target. Because so little action has been taken, emissions must now drop 7.6 percent every year between 2020 and 2030 in order to reach the target, which the U.N. says is "ambitious but still possible."

"The overarching theme, which continues to remain uppermost on the agenda, is the need to ramp up ambition significantly, not only by member states but by all parties, including the private sector, civil society and individuals," Lynnaia Main, the church's representative to the United Nations, told ENS.

The presiding bishop has sent a delegation to each COP conference since COP 21 in 2015. This year, the delegation was headed by California Bishop Marc Andrus, an outspoken climate action advocate. Andrus suffered a stroke in October and participated remotely from California. The team in Madrid consisted of Main, Mullen and Jack Cobb, senior policy adviser in the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations.

So far, the delegation has been busy forging new partnerships, Main told ENS, especially with ACT Alliance — a coalition of 156 churches and adjacent organizations working on humanitarian goals around the world.

"The Episcopal Church delegation has spent the past few days focusing on developing new partnerships and advocacy strategies with Anglican Alliance partners who are here — Archbishop Julio Murray and Dr. Elizabeth Perry — and for the first time has joined up with ACT Alliance's ecumenical delegation which also includes the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation. The Anglican Alliance also has been working with us on this partnership," Main said by email.

"As a delegation, we are advocating for several priorities that link to our 2018 General Convention resolutions. Among these are accelerating ambition, increasing support for loss and damage, protecting human rights in addressing adaptation and mitigation and boosting financial resources and mechanisms. These priorities connect to our overarching goal of ensuring climate justice for the most vulnerable. After all, Jesus calls us most especially to care for the marginalized, and in U.N. terms there is a parallel principle at work: We speak of 'leaving no one behind' and 'reaching the furthest behind first.'"

The delegation is not only urging political leaders to strengthen their policies. It is sharing the ways that the Episcopal Church has already acted to reduce its impact.

"We continue to be surprised and encouraged as national delegations at COP look to faith bodies as the place civil society nurtures hope and progress," Mullen told ENS. "[The Episcopal Church] is already doing many kinds of important local climate work. For instance, the General Convention mandates funding creation care ministries are exactly what government negotiators mean when they talk about local-level 'ambition' and climate 'mitigation efforts.'"

And joining forces with other faith organizations has strengthened the impact of the Episcopal Church's efforts. On Dec. 2, the delegation and its ecumenical allies held a prayer service on the theme of "Praying For Climate Justice":

Partnerships like these, Mullen said, magnify the powerful message the Episcopal Church has to offer: that "a life-giving, liberating and loving vision for the world matters in addressing climate change." ■

Photo/courtesy of Lynnaia Main

From left, Lynnaia Main, Episcopal representative to the U.N., Ruth Ivory-Moore of the Lutheran church and the Rev. Melanie Mullen of the Episcopal Church attend the United Nations Climate Conference COP 25 in Madrid.

NEWS

Church of England's cathedrals continue to attract increasing numbers

By Rachel Farmer
Anglican Communion News Service

As Church of England cathedrals reported a record increase in visitors, they have been hailed as places "for all, and for fresh encounters."

In the report published in late November, cathedrals reported nearly 10 million visitors in 2018, an increase of more than 10 per cent on the previous year. There were also over one million visitors to Westminster Abbey.

The major Christian festivals also grew with Easter congregations reaching a record high, with 58,000 people attending a cathedral at Easter and 95,000 during Holy Week — the highest numbers recorded for a decade.

Third Estates Commissioner Eve Poole, who leads the Church of England's Cathedrals Support Group, said: "We are proud that our cathedrals are a precious resource not only for the church but for the nation as well.

"We know from countless anecdotes that many who visit as tourists encounter something deeper, and cathedrals have been imaginative in creating more opportunities for people from all walks of life to cross their thresholds."

Over the summer several cathedrals hit the headlines for their quirky art installations which ranged from a helter skelter amusement slide at Norwich Cathedral to a mini golf course in Rochester which drew crowds but also led to criticism.

Photo/Wikimedia Commons

The spire and south transept of Norwich Cathedral is viewed from the cloisters.

Cathedrals reported a total of 37,000 people worshipping each week in 2018, marking an increase of around 14 per cent over the past 10 years. They also welcomed the highest ever number of children and young people for educational events. In 2018, 340,000 young people from nursery through to 18+ attended events at cathedrals and at Westminster Abbey.

Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield and chair of the Association of English Cathedrals, described the latest statistics as pleasing, but warned against complacency.

"We continue to try and find ways that offer spiritual nurture and hospitality to people who have never had much contact with the church or with organized religion," he said.

"There is a place for a creative interpretation of big events and anniversaries — whether that's the Armistice, Easter, Advent or the moon landing — and by opening up our great sacred spaces for such encounters, it opens up opportunities for new conversations and new dialogues; it welcomes, it challenges, it engages our communities and allows us to reach new audiences and that says something about cathedrals being a place for all, and a place for fresh encounters."

Dean of Leicester David Monteith, of a cathedral where attendance continues to grow, said there had been no single factor behind the increase, but that the cathedral had improved publicity, developed hospitality, invested in music and built relationships across the city and county.

"We are increasingly trusted to offer worship which is inspirational and inclusive; it is both 'classic cathedral' yet imaginative and challenging," he said.

"We draw from the riches of our faith directing us to God and yet we address the lived experience of our people today."

Next year will see new pilgrimage routes opened-up as part of 'Year Cathedrals; Year of Pilgrimage,' a project in collaboration between the British Pilgrimage Trust and the Association of English Cathedrals. The initiative will ensure there is a one-day pilgrimage route for every Church of England cathedral, in addition to a group of six new trails in the northeast. ■

Photo/Wikimedia Commons

Durham Cathedral is of Romanesque design.

Episcopal leaders join celebrations of Church of England's first black female bishop

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The consecration and installation of the first black female bishop in the Church of England last November were celebrated by a wide array of Anglican Communion leaders, including numerous leaders from the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies president, was joined by West Tennessee Bishop Phoebe Roaf and Connecticut Bishop Ian Douglas, among others, in attendance at the Nov. 19 consecrations of Dover Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin and Reading Bishop Olivia Graham at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

A reception followed at Lambeth Palace, hosted by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

Jennings and Douglas served with Hudson-Wilkin on the Anglican Consultative Council, most recently in 2016.

The Rev. Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care, and the Rev. Ronald Byrd, the Episcopal Church's missioner for black ministries, were among the church leaders who attended Hudson-Wilkin's installation Nov. 30 at Canterbury Cathedral.

Photo/Andrew Holness via Twitter

Dover Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin with Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby stand outside St. Paul's Cathedral.

Hudson-Wilkin, a native of Jamaica, previously served as chaplain to members of the British Parliament and as priest-in-charge of St. Mary-at-Hill Church in London. Her appointment to succeed Bishop Trevor Willmott was announced in June.

The bishop of Dover is technically a suffragan role in the Diocese of Canterbury, though it effectively entails oversight of the diocese, freeing the archbishop of Canterbury to focus on his responsibilities with the Anglican Communion and as head of the Church of England, according to the Anglican Communion News Service.

Hudson-Wilkin was born in Jamaica and ordained a priest in 1994, the first year the Church of England allowed female clergy.

"I'm excited, I've got lots of new people to meet, to get to know, and that fills me with joy," Hudson-Wilkin said after her consecration, according to the BBC. "Beginning this new ministry, there is a sense of awe in it all. But also something refreshing about being open to the new things that God has in store, not just for me as a person taking on this new leadership role, but for our diocese as a whole."

Photo/Kaya Burgess via Twitter

Dover Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin and Reading Bishop Olivia Graham are consecrated Nov. 19 at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Hudson-Wilkin led prayers during the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, a ceremony in which Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preached.

Graham, the bishop of Reading who was consecrated with Hudson-Wilkin, is the first female bishop in the Diocese of Oxford. She now oversees 170 churches in the Reading area. ■