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Two Southwest Florida congregations together work Benison Farm

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Photo/Benison Farm, via Facebook

Volunteers in July 2019 help develop the grounds that would become Benison Farm at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg, Fla.

The Rev. Martha Goodwill doesn't consider herself a master gardener, and though she serves as a deacon at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., her full-time job is as an accountant for the Diocese of Southwest Florida. But for the past year or so, she has been the driving force behind a lively farming partnership between her mostly white congregation and the historically black congregation of St. Augustine's Episcopal Church.

She credits her faith for the inspiration — and her grandmother.

"That general knowledge, I've always had from her," Goodwill told Episcopal News Service, describing how her grandmother taught her at a young age about varieties of plants and how best to grow them. "It's just always been a part of my life."

The two congregations are now working together to harvest the first fruits — and vegetables — of their joint ministry on back acreage at St. Augustine's, which was cleared and prepared for farming with support from a $63,600 grant from the Episcopal Church's United Thank Offering. The congregations gave it the name Benison Farm, incorporating the Middle English word meaning "blessing."

The first round of planting has produced collard greens, mustard greens, turnips, beets, tomatoes, kale, cauliflower and broccoli. Goodwill and other ministry leaders have begun distributing that fresh produce in the farm's neighborhood, deemed a "food desert" because of a lack of grocers nearby. They envision a monthly farmer's market on church property for the farm's next phase.

Another measure of the ministry's success can be counted in the many volunteers from both congregations who regularly come to St. Augustine's and build fellowship while working together at the farm, especially on Saturdays, planting, weeding, trimming and harvesting.

"We did it, and we did it together," said Hazel Hudson-Allen, who has been a St. Augustine's parishioner since 1992. She regularly volunteers her time at Benison Farm and sees it as a form of discipleship, "just seeing how a few hands together can make something happen."

Partnership was fundamental to creating Benison Farm because each congregation brought a different set of assets and challenges. St. Augustine's is an aging congregation with an average Sunday attendance of about 50. Its members were interested in remaining active in the community but were limited in how much physical labor they could apply to

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With weekly feast, Hawaii church feeds community's body and soul

By Mary Frances Schjonberg
Episcopal News Service

Photo/Jeanne Savage

Members of the local Girl Scouts troop flash the shaka sign of aloha during a break from serving dinner at a recent Waimea Community Meal at St. James Episcopal Church in Waimea, Hawaii.

It can be lonely in paradise.

The Big Island of Hawaii is a stunning combination of deep tropical canyons, wind-scrubbed hills, occasionally snow-capped mountains, high surf and active volcanoes, but it can be hard to live there.

Some of the 186,000 people who call the 4,000-square-mile island home live in multimillion-dollar houses. Others pitch tents on beaches. In a tourism-based economy, many residents work more than one job to make ends meet. Groceries cost 60 percent more than the national average.

Every Thursday evening, a group of staunch volunteers and one part-time paid coordinator use donations of food and money from Waimea-area businesses, farms and other organizations to feed the bellies and souls of more than 350 people in 90 minutes at St. James Episcopal Church. Diners eat together at long tables in the open-air Savanack Pavilion on the church grounds while volunteers deliver meals to home-bound people.

The team's work and the parish's commitment to the ministry is getting a major boost. One of St. James' mainland visitors who considers the parish to be a second church home has pledged $1 million toward the planning and construction of a gathering space to house the weekly meal and other ministries. The donation will allow St. James to go into the next phase of planning and preparing drawings for bids and permits.

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CONVERSATIONS

America's crisis of contempt

By Arthur Brooks

Editor's note: This is an excerpt of remarks delivered by social scientist Arthur C. Brooks on Feb. 6 at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C.

MR. PRESIDENT, Mr. Vice President, Mrs. Pence, Speaker Pelosi, heads of state, members of Congress and honored guests: Thank you for inviting me here today. I am deeply honored and grateful to address the National Prayer Breakfast.

As you have heard, I am not a priest or minister. I am a social scientist and a university professor. But most importantly, I am a follower of Jesus, who taught each of us to love God and to love each other.

I am here today to talk about what I believe is the biggest crisis facing our nation — and many other nations — today. This is the crisis of contempt — the polarization that is tearing our society apart. But if I do my job in the next few minutes, I promise I won't depress you. On the contrary, I will show you why I believe that within this crisis resides the best opportunity we have ever had, as people of faith, to lift our nations up and bring them together.

As leaders, you all know that when there is an old problem, the solution never comes from thinking harder in the old ways; we have to think differently — we need an epiphany. This is true with societal problems and private problems.

To start us on a path of new thinking to our cultural crisis, I want to turn to the words of the ultimate original thinker, history's greatest social entrepreneur, and as a Catholic, my personal Lord and Savior, Jesus. Here's what he said, as recorded in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, chapter 5, verse 43-45: You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."

Love your enemies! Now that is thinking differently. It changed the world starting 2,000 years ago, and it is as subversive and counterintuitive today as it was then. But the devil's in the details. How do we do it in a country and world roiled by political hatred and differences that we can't seem to bridge?

So let me ask you a question: How many of you love someone with whom you disagree politically?

Are you comfortable hearing someone on your own side insult that person?

This reminds me of a lesson my father taught me, about moral courage. In a free society where you don't fear being locked up for our opinions, true moral courage isn't standing up to the people with whom you disagree. It's standing up to the people with whom you agree — on behalf of those with whom you disagree. Are you strong enough to do that? That, I believe, is one way we can live up to Jesus' teaching to love our enemies.

Let's take a step back now and diagnose the problem a little bit.

Some people blame our politicians, but that's too easy. It's us, not them — I am guilty. And frankly, I know many politicians, many of them here today, who want a solution to this problem every bit as much as I do.

What is leading us to this dark place that we don't like?

The problem is what psychologists call contempt. In the words of the 19th-century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, contempt is "the unsullied conviction of the worthlessness of another." In politics today, we treat each other as worthless, which is why our fights are so bitter and cooperation feels nearly impossible.

The world's leading expert on marital reconciliation is Dr. John Gottman, a psychologist at the University of Washington. After watching a couple interact, he can predict with 94 percent accuracy whether they will divorce within three years.

The biggest warning signs are indicators of contempt. These include sarcasm, sneering, hostile humor and — worst of all — eye-rolling.

These little acts effectively say, "You are worthless." Want to see if a couple will end up in divorce court? Watch them discuss a contentious topic and see if either partner rolls his or her eyes.

> **"Within this crisis resides the best opportunity we have ever had to lift our nations up and bring them together."**

Why do they do that? It's a habit, and that habit is tearing their marriage apart. And like a couple on the rocks, in politics today, we have a contempt habit. Turn on prime-time cable TV and watch how they talk. Look at Twitter. Listen to yourself talking about a politician you don't like.

How do we break the habit of contempt? Even more, how do we turn the contempt people show us into an opportunity to follow the teachings of Jesus, to love our enemies?

To achieve these things, I'm going to suggest three homework assignments.

First: Ask God to give you the strength to do this hard thing — to go against human nature, to follow Jesus' teaching and love your enemies. Ask God to remove political contempt from your heart. In your weakest moments, maybe even ask Him to help you fake it!

Second: Make a commitment to another person to reject contempt. Of course you will disagree with others — that's part of democracy. It is right and good, and part of the competition of ideas. But commit to doing it without contempt and ask someone to hold you accountable to love your enemies.

Third: Go out looking for contempt, so you have the opportunity to answer it with love. I know that sounds crazy, to go looking for something so bad. But for leaders, contempt isn't like the flu. It's an opportunity to share your values and change our world, which is what leadership is all about, isn't it?

I'm asking you to be kind of like a missionary. I've had missionaries on both sides of my family. They don't go out looking for people who already agree with them, because that's not where they are needed — they go to the dark places to bring light. It's hard work, and there's lots of rejection involved.

I'm calling each one of you to be missionaries for love in the face of contempt. If you don't see enough of it, you're in an echo chamber and need a wider circle of friends — people who disagree with you. But run toward that darkness, and bring your light.

If you see the world outside this room as mission territory, we might just mark this day as the point at which our national healing begins.

God bless you, and God bless America. ■

Arthur C. Brooks is a professor of the practice of public leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School and a senior fellow at Harvard Business School.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE concern memorials to the lynchings of African Americans, the murder rate among African Americans in New Orleans, the history of Negro spirituals and a film about Harriet Tubman, who led enslaved people to freedom.

To a white person, it might seem that all of a sudden the distasteful subjects of slavery and lynchings are everywhere. These were terrible things that happened in the past and are rather depressing to think about, one might say.

A few white visitors, in online reviews, have pushed back at the idea that a tour of a Southern plantation should tell the stories of those who were forced to work there as well as the tales of those who enjoyed the fruits of that labor.

They must have missed the prominent description of the Whitney Plantation in Louisiana as a museum that focuses on the lives of the people enslaved there. It must be said that these sour voices are a tiny minority, with many visitors describing the experience as "informative," "moving," "important," "powerful" and "educational."

What the whiners may not realize is that if the stories were told, in depth and detail, of the physical and mental torture visited upon America's enslaved population, they probably couldn't stand it.

Episcopal dioceses and individual churches — and the church as a whole — have been researching the ways in which they benefited from slavery, more intensely since a 2008 apology.

"Through it all, people of privilege looked the other way, and too few found the courage to question inhuman ideas, words, practices or laws," said then-Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori.

Clearly, many white people today would still rather look the other way. One of the online reviewers stated that her family and her husband's had emigrated to the United States well after the Civil War and therefore had nothing to do with slavery.

The problem with that view is that white people standing on American soil today reap the invisible rewards of a vicious system. It's about time to tell the whole story of the American experience. The least white people could do is listen. ■

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NEWS

Florida church to offer same-sex marriage in diocese that previously refused to allow it

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The General Convention resolution aimed at making marriage rites available to same-sex couples in all the church's domestic dioceses took effect more than a year ago, in December 2018, though the pace of implementation has varied in the handful of dioceses that previously had refused to offer the rites.

Supporters of the new rites were particularly critical of Diocese of Florida Bishop John Howard, accusing him in January 2019 of failing to honor the intent of Resolution B012 in the process he established to comply. Howard denied those allegations.

A year later, a congregation in Howard's diocese, St. John's Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, is now moving forward with plans to offer the rites to same-sex couples.

After an extended process of discernment, a committee of nine church members issued a report in December in which most of the group recommended offering the rites, and the vestry decided in late January to accept that recommendation.

"We want to do our very best to care for God's people at St. John's," the Rev. Dave Killeen told the Tallahassee Democrat. Killeen, the rector, was one of the nine members of the consultation group. "All couples will be treated equally… We want to make sure everyone feels comfortable and has a place here at St. John's — that they know they are loved and valued."

Howard had been one of eight diocesan bishops who, citing their theologically conservative views on marriage, initially refused to allow clergy in their dioceses to use the trial rites that General Convention approved in 2015 for use in same-sex weddings. In 2018, General Convention passed B012, calling on all bishops to make provisions for allowing the rites in any jurisdiction where civil law allowed same-sex marriage.

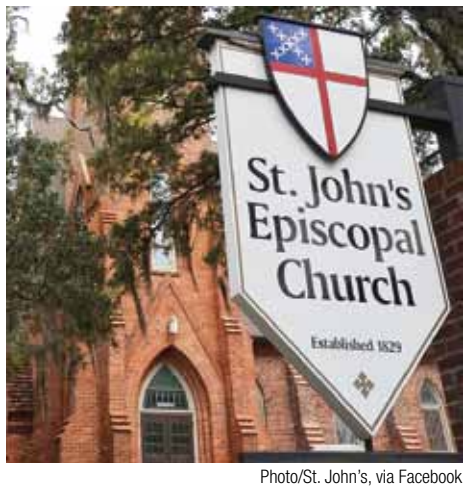
Some of the eight holdout bishops, including Howard, announced processes that relied heavily on one provision of the resolution that specified they should ask outside bishops "as necessary" to provide pastoral oversight when congregations request to use the rites.

Howard's canon to the ordinary, the Rev. Allison DeFoor, referred questions directly to Killeen, who told Episcopal News Service by phone that Howard planned to delegate another bishop to oversee matters relating to all marriages at St. John's. That bishop has not yet been identified, Killeen said, and Howard will continue to provide pastoral oversight for St. John's on all other matters.

Howard "was very, very supportive of the process itself," Killeen told ENS.

The St. John's vestry approved use of the rites in a majority vote on Jan. 28, according to the church's website. The decision partly drew on the input collected from parishioners at three forums, held in June, September and October.

"Our clergy has been in touch with Bishop Howard to share the St. John's vestry's decision," the church said on its website. "Bishop Howard has pledged to continue to wholeheartedly support the missions and ministries of this church."



Photo/St. John's, via Facebook

The vestry at St. John's Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, Fla., voted last month to offer marriage rites to same-sex couples.

At least one other congregation in the diocese has gone through the same process. St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Fernandina Beach notified Howard late in 2018 that it intended to offer the rites to same-sex couples, and Howard said he would delegate another bishop to provide oversight there, the Rev. Stephen Mazingo, rector at St. Peter's, told ENS. He said he made the decision to move forward with the support of lay leaders, though no same-sex couples have yet asked to be married in the church.

Change came much faster to the Diocese of Dallas, where Bishop George Sumner agreed after General Convention in 2018 to allow same-sex marriage under Missouri Bishop Wayne Smith's oversight. In January 2019, less than two months after B012 took effect, the Dallas diocese's Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration and Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle held services to bless the unions of 24 gay and lesbian couples who previously had been forced to marry outside the diocese or in civil ceremonies.

Same-sex couples in the Diocese of Albany, meanwhile, have yet to benefit from a change in policy, because Bishop William Love continues to refuse to allow the rites for their weddings in his northern New York diocese. Love's decision now has become the focus of disciplinary proceedings against him, under the Episcopal Church's Title IV canon. A hearing in that case is scheduled for late April.

The Diocese of Springfield, in the mostly rural southern half of Illinois, is another conservative diocese where same-sex marriage had been forbidden. Bishop Daniel Martins responded to B012 by reluctantly agreeing to a process similar to the one Sumner adopted in Dallas, though its implementation last year drew less fanfare.

Martins allowed the Chapel of Saint John the Divine, at the University of Illinois in Champaign, to use the trial marriage rites after delegating pastoral oversight of the chapel to Fond du Lac Bishop Matt Gunter, as Martins outlined in an October letter to the diocese.

Later that October, the chapel posted congratulations on its Facebook page to "Andrea and Sarah on the blessing of the marriage today!" ■

St. Louis church included in historic register for LGBTQ advocacy

By Michael Shepley
Diocese of Missouri

Trinity Episcopal Church in St. Louis' Central West End has become the first site in Missouri to be named to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its significance in LGBTQ history. It is the first and only such site in Missouri and the only Episcopal parish in the country so honored.

Trinity was recognized in particular for the years 1969 to 1993, which include its early support of gay rights, its embrace of LGBTQ parishioners and community members, and its compassionate response to the first AIDS patients in the 1980s.

The recognition of Trinity is part of an effort by the U.S. Department of the Interior to document a more complete story of the gay rights movement, a project announced in May 2014 by Secretary Sally Jewell.

The NRHP is the U.S. federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects deemed significant to American history and worthy of preservation. Currently there are 93,500 sites across the country, with LGBTQ sites numbering less than 20.

Photo/Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity Episcopal Church members march in the 1991 St. Louis Pride Parade.

"Trinity, as a progressive Episcopal church, continues today as an energetic supporter of LGBTQIA+ worshippers," said the Rev. Jon Stratton, rector of the church. "We are honored by the NRHP recognition and wear this designation proudly."

A formal dedication ceremony, including the installation of a plaque on the exterior of the church at 600 N. Euclid Ave., will be held on Saturday, June 13. Bishop-elect Deon Johnson, whose ordination is planned for April 25, will be an honored guest and speaker. Johnson will be the first openly gay bishop to serve in the Diocese of Missouri.

"Trinity's longtime support for the LGBTQIA+ community dates back to its serving as the meeting space of St. Louis' first gay rights organization, The Mandrake Society, in 1969," said Steven Brawley, founder of the LGBT History Project in St. Louis.

The NRHP designation came after a concentrated period of reflection, recollection and research by members of the church and those involved in the preservation of St. Louis' early gay and lesbian history.

Aiding the application process were longtime Trinity parishioners who are keepers of parish records and institutional memory for the years cited in the NRHP designation — Ellie Chapman, wife of the late Trinity rector Rev. William Chapman; Etta Taylor, church archivist; and Jym Andris, community historian. Their work was supplemented by Ian Darnell, curatorial assistant for the LGBTQ Collection at the Missouri History Museum, and Steven Brawley.

University of Kansas professor Katie Batza wrote the application as an extension of a current book project and as part of her ongoing work with the National Park Service LGBT Heritage Initiative. She said that as the application took shape, Trinity Church's ties to the LGBTQ community were inspirational.

"It was encouraging to see how committed Trinity was to the rights of all of its gay and lesbian parishioners at a time when these rights largely were unknown to the mainstream," she said.

"The first Mandrake Society meeting at Trinity was one of a handful of local, national and global political actions and protests in 1969 — including the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village — that marked the start of a new civil rights movement."

Trinity Episcopal Church, founded in 1855, has stood at the corner of Euclid and Washington avenues since 1935. Trinity is urban, socially progressive and Anglo-Catholic in its worship. Its rector is 35-year-old Jon Stratton, a social justice activist involved with the Clean Missouri campaign and a member of the leadership team at Missouri Jobs with Justice. ■

Michael Shepley is a member of Trinity Episcopal Church.

AROUND THE CHURCH

Integrity USA elects Ron Ward as president

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Integrity USA, the nonprofit organization dedicated to LGBTQ advocacy within the Episcopal Church, said Ron Ward was chosen president on Dec. 31 and took office on Feb. 1. Ward's election was the result of a special ballot to fill the remainder of the Rev. Gwen Fry's term, which ends in 2021. Fry resigned in November after criticism from members over perceived mismanagement.

Ward was the sole candidate for the presidency, and members have expressed concern and frustration with the election process on Integrity's Facebook group, with some arguing that Integrity's reputation is damaged beyond repair, its mission is unclear and it should fold.

"I've had a lot of communications from folks stating that Integrity is dead. 'Let it die. It has no purpose,'" Ward told ENS in an interview while attending the Rooted in Jesus conference in Atlanta. "I didn't step up to volunteer to be presiding over a Friday funeral. I would rather be involved with a Sunday awakening."

The election was plagued by controversy ever since Fry's resignation, mostly surrounding procedural issues.

Ward, who was nominated by Secretary Ellis Montes after expressing a desire to run, is a longtime advocate for the LGBTQ community in Connecticut. He is now a first-year student at Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, with the goal of becoming a chaplain, and says he is "in an informal conversation about the diaconate" with the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

Photo/Egan Millard/Episcopal News Service

Ward

Ward, 55, attended mostly Unitarian Universalist churches until about two years ago, when he started attending St. James Episcopal Church in New London, Conn. His first experience with Integrity was the Integrity Eucharist at the 2018 General Convention, where he was volunteering with Episcopal Migration Ministries.

"I made a commitment to myself, when I was accepted a year ago to Union Theological Seminary, that I wanted to re-engage my advocacy within my own self-identified community," Ward told ENS. "I've been following Integrity since 2018 … When I realized that they were going to be having an election and looking for volunteers to serve, I saw that as an opportunity to step up and offer myself to serve." ■

Seamen's Church Institute names president

The Seamen's Church Institute of New York & New Jersey (SCI) said it selected the Rev. Mark S. Nestlehutt as president and executive director, succeeding the Rev. David Rider as of Feb. 18. Rider's official retirement date is March 1.

Nestlehutt was most recently rector of Washington Memorial Chapel in Valley Forge, Pa.

His previous employment and interests include service as an officer in the U.S. Navy, director of planned giving at Opera Philadelphia, various positions for five years in the field of commercial banking and asset planning as well as engagement as an enthusiastic rugby player from 1980-2012.

An avid one-design sailor, Nestlehutt spent 12 years as the Rector of Christ Church in St. Michaels, Md., a waterfront community on the Chesapeake Bay where his parishioners were comprised of Chesapeake Bay pilots, Delaware River pilots, tugboat captains, ship engineers, students at the Calhoon MEBA Engineering School, and others.

SCI board chairman Bruce G. Paulsen noted Nestlehutt's "genuine and heartfelt affection for the sea and the mariner … The last 20 years has seen SCI's expansion of its mission on the inland rivers of the United States as well as its continued commitment to blue water mariners."

Nestlehutt

Founded in 1834, SCI's three-fold mission is to be chaplains and first-responders, to provide legal assistance and advocacy, and to facilitate advanced educational training for domestic and international mariners.

A native of Atlanta, Nestlehutt studied at the University of Georgia and Georgia State University. He attended seminary at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. with a concentration in Anglican, Global and Ecumenical Studies, and holds a certificate in World Mission and Ecumenism from the Boston Theological Institute.

— Seamen's Church Institute

Quincy settlement announced

The Diocese of Chicago and the Episcopal Church said they reached a settlement with the Diocese of Quincy in the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and 15 parishes and missions in that diocese over real property, other assets and church records that were part of the former Episcopal Diocese of Quincy and the Episcopal Church in 2008.

The settlement, the terms of which are confidential, includes property at issue in a suit filed in 2013 in a circuit court in Peoria.

A majority of the clergy and members of the former Episcopal Diocese of Quincy voted to leave the Episcopal Church in November 2008 over issues including the church's decision to include gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members more fully in its life and ministry. The remaining members of the continuing Episcopal Diocese of Quincy reunited with the Diocese of Chicago in September 2013 and form its Peoria Deanery.

The congregations of St. James, Griggsville; St. James, Lewistown; the Episcopal Church of St. George, Macomb; and All Saints, Rock Island will benefit from the settlement funds. Other funds recovered in the settlement will be held in the endowments of the Diocese of Chicago for the benefit of the Peoria Deanery.

The Diocese of Chicago has two remaining legal matters with congregations in the ACNA Diocese of Quincy. Those concern the property and assets of Grace Episcopal Church in Galesburg and Christ Church in Moline, whose Episcopal congregation is now part of All Saints, Rock Island.

— Diocese of Chicago

Minnesota elects Craig Loya as bishop

Dean Craig Loya of Trinity Cathedral in Omaha, Neb., was elected on Jan. 25 the tenth bishop of the Diocese of Minnesota. The election took place during the 162nd convention of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota (ECMN), held in St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Minneapolis.

Loya

He was elected on the 2nd ballot. "Among diverse people and across diverse contexts, Minnesota Episcopalians have always borne vibrant witness to God's reconciling love, and it's an extraordinary privilege to be called to join that work in this new season," Loya said.

Loya has served as dean of Trinity Cathedral since 2013, and was the canon to the ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas from 2009 to 2013. He received his master of divinity from Yale University and a diploma in Anglican Studies from Berkeley Divinity School at Yale in 2002. Loya lives in Omaha with his wife, Melissa, and their two children.

If Loya's election receives the required consent of a majority of diocesan bishops and diocesan standing committees, he is scheduled to be ordained and consecrated bishop on June 6 at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

— Episcopal Church in Minnesota

Curry encourages support for Relief & Development Sunday, March 1

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry is encouraging Episcopalians to support the "One Thousand Days of Love" campaign through observance of Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday on March 1.

"Lent is a time of reflection and of following Jesus, demonstrating his love for the world," said Presiding Bishop Curry. "I invite all congregations to devote a Sunday in Lent to reflect on the transformational work of Episcopal Relief & Development, particularly their work with children, and to tangibly demonstrate God's love by giving generously to support One Thousand Days of Love."

At the 2009 General Convention, Lent was officially designated as a time for dioceses, congregations and individuals to remember and support the work of Episcopal Relief & Development. Although the first Sunday in Lent is the official day of observance, churches may hold a special service on any Sunday.

Globally, 155 million children under the age of six are not reaching their full potential due to inadequate nutrition and healthcare. One Thousand Days of Love is a three-year, $3 million grassroots church-wide fundraising campaign dedicated to expanding Episcopal Relief & Development's programs for children up to age six. The campaign launched in September 2019 and will run for 1,000 days until May 31, 2022.

ONE THOUSAND DAYS OF LOVE

Developed in collaboration with Grow Christians, the agency's 2020 Lenten meditations focus on the spiritual lives of children and how they can inform the prayers and meditations of all Christians. These booklets and other resources including hope chests, pew envelopes, bulletin inserts and special prayers are available at **www.episcopalrelief.org/Lent**.

Supporters are encouraged to sign up for daily email meditations in English and Spanish and, new this year, to subscribe to the meditations as podcasts on Apple Podcasts, Sound Cloud and Google Play.

— Episcopal Relief & Development

AROUND THE CHURCH

Lent 2020: A Call to Prayer, Fasting and Repentance Leading to Action

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry invites Episcopalians and people of faith to turn and pray on behalf of our nation during the season of Lent:

"In times of great national concern and urgency, people of faith have returned to ancient practices of repentance, prayer and fasting as ways of interceding with God on behalf of their nation and the world. This is such a moment for us in the United States.

"On Ash Wednesday I will join with other Christian leaders observing this Lent as a season of prayer, fasting and repentance on behalf of our nation, with continued fasting each Wednesday until the Wednesday before Advent begins.

"Our appeal comes during a time of profound division and genuine crisis of national character. This is not a matter of party or partisanship, but of deep concern for the soul of America.

"The group of religious "Elders" who share this commitment — the same group that over a year ago published the "Reclaiming Jesus" statement — includes Evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant leaders. While we hold diverse political affiliations and positions on many issues facing our country, we find common ground in two shared convictions:

First and foremost, we are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, and his way of love as our primary loyalty.

Second, because we love our country, we are concerned about its moral and spiritual health and well-being.

"For me, this call is rooted in my personal commitment to practice Jesus's Way of Love, by which I turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go and rest in the way of our savior. Especially now, drawn together by love, hope and concern, and recalling the wisdom of our ancient traditions, I am grateful to join others in the spiritual practice of prayer, fasting and repentance for our nation. If you feel called to join us in this practice, the invitation is attached. The full text, together with the "Reclaiming Jesus" document can be found on the Reclaiming Jesus website, **www.ReclaimingJesus.org**."

Your brother,
The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Evangelism Grants fund 16 projects across Episcopal Church

At its February meeting in Salt Lake City, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church ratified awards of more than $66,000 in Evangelism Grant funding to 16 Episcopal communities.

"The projects we were able to fund are remarkable for the ways in which they respond to the needs of specific communities across the church," said the Rev. Devon Anderson, chair of the Executive Council Episcopal Evangelism Committee. "Thanks to these ideas that are full of sheer grit and creativity, Episcopalians across the church will soon have more resources to help them reach out, tell stories, and invite their neighbors."

The Episcopal Evangelism Grants program, designed to fund local and regional evangelism efforts, began in 2017 as a result of the 2015 General Convention's increased investment in evangelism, galvanized by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. Grants provide up to $2,000 for an individual congregation and up to $8,000 for multi-church, diocesan and regional collaborations.

Projects funded by the evangelism grant program include a Diocese of Central Pennsylvania online learning platform that will train Episcopalians in the art of "collaborative, innovative evangelism," an effort to develop liturgies for home and dinner church gatherings in the Dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan, and an effort spearheaded by Province IV to expand the Episcopal Church's evangelism at the Wild Goose Festival, to be held in July in North Carolina.

The 16 Evangelism Grants are:

- That Deacon on Youtube; Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles: $1,200.
- The Church that Children Built; Clarence, N.Y.: $1,000
- Connecting the Episcopal Church to the Millennial Generation; Episcopal Diocese of Olympia: $2,000.
- Barrier Free Labyrinth - Peace Pole & Outdoor Library; Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan: $2,000.
- A Solitary Place; Episcopal Diocese of Rio Grande: $5,000.
- Big Bend Episcopal Mission; Episcopal Diocese of Rio Grande: $8,000.
- Green Mountain Witness; The Episcopal Church in Vermont: $8,000.
- The Hive; Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania: $2,000.
- Spiritually Homeless - LGBTQ+; Panama City, Fla.: $2,000.
- Rhythms of Grace; Episcopal Diocese of Missouri: $2,000.
- Plainsong Farm & Ministry; Episcopal Dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan: $2,000.
- Thriving in Christ; The Episcopal Church in Central Pennsylvania: $5,800.
- The Episcopal Tent at the Wild Goose; Province IV: $8,000.
- Festival of Saints and Stories; The Episcopal Church of New Hampshire: $8,000.
- The People's Summer; Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania: $5,200.
- CCC - Evangelism 101; Episcopal Diocese of Alabama: $2,000.

The committee received 74 applications from across the church and requests far exceeded the funding allocated in the budget. The next application cycle will open this spring, and each diocese or organization whose application was not funded in this cycle has been invited to reapply. In advance of the 2020 grant deadline, the Executive Council Episcopal Evangelism Grants Committee plans to offer a webinar and other support to potential applicants.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Episcopal Church and La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico sign agreement

The presiding bishops of the Episcopal Church and La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico on Feb. 16 signed an agreement celebrating and recommitting to a relationship dating back to 1875. The signing took place during a Eucharist service on the border of the two countries.

The churches said that their belief that all people are children of God is shown through their commitment to the most vulnerable people, with the intention of making them feel the love of God no matter who they are, where they are from, or where they are going.

The preamble to the agreement signed by Episcopal Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico Presiding Bishop Francisco Moreno recognizes that, despite the political difficulties that the two countries are experiencing, the churches are called to "share a ministry of prayer and collaboration through the gifts and talents we have to help us in mutual growth where we reflect the kingdom with our actions of justice, peace and love through service, education and the expansion of ministry."

This agreement marks a key transition in the relationship between the two churches. An earlier covenant, which expired at the end of 2019, outlined the partnership between the Episcopal Church and La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico as the Mexican church transitioned from a diocese of the Episcopal Church to a province of the Anglican Communion.

The Rev. Canon C.K. Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond the Episcopal Church noted, "With this new agreement we celebrate our ongoing relationship and collaboration with our sister and brother Anglicans in the church in Mexico."

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

FEATURE

HAWAII continued from page 1

"We are very grateful to the Lematta Foundation of Vancouver, Wash., for their trust in the Waimea Community Meal and their support of our dream," Junior Warden Tim Bostock told Episcopal News Service.

When the Waimea Community Meal began in December 2016, organizers wanted to help those who were physically hungry, the Rev. David Stout, rector of St. James, said in a recent interview.

Soon, however, larger needs became apparent.

Meal organizers realized that people in and around town "were not only hungry in belly but hungry in heart and soul," Stout said. "There is a lot of lonely eating on the island."

He invoked Mother Teresa, who once said that loneliness is the West's greatest disease.

"We decided very early on that we were not going to advertise this as a homeless meal and that we weren't going to emphasize the St. James Church thing," Jane Sherwood, who co-chairs the ministry with Bostock, said in an interview. "So, we are the Community Meal at St. James. While we are church-sponsored, we are not Bible-thumping. We're trying to live by example; our actions are louder than our words."

Community Meal ministry coordinator Sue DeleCruz says the meal is a sermon preached by doing.

Each Thursday evening, one of the three clergy associated with St. James — either Stout, the Rev. Marnie Keator or the Rev. Linda Lundgren — gathers in a circle the people who are present at 4:30 p.m. for a prayer. They are always there and "collared up," as Sherwood put it, so that people know who they are when they make the rounds.

The weekly gathering does not offer a bare-bones soup kitchen sort of meal. Think of it as more like a luau with an ever-changing variety of food, entertainment, social services and pastoral care. One night it's enchiladas with all the trimmings plus hula music. Another week it might be the Hawaiian dish called shoyu chicken served with broccoli soup, roasted carrot and celery salad, and folk music.

Some nights, diners can get their blood pressure checked or take a hot shower.

At every meal people from different backgrounds settle in for the Hawaiian tradition known as talking story, taking as much time as needed to discuss both the mundane and the profound. One recent night a Tesla-driving man talked story with another man who rode in on a rickety bicycle. Meanwhile, kids played outside and families visited the church's thrift shop.

"It brings us together even if it's for one night," DeleCruz told ENS. The meal's slogan is "building community one meal at a time." Every week, she said, the regulars show up and often there are new people.

The idea of a meal came to fruition after a congregational process to discern the parish's call to ministry. Stout credits Bostock and Sherwood with being "the visionaries" of what became the Community Meal.

While church growth is not the meal's goal, six adults and nine children or youths who have baptized into St. James had an initial connection through the Community Meal ministry, according to Stout and Susan Acacio, who heads the parish's ministries for children, youth and families. About 15 already baptized people have joined St. James through the same connection.

The meal's weekly orchestration combines food-service logistics with a bit of magic. The Community Meal Core Ministry Team plans the year's meals and then meets every Monday to fine-tune that week. They make changes based on what food donors have promised to deliver that week and which volunteer cooks are on board. Any needed basics are bought from a local food distributor.

Each week's dinner involves 80-85 pounds of protein, plus dishes that meet a growing demand for vegetarian and vegan offerings. The meal usually features three different salads and lots of vegetables.

"We've gotten pretty creative with kale," said Bostock. The team has introduced people to new foods. "More salads are being eaten by people who would not normally eat salads," said DeleCruz.

On Tuesday, a large sign inviting everyone to the meal gets hung up near the entrance to St. James on busy Kawaihae Road. Wednesday is food delivery day. Those deliveries include a weekly donation of expired but still-usable food from the island's only Costco.

As DeleCruz spoke to ENS recently, a new donor dropped off some microgreens. DeleCruz said she is "on 24 hours a day" connecting with people in her broad network of contacts, which she built while previously working for social service agencies across the island.

The parish recently increased DeleCruz's paid hours because the weekly meal was receiving more food than it could use. She was spending extra time farming out that food to smaller meal programs and food banks so that none would go to waste. Now, that part of her ministry is officially part of her job.

Every week an outside organization pays $600 to help cover the meal costs. The groups often supplement their monetary donations with volunteers from their staff to help serve the meal.

Early Thursday morning DeleCruz is in the commercial kitchen at the back of the St. James sanctuary, setting up equipment and writing instructions for the day on a whiteboard. Soon the vegetable washing crew shows up, followed by the veggie and meat chopping crews. The afternoon is spent cooking, cleaning up, packing up meals for delivery and getting the pavilion ready for the 4:30-6 p.m. meal.

The effort takes about 50 volunteers. "We always seem to get the right number" of volunteers, Bostock said, calling it a weekly miracle.

The youngest volunteer is a 7-year-old boy who often delivers meals with his grandmother and older brother, Bostock said. The oldest is Harry, a 93-year-old dish dryer. Community-building happens among the volunteers, not just the diners.

"The wonderful thing about these chop crews, as we call them, is that the conversations and the friendships that have developed around our tables is remarkable," Sherwood said. "They are people who are not church members for the most part but who want to be part of this group, who just come and have fun and chat, and know that they're part of the big community here in Waimea." ■

Photos/Jeanne Savage

Above, co-chairs Tim Bostock and Jane Sherwood, center, partner each week with Community Meal ministry coordinator Sue DeleCruz, right, and a number of volunteers to bring the weekly meal to the table. Jaisy Jardine, left, is a frequent volunteer.

Far left, Sue DeleCruz, the Community Meal ministry coordinator, starts early each Thursday morning in St. James' kitchen preparing for the volunteers who make the Community Meal happen each week.

Left, The Rev. David Stout, rector of St. James Parish, says the lay leadership of the Community Meal Core Ministry Team frees him to be a pastoral presence at the weekly meal.

Photos/St. James via Facebook

The Shower and Vision Buses visit and diners can get their blood pressure checked, take a hot shower or have their eyes examined.

FEATURE

FLORIDA continued from page 1

clearing the congregation's overgrown lot behind the church.

When Goodwill was ordained as a deacon two years ago, she was assigned to St. Thomas, which is northeast of downtown St. Petersburg. On a good Sunday, about 200 people will fill the pews at St. Thomas. She saw an opportunity in that unused acre and a half at St. Augustine's about 15 minutes away on the city's south side.

"St. Thomas doesn't have any land, but they have people that want to volunteer," said Goodwill, 56.

The two congregations already had developed relationships through various joint events, such as Bible studies and youth group meetings. Goodwill's congregation loved the idea of creating a garden ministry, she said. She pitched the idea to lay leaders at St. Augustine's, who also were receptive, especially given the dearth of stores selling fresh fruits and vegetables in the church's neighborhood.

"The need for the fresh produce is there, so the goal of the farm is to give away 50 percent of what we grow and to sell the other 50 percent in that neighborhood so that the farm can be self-sustaining," Goodwill said.

After receiving the UTO grant in August 2018, as well as money from the diocese's annual Bishop's Appeal, the churches began clearing invasive plants, trees and shrubs from the lot.

They installed an irrigation system, 24 raised beds and 48 smaller planters known as earth boxes. Through summer 2019, volunteers from both churches filled the beds and boxes with organic soil and compost, and congregation members planted seeds and sprouted them at home so the seedlings could be planted at the farm.

Then in August 2019, St. Augustine's hosted a planting day, when the foster gardeners from each congregation brought their seedlings to the nascent farmland to be tucked under the rich soil — like "handling a little baby," Hudson-Allen said.

The church farm also has room for fruit trees, and so far the congregations have planted mango, avocado and guava. Banana trees have taken root on their own, possibly tracing their origin to the community gardens that occupied part of the property years ago. "That was pretty cool," Goodwill said, "a surprise we didn't expect."

Benison Farm's latest additions include squash, zucchini and sweet potatoes. Because of the warm Florida climate, the farm should yield food nearly year-round, except for a break during the hot summer months. A core group of about 10 volunteers is regularly tending to the crops, while more parishioners join them for once-a-month workdays.

Since Benison Farm isn't yet at full capacity, the congregations are giving most of the initial harvest to a local food pantry, though they are starting to put plans in place to launch a farmer's market soon on the church grounds and ramping up that effort throughout the year.

Goodwill also sees the ministry as a form of one-to-one evangelism, "sharing your story with other people that you're digging in the dirt with and listening to their stories and understanding where Christ is in both of our lives."

"It's really life-giving. We've made good friendships," she said.

Hudson-Allen, a retired teacher and management analyst, is among the core volunteers. The farm has been a catalyst for other members of her congregation to get involved, even those with less time or physical ability. "There is a role there pretty much for everyone," she said.

She also is drawn to gardening's spirituality, which she senses even when she's alone working in the dirt. "The Holy Spirit has had many conversations with me in the garden on the farm." ■

Benison Farm is a partnership between the host congregation, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, south of downtown St. Petersburg, Fla., and St. Thomas Episcopal Church, a larger congregation about 15 miles to the northeast.

Photos/Benison Farm via Facebook

By January, some of the crops at Benison Farm were ready for harvest, though the farm is not yet at full capacity.

NEWS

Executive Council meeting hears of racism's toll on Native Americans

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

"The first thing I want to say is that we, as a nation, are in big trouble," said Forrest S. Cuch at the February meeting in Salt Lake City of the Episcopal Church's Executive Council.

"And due to the extreme degree of cruelty and nastiness that is being displayed in our nation's capital, I believe it is of a diabolical nature. And it needs to be taken seriously."

Cuch knows what it's like to live in a nation facing big trouble, as a member of a tribe that has persevered through genocide, oppression, disease and a multitude of other adversities. He is a longtime leader of the Ute people, former director of Utah's Division of Indian Affairs and the bishop's warden at St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church on the Uintah-Ouray Ute Reservation.

On behalf of the Diocese of Utah, Cuch spoke to the council on Feb. 13, the first day of its three-day meeting, about racism and reconciliation from an indigenous perspective.

The Executive Council, a 43-member body that enacts the policies adopted by General Convention, meets at least three times per year.

The council witnessed a presentation on how the Doctrine of Discovery dehumanized Native peoples. The Doctrine of Discovery, a broad concept that asserted the superiority of white Europeans and their descendants over indigenous peoples, was used to justify the taking of native lands and the forced assimilation of native peoples, among other injustices.

Photo/Egan Millard/ENS

Forrest S. Cuch addresses the Executive Council meeting in Salt Lake City.

The Episcopal Church formally rejected the doctrine and repented for its complicity in it at the 2009 General Convention, but the presentation given to Executive Council in Salt Lake City showed ways in which it lives on.

Cuch, the Rev. Cornelia Eaton of Navajoland and the Rev. Angela Goodhouse-Mauai of North Dakota (both members of the council) shared, through personal and historical narratives, how the church can be an instrument of oppression and erasure of native peoples or a source of strength and empowerment for them.

"In the Episcopal Church, we meet in the paradox of everything," Goodhouse-Mauai said. "And it's always the 'both/and' — how do we meet in the middle to continue this work together that we're called to do?"

Churches — including the Episcopal Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — played a central role in the sweeping history of indigenous oppression in Utah that Cuch presented to council.

Cuch's people and other tribes were slaughtered by settlers, killed off by diseases, removed to ever-shrinking reservations and stripped of their land, language, culture and spirituality. In residential schools, they were separated from their parents and subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

Those deep injustices linger on today in forms like intergenerational trauma, Cuch said, but new injustices continue to manifest the centuries-old idea of native peoples' inherent inferiority. The gruesome realities of massacres committed by white settlers on Native communities are still being covered up today, Cuch told council.

Photo/Egan Millard/ENS

The Rev. Cornelia Eaton shares a story as the Rev. Angela Goodhouse-Mauai looks on.

Political actions like President Donald Trump's 85-percent reduction in the size of the Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah — the first national monument created at the request of native tribes — continue to show a lack of respect for the dignity of native peoples.

The Episcopal Church, which has made racial reconciliation a cornerstone of its mission, can and should be at the forefront of the movement to undo the damage of the Doctrine of Discovery and root it out where it still grows, the presenters said.

The Rev. Michael Carney, vicar at St. Elizabeth's, showed some of the many ways his church is working to heal and renew the people of the Uintah-Ouray Ute Reservation, especially children.

Through talking circles and art projects, children can share traumas openly, receive support and express difficult emotions. By bringing in native storytellers to share the Ute creation stories, children can reconnect with the cultural heritage that was taken away from them. Gatherings of native Episcopalians such as Winter Talk and Mountains and Deserts can help heal, too, Carney said. ■

Texas diocese to fund racial justice projects

Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Bishop C. Andrew Doyle of the Diocese of Texas has introduced a "Missionary Vision for Racial Justice" initiative that aims to repair and commence racial healing for individuals and communities who were directly injured by slavery in the diocese. The announcement was made at the 171st Diocesan Council held in Waco, Texas, Feb. 7-8.

Doyle

The initiative includes a $13 million commitment towards racial reconciliation projects and scholarships for the future training and education of people of color.

"The goal is to support the people of our communities who were actually injured by our past actions," said Doyle. He further explained to the clergy, delegates and members of the diocese that he recently met with 38 representatives of Historic Black Churches to invite their future collaboration and support. "I have sought to undergird this work with the best theological and practical ideas in this present moment and from across the church to reinforce and amplify remedies and imagine a different trajectory for our future," he said.

Doyle also reminded the audience that Bishop Alexander Gregg, the first bishop of the diocese, had household slaves. "People don't realize that our first congregation, Christ Church, Matagorda, was built by slaves. This is our truth. It is the truth of this diocese," said Doyle.

Doyle added that although clergy and laity alike have spoken out against slavery, racism, and even stopped lynching, other leaders have defended slavery and white supremacy, and remained silent. Furthermore, Doyle also shared that he believes some lay leaders in the 19th century and early 20th century participated in lynching.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry commended the initiative. "When I read the Missionary Vision for Racial Justice, for a moment, to be honest, it took my breath away … One translation of the word 'inspiration' is 'God breathed.' What you, the good people of the Diocese of Texas have done together with God is something truly God breathed, inspired!'"

The money for the Missionary Vision for Racial Justice Initiative will go to fund the Bertha Means Endowment at Seminary of the Southwest, the David Taylor Scholarship at Seminary of the Southwest, the Pauli Murray Scholarship Fund at Seminary of the Southwest, the Thomas Cain Fund for Historic Black Churches, the Henrietta Wells Scholarship Fund for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), the John and Joseph Talbot Fund for Racial Justice, and the Episcopal Health Foundation Congregational Engagement. ■

Anglican Church of Canada launches podcast featuring indigenous voices

Anglican Communion News Service

The Anglican Church of Canada launched a podcast on Feb. 3 entitled "Sacred Teachings: Wisdom of the Land". The podcast is an eight-part series featuring indigenous speakers, who will share their insights, wisdom, traditions and stories about the sacredness of creation.

In a trailer for the podcast shared on Facebook, Ginny Doctor of the Mohawk Turtle Clan said that the series would explore the meaning and importance of the natural world to the First Peoples of the land. She said: "it is our responsibility to live in harmony and balance with all of creation. In this time, when young people across the globe are calling out for justice and for all of us to stop destroying our natural world. We offer to use some wisdom and reflections to inform and inspire the way forward."

The first episode features Archbishop Mark MacDonald, the National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop. He talks about St Francis of Assisi and reflects on the idea of being in communion with creation. Since 2007, MacDonald has served as pastoral leader to indigenous peoples in the Anglican Church of Canada.

The podcast initiative is a joint project between Indigenous Ministries and Anglican Video.

Indigenous Ministries supports the indigenous peoples of Canada — First Nations, Inuit, and Métis — spiritually, socially, economically and politically.

Their page on the Anglican Church of Canada's website says that "as active participants in the life of the church, we strive for reconciliation with the Anglican Communion and work towards Indigenous self-determination."

Anglican Video is part of the internal communications system of the Anglican Church of Canada. It produces video resources for parish and individual use, as well as producing documentaries on spiritual topics.

The podcast can be found on Vimeo, Spotify and Podbean. ■

NEWS

Ideas flourish at "Rooted in Jesus" gathering

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

As the Episcopal Church grapples with membership decline in a secular culture, the first "Rooted in Jesus" conference offered a chance to share innovative ideas, collaborate and celebrate.

Nearly 1,400 people attended the Jan. 21-24 gather in Atlanta, hosted by the Episcopal Church Foundation in partnership with the Episcopal Church and several other Episcopal organizations.

Dozens of presentations and workshops were offered by influential figures and groups from across the church on such topics as digital evangelism, civic engagement, environmental justice, liturgical renewal, preaching on current events and welcoming younger generations into the church.

The conference began with an address from the Rev. William Barber II, founder of the Moral Mondays movement and leader of the Poor People's Campaign, who warned of the moral dangers of worshipping God without a conscience that responds to the needs of one's neighbors.

After his speech, between 2,000 and 3,000 people packed the arena at Clark Atlanta University for a rousing revival service featuring choirs, multilingual prayers and testimonials, led by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

Attendees could hear presentations like "Lonely, Thirsty, Hungry People," in which Jerusalem Greer, the Episcopal Church's staff officer for evangelism, talked about the loneliness epidemic that is infiltrating every demographic group in American society and how churches are uniquely equipped to fight it.

Another presentation was titled "Evangelism for Shy People," in which the Rev. Frank Logue, Diocese of Georgia's bishop-elect and canon to the ordinary, offered tips for Episcopalians who don't feel comfortable talking about faith.

Participants also could attend panel discussions such as "Where Is the Modern Liturgical Movement Taking Us?" which addressed the meaning of liturgy in the 21st century and how liturgical revisions might make it more relevant, and small group sessions like "Queering the Church" and "Sacred Resistance in the Pulpit."

They could watch "Pitchtank," part of the TryTank innovation project from Virginia Theological Seminary and the General Theological Seminary. Styled after "Shark Tank" — the reality show in which entrepreneurs pitch business ideas to investors — the event featured several contestants pitching their ideas for innovative ministry projects to a panel of judges for the chance to win a partnership with TryTank and up to $5,000 to launch and run their experiment.

Attendees also got to experience the first preview of "Embracing Evangelism," a six-part evangelism video course developed by the Episcopal Church and Virginia Theological Seminary. The videos, which will be available to download this spring, offer new methods of spreading the teachings of The Episcopal Church, using group exercises and personal stories to demystify and unpack complex topics.

In addition to discussions of experimental and creative new modes of ministry, there were also workshops and lectures that focused on the immediate challenges of the church, such as "Discovering the Vitality in Small and Rural Churches" and "Preaching in the Era of Division," as well as lessons on the more practical elements of ministry, like how to schedule a program year, write grant applications and build an endowment.

Curry and Barber recorded a podcast episode live from one of the conference ballrooms. On one floor, attendees could experience the Sacred Space prayer room, an experiential worship space designed by Lilly Lewin with art installations, craft stations and views of Atlanta.

"I think what's really striking is just the sheer size of this conference — that this many people are excited enough to get on a plane or get in a car and come to Atlanta to talk about discipleship and evangelism and the church," said the Rev. Scott Gunn, the executive director of Forward Movement, one of the conference's sponsors. "It feels like the Episcopal Church has turned a real corner in the last few years and it's very exciting."

"It was good to see the community gathered, especially the lay community, to deepen our ministry experiences, and to meet each other, because we're from all across the church. And I think it's a model for how we can probably do General Convention, where we can combine a legislative agenda and programmatic agenda," said Annette Buchanan, former president of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

The conference closed with a packed Eucharist at nearby All Saints' Episcopal Church, during which the Rev. Mark Jefferson echoed one of the recurring themes of the conference: to truly be followers of Jesus, we must "get our hands dirty" and abandon our notions of "comfortable Christianity."

"We must understand that liberation in the context of oppression is embodied grace," Jefferson said, to shouts of "Amen!"

While there are no immediate plans to make Rooted in Jesus a recurring event, organizers have said it may be a possibility.

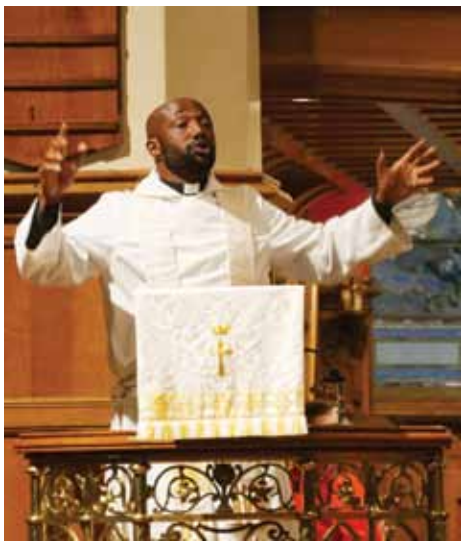
"Rooted in Jesus has been such a success," said Melissa Rau, senior program director of leadership for the Episcopal Church Foundation.

"But what will make it even more successful is if you're able to take all the great stuff that happened here over the last few days, resonate with it, think about it, really implement some of the stuff you learned, and move forward with it so that it will truly undergird what we're trying to do in this Jesus Movement we find ourselves in." ■

Photos/Egan Millard/Episcopal News Service

Above, participants talk in a small group session at the Rooted in Jesus conference.

Left, "Putting Feet on the Jesus Movement" was one of the dozens of presentations offered at the Rooted in Jesus conference.



Photos/Egan Millard/Episcopal News Service

The Rev. Mark Jefferson preaches and musicians lead the congregation in song during the closing Eucharist.

Photo/Jason Merritt

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, right, makes his selections for Lent Madness, the bracket-style tournament of saints developed by the Rev. Tim Schenck, center.

FEATURE

Florida Episcopalians lead efforts to remember victim of 1914 lynching

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Ala., which opened two years ago to honor more than 4,000 victims of lynchings in America, has become a popular destination for Episcopal racial reconciliation pilgrimages. Numerous congregations have organized trips, and the church's Executive Council visited the memorial in October 2019 during its meeting in Montgomery.

The Equal Justice Initiative, which created the national memorial, also has a program to encourage local efforts that increase the public's awareness of what the organization labels racial terror violence during the era of Jim Crow segregation. Parishioners from St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., are taking that next step.

"We were all moved by it, and a group of us decided we would take on this project," said Jacqueline Hubbard, a St. Augustine's member and retired lawyer.

St. Augustine's is a small, historically black congregation that has gradually grown more racially diverse. Its fall 2018 visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice partly inspired some parishioners' involvement in efforts to install a historical marker in St. Petersburg that will memorialize John Evans, a black laborer who in 1914 was hanged from a light pole in the city and murdered, as a mob of 1,500 white residents encouraged and celebrated his death.

Reports suggest he was able to keep himself alive by wrapping his legs around the light pole, until he was shot by people in the crowd. He had been accused by the crowd of killing a white employer despite little conclusive evidence tying him to the crime.

"In many cases these individuals were not given or allowed to experience a proper memorial," vestry member Andrew Walker said an interview with Episcopal News Service, adding, "the current narrative in a lot of places is a false notion that [lynching victims] did something wrong."

Photos/David Paulsen/ENS

The Alabama-based Equal Justice Initiative founded the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in April 2018 and encouraged counties to pursue local memorials for lynching victims.

A small group from the church formed the Community Remembrance Project Coalition in April 2019, and it now has 42 coalition partners, including a wide range of religious, historical and civic organizations. It meets twice a month at St. Augustine's to plan for an Evans historical marker.

Hubbard, who serves as co-chair, told ENS the coalition aims to install the marker by November on city-owned property at Ninth Street and Second Avenue, near where Evans was lynched on Nov. 12, 1914.

The killing of Evans was one of at least two lynchings in Pinellas County from 1877 to 1950, according to Equal Justice Initiative research. The nonprofit was founded by attorney Bryan Stevenson, whose book "Just Mercy" was turned into the movie of the same name released in December. Stevenson's organization documented more than 4,400 lynchings in 12 Southern states during those decades, and another 300 victims were identified in states outside the South.

"Terror lynchings were horrific acts of violence whose perpetrators were never held accountable. Indeed, some public spectacle lynchings were attended by the entire white community and conducted as celebratory acts of racial control and domination," Equal Justice Initiative says in its research report "Lynching in America."

Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative speaks to Executive Council members on Oct. 19, 2019, at Church of the Good Shepherd in Montgomery, Ala.

Even before the St. Augustine's parishioners' recent work, Episcopal leaders have taken a lead in bringing details of this brutal history to light, particularly in the Diocese of Atlanta. The diocese organized a pilgrimage in October 2016 to the historic site of a lynching in Macon, Ga., part of a three-year series of racial reconciliation events. And in 2017, St. Mark's Episcopal Church in LaGrange, Ga., supported local efforts to dedicate a historical marker remembering lynching victims.

Also in 2017, the Diocese of Tennessee held a Eucharistic service and memorial litany for three identified victims of lynchings in Davidson County and for others whose identities are lost to history. A memorial marker was dedicated at St. Anselm's Episcopal Church in Nashville.

Such efforts coincide with the Episcopal Church setting racial reconciliation as a top priority in recent years, and that work gathered steam in early February when the Diocese of Texas announced it was committing $13 million to racial justice projects and promotion of racial healing.

The Equal Justice Initiative has been building momentum in its campaign to tell the fuller story of the United States' legacy of racial injustice, violence and oppression. Its national prominence surged with the opening in April 2018 of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

On a hill overlooking downtown Montgomery, the memorial's series of steel columns hang in rows around a green square. Each column represents a county where the Equal Justice Initiative has confirmed at least one lynching occurred. The victims are listed on the columns.

"It is powerful when you see every county in the United States where lynchings occurred," said Walker, the St. Augustine's vestry member, who first visited the memorial soon after it opened.

In addition to the two lynchings the Equal Justice Initiative confirmed in Pinellas County, Hubbard said the coalition is investigating evidence of one or two possible others.

The coalition has budgeted about $25,000 for the project, with hopes that a pending donation will cover most of that cost. The coalition also is requesting about $10,000 from Equal Justice Initiative, partly to support a high school essay contest on racial justice. The nonprofit has engaged in similar collaborations with other communities, from Selma, Ala., to Wilmington, Del.

"They're committed to community development strategies and coalition strategies, to avoid conflict in doing this kind of work, because it is powerful work and it is challenging work," Walker said.

The Equal Justice Initiative also created duplicate columns at its memorial in Montgomery, one for each of the more than 800 counties, and it has invited each county to claim and display its column as an act of confronting, acknowledging and remembering its history.

Few counties have done so yet, but Hubbard said that is one possible next step for the St. Petersburg coalition, after it installs the Evans marker. ■

FEATURE

New Orleans church, home to 'murder board,' eyes new tribute to victims

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Though far from a good year, 2019 was a statistically better year for New Orleans: The city recorded 119 homicides, the fewest in nearly 50 years, further distancing itself from its reputation just a decade ago as the unofficial "murder capital" of the United States.

But the recent decrease in deaths has not alleviated the human toll that violence, particularly gun violence, takes each year on the people of New Orleans. They still are murdered at a higher rate than residents of all but three other major U.S. cities. Their deaths still leave holes in the lives of surviving loved ones and the community.

And their names continue to be added to the "murder board" at St. Anna's Episcopal Church. Since 2007, the congregation has maintained and updated this memorial list outside the church in the city's Tremé neighborhood just north of the French Quarter. The memorial now contains more than a thousand names of people killed in and near the city, and even with homicides decreasing, more than 100 new names are posted each year.

"That's still an intolerable amount," the Rev. Bill Terry, rector of St. Anna's, told Episcopal News Service by phone. "We have a large part of our community that lives in a deep longing and a deep and profound sadness," he said, and the church's lament for that loss of life transcends any public policy success extolled by government leaders.

The permanent memorial at St. Anna's, covering a fence next to the church, lists each victim's name, age, date of death and method — "shot" is the most common — but it only covers 2007 to 2012 because the congregation ran out of room on the fence. So, the current year's homicide victims are written in marker on a separate board attached to a nearby church wall. The congregation envisions a new memorial large enough to commemorate all the victims, by representing them as a sky full of stars on the ceiling inside the church.

Joel Dyer calls it "Stargazers." He is the local artist who came up with the idea for the new memorial and now is trying to raise money to install it at St. Anna's, where he has been a parishioner for most of the past decade. The ceiling of the nave and sanctuary would be painted blue, and 2 1/2-inch gold stars would be arranged in a grid, with enough estimated room to memorialize up to 5,000 murder victims.

"I thought 'Stargazers' would imply a little hope," Dyer, 74, said in an interview with ENS, adding, "our hope is to keep our kids off that ceiling."

One star will shine particularly bright in the eyes of this diverse congregation on Esplanade Avenue. Robert Atkins, 21 years old when he was shot and killed on Oct. 20, 2016, grew up attending the church and had served as an acolyte since he was 5 — a "perfect little boy," his mother, Althea Atkins-McCall, remembered in a phone interview.

The connection between her family and St. Anna's goes beyond a name on a memorial. "It's a little deeper for me because we actually were very much involved in the church," Atkins-McCall said, and though she now lives in Louisiana's capital city of Baton Rouge, she still has "just a great appreciation for the level of commitment that Father Terry has for the community and the members of his church."

Atkins' murder remains unsolved, and his mother is grateful for ways "of keeping my son's name alive." Though his killing was too recent to be included on the permanent list at St. Anna's, Atkins-McCall donated a bench in his name that was installed next to the sidewalk in front of the church memorial, so anyone who visits can sit in contemplation and remembrance.

Terry had only been rector at St. Anna's a couple of years when Hurricane Katrina dealt a devastating blow to New Orleans in 2005. Once a city of nearly 500,000 people, New Orleans lost more than half its population in Katrina's aftermath as it struggled with recovery efforts, but the number of homicides remained high. When murders reached 209 in 2007, the city's estimated per capita murder rate topped that of any other major American city.

Early in 2007, thousands of people marched in New Orleans to protest the killings and what they saw as public officials' inadequate response. After the march, Terry began talking to a deacon about what St. Anna's could do. They came up with the idea of publicly naming each of the victims, and "we've really been doing that ever since," Terry said.

In addition to writing the names on a display outside the church, St. Anna's began incorporating a reading of the latest victims' names into Sunday services, which typically draw about 120 worshippers. Church staff members scour local media outlets each week for reports of killings and follow up with authorities to obtain information about the victims.

Other churches asked to receive the names compiled by St. Anna's, and now the lists are sent out every week by email. They include people killed outside the city limits, in communities that are part of greater New Orleans.

The church is "literally on the border between two worlds," Terry said, between some of the city's wealthiest neighborhoods and those struggling with deep poverty. That intersection is reflected in the congregation, which Terry said includes parishioners from a mix of backgrounds, many of them middle-class or low-income residents.

Photo/David Paulsen/ENS

Photo, right/Luigi Mandile

St. Anna's Episcopal Church in the Tremé neighborhood of New Orleans, has posted the names of the city's homicide victims on a wall outside the church.

Artist Joel Dyer, a parishioner at St. Anna's Episcopal Church, sketched the design on the left for a future Stargazers' tribute to murder victims, which would be displayed on the ceiling of the church, shown in the photo on the right.

Crime is driven by a range of factors, and fluctuations in crime rates defy easy explanations. Terry, though, noted that extreme poverty, an affordable housing shortage and limited job opportunities continue to plague New Orleans, and the local black community, which had made up a significant majority of city residents, has been greatly diminished since Katrina.

The church regularly gets visitors to the homicide memorial. Terry recalls a police sergeant who spent about 15 minutes one day looking over the names before approaching the rector in tears: "I saw four of my high school friends on your murder board," he said.

Mere numbers can dehumanize crime victims, Terry said, and "most of these people live in poverty. They have no memorials." He thinks simply sharing their names is a step toward giving them some dignity in death, though the congregation doesn't stop there. St. Anna's also supports neighborhood children and their families through its Anna's Place program, and it is raising money now for an ambitious expansion of those efforts called the Dodwell House.

"The 'murder board' is a memorial. It's a public spiritual statement to the world that life maters. But that's not good enough," Terry said. "We have to become disrupters in cycles of violence, so the Gospel begins to take shape in the community."

As the "murder board" grew to include more than a thousand names, the list stretched across the church's fence, eventually running out of room. Terry said one option the congregation is considering is to reinstall the permanent memorial so it is configured to fit nearly 3,000 names, but that still would only hold the names of victims through 2017. The longer-term solution is the Stargazers project.

The ceiling of the church is large enough to accommodate stars for all the victims since 2007. Plans also include a computer kiosk, so visitors can search victims' names and find where on the ceiling each victim's memorial star is displayed.

And there will be room for the memorial to expand as more residents of the New Orleans area succumb to deadly violence.

"It can be discouraging because it's so common," Atkins-McCall said.

Her family was fortunate in many ways. She and her family immigrated to the United States from Guyana in 1989 and settled in New Orleans, where her mother made sure they attended church, first at Christ Church Cathedral and then at St. Anna's.

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

The power of a song in a strange land

By Donna M. Cox

From the moment of capture, through the treacherous middle passage, after the final sale and throughout life in North America, the experience of enslaved Africans who first arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, some 400 years ago, was characterized by loss, terror and abuse.

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 made it illegal to buy and sell people in British colonies, but in the independent United States slavery remained a prominent — and legal — practice until December 1865. From this tragic backdrop one of the most poignant American musical genres, the Negro spiritual, was birthed.

Sometimes called slave songs, jubilees and sorrow songs, spirituals were created out of, and spoke directly to, the black experience in America prior to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, that declared all slaves free.

Spirituals have been a part of my life from childhood. In small churches in Virginia and North Carolina, we sang the songs of our ancestors, drawing strength and hope. I went on to study, perform and teach the spiritual for over 40 years to people across the U.S. and in various parts of the world.

Despite attempts, white slave-owners could not strip Africans of their culture. Even with a new language, English, and without familiar instruments, the enslaved people turned the peculiarities of African musical expressions into the African American sound.

Photo/James Wallace Black/American Missionary Association

A studio group portrait of the Fisk University Jubilee singers, circa 1870s.

Rhythms were complex and marked by syncopation, an accent on the weak beat. Call-and-response, a technique rooted in sub-Saharan West African culture, was frequently employed in spirituals. Call-and-response is very much like a conversation — the leader makes a statement or asks a question and others answer or expound.

An example of this is the spiritual, Certainly Lord. The leader excitedly queries, "Have you got good religion?" and others jubilantly respond, "Certainly, Lord." Using repetition and improvisation, the conversation continues to build until everyone exclaims, "certainly, certainly, certainly, Lord!"

In Africa, drums were used to communicate from village to village because they could be used to mimic the inflection of voices.

As early as 1739 in the British colonies, drums were prohibited by law and characterized as weapons in an attempt to prevent slaves from building community and inciting rebellion.

As a result, enslaved people "played" drum patterns on the body. Hands clapped, feet stomped, bodies swayed and mouths provided sophisticated rhythmic patterns. This can be observed in Hambone, an example of improvised body music.

Photo/Fisk University Library via Wikimedia Commons

Ella Sheppard was a singer, pianist, arranger of Negro spirituals, and matriarch of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Some spirituals were derived from African melodies. Others were "new," freely composed songs with a melodic phrase borrowed from here and a rhythmic pattern from there — all combined to create an highly improvised form.

The spiritual was deeply rooted in the oral tradition and often created spontaneously, one person starting a tune and another joining until a new song was added to the community repertoire. The sophisticated result was beautifully described in 1862 by Philadelphia musicologist and piano teacher Lucy McKim Garrison.

"It is difficult to express the entire character of these negro ballads by mere musical notes and signs," she said. "The odd turns made in the throat; the curious rhythmic effect produced by single voices chiming in at different irregular intervals, seem almost as impossible to place on score."

Textually, the spiritual drew from the Hebrew-Christian Bible, particularly the Old Testament, with its stories of deliverance and liberation. Songs like "Go Down Moses" direct the awaited deliverer to "go down" to Southern plantations and "tell ole Pharaoh" — the masters — to "let my people go."

For the slaves, the spiritual proved to be an ingenious tool used to counter senseless brutality and the denial of personhood. In order to survive emotionally, resilience was critical. In the spirituals, slaves sang out their struggle, weariness, loneliness, sorrow, hope and determination for a new and better life.

Yet these are not songs of anger. They are songs of survival that voice an unwavering belief in their own humanity and attest to an abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of good over systemic evil.

Interspersed within these seemingly hopeless texts are phrases that reflect the heart's hope: the words "true believer" amid the acknowledgment that "sometimes I feel like a motherless child," for example; and "glory, hallelujah" interjected after the text, "nobody knows the trouble I see."

Songs declaring, "I've got a crown up in a dat kingdom. Ain't a dat good news" proclaimed the certainty of a future hope totally unlike the day-to-day reality of enslavement.

People whose every movement was dictated audaciously declared, "I've got shoes. You've got shoes. All God's children got shoes. When I get to heaven gonna put on my shoes, gonna walk all over God's heaven." In the same song they denounced the hypocrisy of the slaveholders' religion: "Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain't going there."

Spirituals weren't simply religious music. In his seminal work, "Narrative Of The Life of Frederick Douglass An American Slave," published in 1845, the abolitionist explains, "they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains."

The spirituals were also acts of rebellion. They were used to organize clandestine meetings, and announce activities of the Underground Railroad. For example, songs like "Great Camp Meeting," were used to announce when secret gatherings were being planned.

The spiritual served as a mediator between the dissonance of oppression and the belief that there was "a bright side somewhere."

Four hundred years after the birth of slavery, as the world still struggles with racial division, injustice and a sense of hopelessness, spirituals can teach how to build hope in the face of despair and challenge the status quo. ■

Donna M. Cox is professor of music at the University of Dayton in Ohio. The article was previously published at The Conversation, ***www.theconversation.com****.*

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"We had this very strong Christian-based upbringing," she said, and she instilled the same in her son, who was born in 1995.

Robert Atkins was "everything you wanted in a kid," she said, but tragedy struck early in his life. His father, who had been Atkins-McCall's high school sweetheart, was shot and killed a few months after their son's first birthday.

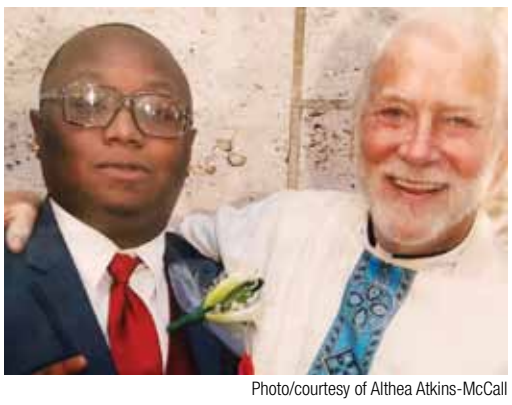
Despite that loss, Robert grew into a gifted student who loved art and football, his mother said, and St. Anna's "became home and became part of our family."

Atkins was taking a break from college in 2016 and working an overnight security job when he was murdered. He would call his mother after getting home from his shift, and when he didn't call that morning, she grew worried. Later that day, she learned from his girlfriend that he had been shot in a car, pushed into the street and left for dead.

The killing was all the more jarring because it came at a time of celebration: Less than two weeks earlier, Robert Atkins had been all smiles while attending his mother's wedding at St. Anna's. Terry, who presided at the wedding, later led a candlelight vigil with the family at the scene of Atkins' murder.

Atkins-McCall still holds out hope that police will find who killed her son, and she sometimes checks in with investigators, to see if they have any new information and to remind them that she still wants answers.

When she gets discouraged, she looks back on her son's last Instagram post, which she said seemed both to foreshadow his death and to show that his faith remained strong. The photo appeared to be of a page from a Christian devotional, leading with the sentence, "You are on the right path."



Photo/courtesy of Althea Atkins-McCall

Robert Atkins, left, poses for a photo with the Rev. Bill Terry at St. Anna's Episcopal Church.

"I'm behind you Lord!" Atkins wrote in the post. "You gotta trust him and trust yourself. Your time is NEAR."

"He was an awesome kid," Atkins-McCall said. "Whatever God placed him here to do, it was accomplished." ■

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Faith made Harriet Tubman fearless as she rescued slaves

A "carte-de-visite" photograph shows a young Harriet Tubman seated in an interior room. The photo dates from approximately 1868-69 and is jointly owned by the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Library of Congress.

Photo/Benjamin F. Powelson via Wikimedia Commons

By Robert Gudmestad

Millions of people voted in an online poll in 2015 to have the face of Harriet Tubman on the US$20 bill. But many might not have known the story of her life as chronicled in a recent film, "Harriet."

Harriet Tubman worked as a slave, spy and eventually as an abolitionist. What I find most fascinating, as a historian of American slavery, is how belief in God helped Tubman remain fearless, even when she came face to face with many challenges.

Tubman was born Araminta Ross in 1822 on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. When interviewed later in life, Tubman said she started working when she was five as a house maid. She recalled that she endured whippings, starvation and hard work even before she got to her teenage years.

She labored in Maryland's tobacco fields, but things started to change when farmers switched their main crop to wheat. Grain required less labor, so slave owners began to sell their enslaved people to plantation owners in the the Deep South.

Two of Tubman's sisters were sold to a slave trader. One had to leave her child behind. Tubman too lived in fear of being sold.

When she was 22, Tubman married a free black man named John Tubman. For reasons that are unclear, she changed her name, taking her mother's first name and her husband's last name. Her marriage did not change her status as an enslaved person.

Five years later, rumors circulated in the slave community that slave traders were once again prowling through the Eastern Shore. Tubman decided to seize her freedom rather than face the terror of being chained with other slaves to be carried away, often referred to as the "chain gang."

Tubman stole into the woods and, with the help of some members of the Underground Railroad, walked the 90 miles to Philadelphia where slavery was illegal. The Underground Railroad was a loose network of African Americans and whites who helped fugitive slaves escape to a free state or to Canada. Tubman began working with William Still, an African American clerk from Philadelphia, who helped slaves find freedom.

Tubman led about a dozen rescue missions that freed about 60 to 80 people. She normally rescued people in the winter, when the long dark nights provided cover, and she often adopted some type of disguise. Even though she was the only "conductor" on rescue missions, she depended on a few houses connected with the Underground Railroad for shelter. She never lost a person escaping with her and won the nickname of Moses for leading so many people to "the promised land," or freedom.

Photos/Courtesy of Focus Features

"Harriet" features the life of activist and abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

Above, Cynthia Erivo stars as Harriet Tubman in the film "Harriet." This year, Erivo was nominated for Oscars in the categories of Best Actress and Best Original Song. She wrote the lyrics to "Stand Up."

Left, Erivo as Tubman kneels in prayer in a scene.

After the Civil War began, Tubman volunteered to serve as a spy and scout for the Union Army. She ended up in South Carolina, where she helped lead a military mission up the Combahee River. Located about halfway between Savannah, Ga., and Charleston, S.C., the river was lined with a number of valuable plantations that the Union Army wanted to destroy.

Tubman helped guide three Union steamboats around Confederate mines and then helped about 750 enslaved people escape with the Federal troops.

She was the only woman to lead men into combat during the Civil War. After the war, she moved to New York and was active in campaigning for equal rights for women. She passed away at the age of 90.

Tubman's Christian faith tied all of these remarkable achievements together.

She grew up during the Second Great Awakening, which was a Protestant religious revival in the United States. Preachers took the gospel of evangelical Christianity from place to place, and church membership flourished. Christians at this time believed that they needed to reform America in order to usher in Christ's second coming.

A number of black female preachers preached the message of revival and sanctification on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Jarena Lee was the first authorized female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is not clear if Tubman attended any of Lee's camp meetings, but she was inspired by the evangelist. She came to understand that women could hold religious authority.

Historian Kate Clifford Larson believes that Tubman drew from a variety of Christian denominations, including the African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist and Catholic beliefs. Like many enslaved people, her belief system fused Christian and African beliefs.

Her belief that there was no separation between the physical and spiritual worlds was a direct result of African religious practices. Tubman literally believed that she moved between a physical existence and a spiritual experience where she sometimes flew over the land.

An enslaved person who trusted Tubman to help him escape simply noted that Tubman had "de charm," or God's protection. Charms or amulets were strongly associated with African religious beliefs.

A horrific accident is believed to have brought Tubman closer to God and reinforced her Christian worldview. Sarah Bradford, a 19th-century writer who conducted interviews with Tubman and several of her associates, found the deep role faith played in her life.

When she was a teenager, Tubman happened to be at a dry goods store when an overseer was trying to capture an enslaved person who had left his slave labor camp without permission. The angry man threw a two-pound weight at the runaway but hit Tubman instead, crushing part of her skull. For two days she lingered between life and death.

The injury almost certainly gave her temporal lobe epilepsy. As a result, she would have splitting headaches, fall asleep without notice, even during conversations, and have dreamlike trances.

As Bradford documents, Tubman believed that her trances and visions were God's revelation and evidence of his direct involvement in her life. One abolitionist told Bradford that Tubman "talked with God, and he talked with her every day of her life."

According to Larson, this confidence in providential guidance and protection helped make Tubman fearless. Standing only five feet tall, she had an air of authority that demanded respect.

Once Tubman told Bradford that when she was leading two "stout" men to freedom, she believed that "God told her to stop" and leave the road. She led the scared and reluctant men through an icy stream — and to freedom.

Harriet Tubman once said that slavery was "the next thing to hell." She helped many transcend that hell. ■

Robert Gudmestad is professor and chair of the history department at Colorado State University. The article was previously published at The Conversation, ***www.theconversation.com****.*

FAITH AND THE ARTS

Filmmaking ministry with Episcopal roots tells stories of faith journeys

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

As an Episcopalian, Brian Ide has been fixated recently on the passage in the New Testament that describes the brief period — estimated to have been about 10 days — between Jesus' ascension and the Pentecost, during which the apostles were alone and uncertain about their path forward, praying together in "a room upstairs" in Jerusalem.

As a filmmaker, Ide wants to share that story and its spiritual implications with movie audiences. The tentative title of his film-to-be: "The Upper Room."

"We can see ourselves in those unique 10 days," Ide told ENS by phone. "It's that challenge of stepping into faith, even when we're burdened by fear and uncertainty."

Ide, a member of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills, Calif., drew on his career as a movie director to help form a ministry at the church with other parishioners who work in the Hollywood film industry.

In 2018, their efforts culminated in "This Day Forward," a feature-length film about an Iowa family's struggles with cancer and faith, for which they took a grassroots approach to finding audiences, hosting individual showings at theaters and churches around the country.

For "The Upper Room," Ide envisions something bigger, both for the movie and the underlying ministry. His filmmaking team traveled to the Holy Land last year to flesh out a story for the new movie, for which they are budgeting nearly $3 million, with hopes for a wider theatrical release. And Ide has overseen the creation of Grace Based Films, a nonprofit with a long-term plan for turning spiritually rich stories into thought-provoking movies.

"I can't wait to see how it all comes out," said the Rev. Anne Mallonee, who serves as chief ecclesiastical officer at Church Pension Group. Mallonee was among a handful of clergy members who joined the filmmakers on their Holy Land trip last July. She said in an interview with ENS that Ide's energetic work mirrors a trend she has noticed: lay Christians finding creative ways of putting their talents and abilities in service of "the ministry that comes from being baptized."

"The Spirit really does seem to be inspiring all kinds of people to be thinking in terms of mission," she said.

That inspiration was evident in "This Day Forward," which is heading toward an official release June 1 on streaming services and DVD. The movie was backed by donations, and Ide and his team from All Saints' kept the production on a modest scale.

"We didn't have the resources of a big studio to just throw money at it. Instead, it was just sweat equity for us," Ide said.

They worked hard not just making the movie, but also promoting it during a 53-city tour in fall 2018. Ide estimates he and his team drove 17,000 miles to introduce the movie to audiences, and they embarked on another limited tour with the film last year through south Australia.

Photo/The Upper Room, via Facebook

Director Brian Ide, left, and cinematographer, Kyle Ramsey Moe discuss production design ideas while looking at a first-century model of Jerusalem.

The filmmakers have planned a few additional showings of "This Day Forward" in the coming months, prior to its digital release, and with this distribution deal, Ide thinks the movie "will have a long life, which is great."

His primary focus, meanwhile, has shifted to development of "The Upper Room." The initial idea came to Ide while he was with a group from All Saints' on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Toward the end of the trip, he started thinking about how the experience might shape his next film project, and he was particularly intrigued by a passage in the first chapter of Acts of the Apostles: "When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying."

The chapter continues by relaying that, after Jesus ascended to heaven, his apostles "were constantly devoting themselves to prayer," but they had yet to receive the Holy Spirit and begin their ministry in the world.

"You can't help but imagine that there would be a range of emotions, of fear and anticipation and imagination," Ide said.

He began sketching narrative outlines for a possible script, and in April 2019, Virginia Theological Seminary hosted a kind of theological focus group for Ide and his fellow filmmakers that provided them with input from Mallonee, the seminary's dean, the Rev. Ian Markham, and a range of other Episcopal leaders.

With that group's encouragement, Ide recruited Mallonee and a few others to join his filmmaking team on their own trip to the Holy Land, with the goal of developing ideas and supplying inspiration, accuracy and depth to the ultimate work of the writer and filmmakers.

It was Mallonee's first trip to the Holy Land, and she said she was particularly moved by the group's visit to an archeological dig where researchers were uncovering a temple where Jesus was believed to have taught.

"It helped to envision life there," she said, and she also felt a direct connection between past and present. "Jesus is here, God is here, we are here. God's love is here now, and we're a part of it. It was really powerful."

The Rev. Greg Millikin, rector at Grace Episcopal Church in New Lenox, Ill., also joined the pilgrimage, his second to the Holy Land, and he described it as different from the overly-scheduled tours that many pilgrims experience. This was more contemplative, particularly during the two days they spent in the garden of Gethsemane, he said.

"It really kind of zaps you back 2,000 years, and you can feel it," he said.

Millikin has known Ide for about 20 years, since both attended All Saints' in Beverly Hills, and Millikin has professional roots in the film business. He worked in studio marketing for 10 years before leaving his job in 2012 to attend Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 2016 and has served at Grace Episcopal Church for two years.

Now, as an informal adviser on "The Upper Room," he sees himself as part of Ide's theological "think tank," and he thinks Ide's story is mining fertile spiritual ground. "What does it mean for these disciples to have a leader leave, and that they have to kind of find a voice amongst them or some kind of direction or path forward that would end up becoming the church?"

While Grace Based Films is raising the money needed to turn "The Upper Room" into a high-caliber professional production, the writer on Ide's team, Nick Schober, is working on finalizing a script that will draw on the pilgrimage experience and input from participants. Half of the movie will be set in the apostles' time, and the other half will be set in the present, though all of it will be filmed on sets in the United States, due to the prohibitive costs of shooting in the Holy Land, Ide said.

He would like to begin filming this year if the financing comes through by then. The film's success would enable more projects like it.

Churches of all denominations supported "This Day Forward," and Ide's nonprofit film company will continue to take an ecumenical approach to its mission. He sees a receptive audience in "people that are really hungry for honest stories about faith journeys." ■

Friends of Jerusalem diocese set Easter appeal

American Friends - individuals and church communities — of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem are invited to take part in an Easter Appeal to support the ministry of Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City and the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, which treats children with disabilities.

The appeal is sponsored by the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (AFEDJ).

Bishop Greg Rickel of the Diocese of Olympia (Wash.), chair of the AFEDJ board of trustees, wrote, "As we turn our eyes to Jerusalem during Holy Week and Easter, please join me and the churches of Western Washington in support of Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza and Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre. Together we can reach our Easter Appeal 2020 goal of $100,000 in support of these remarkable Episcopal ministries in the Holy Land."

Parishes may make a church-wide appeal to members, choose to donate the offering from an Easter service, or offer a gift through an outreach program.

Downloadable resources for the Easter Appeal 2020 such as a brochure, story cards, a bulletin insert, a letter from Rickel and videos from Jerusalem and Gaza are available at **www.afedj.org/easter**.

— AFEDJ

OPINION

Forty days (and more) without plastic

By Linda Brooks

IN THE PAST, I usually didn't give up anything for Lent mainly because of what I heard other people giving up — Facebook, favorite TV shows, cigarettes, beer. Somehow giving up what could be considered a "luxury" of our modern life didn't seem to make much sense in the way of sacrifice and soul-searching.

But last year was different. It seemed like the whole world was on fire and there was nothing I could do as one individual that would make any difference. Then I came across a news item stating that in 2018, the Archbishop of Canterbury asked Anglicans to give up plastic for Lent. Last year, many Episcopal dioceses did the same. I eagerly joined in.

I thought it would be easy. In our household we were already carrying our own reusable grocery bags to the farmers' market, reusing vegetable plastic bags, and recycling. So I was prepared to be just a little more aware whenever I purchased something. Aware yes. Easy, not so much.

I found I would have to loudly announce to supermarket cashiers that I had my own bags or they automatically started filling up the plastic ones. Over time I boldly inquired why they didn't ask first if a customer had their own bags before they started. The answer was disturbing — most customers would be annoyed or insulted.

Sharing the message with friends that I was giving up plastic for Lent was met with enthusiasm. Most agreed it was a good idea but thought it too difficult. I was suddenly aware that almost every item that can be purchased involves plastic wrapping or containers. Some could be avoided, but not all.

Not deterred, I continued my search for plastic-free items, choosing paper-wrapped items over plastic or not purchasing some items at all.

Vegetables can be bought in bulk, not wrapped. Milk can still be found in glass bottles and eggs in paper containers. At the farmers' market, the returned containers are appreciated. On the Internet, there were endless suggestions for purchasing non-plastic wrapped items (more things we don't need).

Helpful tips for household cleaners made from everyday items helped eliminate many under the sink counter purchases. Vinegar, lemon juice, baking soda are not just for cooking. Petitions to manufacturers to cut back on plastic usage appeared in my email inbox.

Forty days became 90 days and has continued. Not purchasing anything wrapped in plastic has become our normal routine. But after a year I have become a little lax. So Lent is upon us again and I will re-pledge myself to doing more. This year it will be a little easier. Beginning the first of March here in New York, no plastic bags will be given away at markets. It is a start.

I have learned a great deal from my small experiment last year of trying to do something for Lent I felt was important to myself and the world around me — that even a little change can make a big difference over time.

The decisions we make, no matter how seemingly insignificant, can over time change the way we think and how we relate to others. Nothing should be taken for granted. I believe that is what our faith teaches us.

Our weekly garbage now consists of a small bag of mostly non-recycle plastics and ice cream containers. I have to work on that. Maybe this year I should give up ice cream for Lent too. ■

Linda Brooks is Episcopal Journal's art director.

Church of England sets carbon target for 2030

Anglican Communion News Service

The Church of England's General Synod has set new targets for all parts of the church to work to become carbon "net zero" by 2030.

At its February 2020 meeting, members voted in favor of a revised date encouraging all parts of the Church of England to take action and ramp-up efforts to reduce emissions.

A motion approved today called for urgent steps to examine requirements to reach the new target, and draw up an action plan.

An amendment by Martin Gainsborough (Bristol) introduced a more ambitious target date of 2030, 15 years ahead of the original proposal.

The motion follows the launch of the Church of England's first-ever Green Lent (#LiveLent) campaign for 2020, featuring 40 days of prayers and actions to encourage care for God's Creation.

The Church of England has also announced an appliance-style footprinting tool for parishes to calculate their carbon footprint.

Following the debate, Bishop of Salisbury Nick Holtam, the Church of England's lead bishop for the Environment said:

"Synod has set an ambitious target for the whole Church of England to respond to the urgency of the climate crisis.

"To reach synod's target of 2030 we will each need to hear this as an urgent call to action, but I am encouraged by the statement of intent this makes across the church, and wider society about our determination to tackle climate change, and safeguard God's creation.

"This is a social justice issue, which affects the world's poorest soonest and most severely, and if the church is to hold others to account, we have to get our own house in order.

"There is no serious doubt that climate change is happening, and that people are causing it, so it is very encouraging that synod is grappling with the most urgent issues of our time."

The final motion approved was as follows:

That this Synod, recognizing that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the call of the Anglican Communion in ACC Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06;

(a) call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs [Bishop Mission Orders], education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals, and the NCIs [National Church Institutions], to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target;

(b) request reports on progress from the Environment Working Group and the NCI's every three years beginning in 2022 and;

(c) call on each Diocesan Synod, and cathedral Chapter, to address progress toward net zero emissions every three years. ■

FEATURE

Offering free legal aid, Pennsylvania attorney visits Episcopal churches

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The individuals and families who visit the weekly food pantry at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral in the Diocese of Pennsylvania — usually about 150 households, according to Dean Judith Sullivan — know if they come hungry on a Monday morning, they can leave with an assortment of canned goods, fresh produce and frozen meats to help get them through the week.

The food pantry has been a ministry of the cathedral for years, but in recent months, participants have been able to take advantage of one additional benefit: free legal assistance, courtesy of Steve Chawaga, a local attorney and the founder of Episcopal Legal Aid.

Chawaga launched the nonprofit in November as a ministry of the diocese and serves in a paid position as its executive director. In Episcopal Legal Aid's first two months, he counseled 54 clients on civil law questions during his 10 clinics held at the cathedral and a handful of other Episcopal churches around the Philadelphia area. He estimates about half of the questions relate to landlord-tenant disputes or property matters, such as setting up wills, while the other half cover a range of topics, from immigration issues to personal injury incidents.

Photo/courtesy of Steve Chawaga

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral serves about 150 households at its weekly food pantry. Steve Chawaga sets up his legal aid clinic in the space one Monday a month.

"They're not life-or-death questions, but they're questions that they're not going to find another lawyer to answer," Chawaga said in an interview with Episcopal News Service.

That's because many people of moderate means who would benefit from meeting with an attorney either can't afford one or don't have the time to look for one, Chawaga said. Other social service organizations offer pro bono legal assistance, but he sees Episcopal Legal Aid as unique in leveraging church gatherings to reach people where they already are.

"People come in for other services and supports and find out that he's there, and they have been very appreciative," said Sullivan, who also chairs the nonprofit board of Episcopal Legal Aid. She thinks Chawaga's ministry fits naturally with the cathedral's broader mission of serving the community in a variety of ways, such as through clothing drives and medical checkups.

"We have this beautiful intersection with the values of our faith, with our way of love, with our way of sharing the Gospel in this world and caring for every seeking soul, loving our neighbors as ourselves, seeing Christ in one another," she told ENS.

Chawaga began forming the idea of a service like Episcopal Legal Aid when he was turning 60 and planning to step away from a career in corporate law. "If I want to do something else, I better get going," he told himself.

And that something else became clearer to him at the November 2018 convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, for which he has long served as parliamentarian. Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez, while rallying the diocese behind the theme "Know Jesus, Change the World," urged congregations to find ways of putting their church buildings to use serving their communities on the other six days of the week.

Chawaga thought free legal aid might fit that calling, and after the convention, he spoke to Gutiérrez about the idea. The bishop's response: Why not give it a try?

"He has got this deep and faithful heart," Gutiérrez said in an interview. "He started digging the ground and planted some seeds."

The diocese agreed to provide some startup funds, about $20,000, and it hopes soon to provide some space in a diocesan building, mainly for storage and administrative functions — not for welcoming clients, since Chawaga's consultations are offered not in an office but in the community, at churches.

Chawaga grew up attending Church of Saint Asaph in the Philadelphia suburb of Bala Cynwyd, where he still is a parishioner. As the diocese's parliamentarian, he knows many of its clergy leaders and is familiar with some of their outreach efforts and regular community events. When he pays a visit, the churches may promote his services in advance, but his main tactic for courting new clients is to set up a table at the event and invite anyone with questions to take a seat with him.

Photo/courtesy of Steve Chawaga

Attorney Steve Chawaga, executive director of Episcopal Legal Aid, greets a client during his free clinic at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

For one recent outing, Chawaga traveled to St. James the Greater Episcopal Church in Bristol, Pa., which he described as "an old industrial town, very modest economic means" across the Delaware River from New Jersey. The church holds a free dinner once a month for anyone who needs a meal, and he said it sometimes draws people who live in a nearby tent encampment.

Since this was Chawaga's first time visiting the St. James dinner, he figured he would just introduce himself and describe his services to the 60 or so guests, and then let them know he'd be back the following month to set up his legal aid clinic.

"And then these hands started going up," he said.

Someone had a dispute with the Internal Revenue Service. Someone else had a question about setting up wills for herself and her husband. One woman said she was having problems with her doctor but her insurance company was no help. A man told Chawaga he was facing a noise complaint at his apartment but he wasn't to blame.

Some of the questions could be answered easily that night, while others required follow-up work.

"By the time I left, I had taken on four new clients," he said.

Because his former corporate job involved general litigation, Chawaga said he has a broad base of civil law knowledge, though for certain issues that he can't handle himself, he will refer those clients to another lawyer with the appropriate specialty, such as immigration law or housing law. Either way, making that initial contact with his clients is a key advantage of the church-based clinics.

Chawaga, as executive director, is Episcopal Legal Aid's only paid staff member. As the ministry grows, he may look to hire someone to provide administrative help, though the more substantive growth will involve scheduling more clinics at church events where people who are struggling on society's margins gather.

"If they have to go across the street, let alone another town, they won't ask," he said. "I'm having beef stew with them and not occupying an office and asking folks to come find me." ■

Bishop's son deported to El Salvador

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The son of the Anglican bishop of El Salvador, who fled to the United States after being kidnapped and threatened in his home country, has been deported there, according to his father.

Josue Alvarado Guerra, 34, was detained in November by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Alvarado Guerra filed a petition for asylum but was denied and was sent back to El Salvador on Jan. 28.

Bishop David Alvarado of the Diocese of El Salvador, which is part of the Anglican Church of Central America, said his son had to flee El Salvador because his life was in danger. He had been working as a taxi driver in Colón, just northwest of San Salvador, one of the most dangerous cities in a country with the world's highest homicide rate. Alvarado Guerra was "threatened, kidnapped and persecuted by one of the largest gangs operating in the country" and forced to drive them around, according to his father.

In a letter to Ohio Bishop Mark Hollingsworth Jr. and others who have offered support, which his office shared with ENS, Alvarado expressed fear, gratitude and happiness at his son's return to El Salvador. He added that the danger to his son's life is so great that he is still trying to make arrangements for him to live in another country.

"We thank the God of life for allowing us to have Josue back in our house and share with him the difficult experiences he lived in detention," Alvarado wrote. "Josue definitely can't be safe anywhere in El Salvador, we fear for his life. … We want to continue with the plans to get him out of the country as soon as possible."

Alvarado said his family is looking into requesting asylum for his son in Canada and has been in contact with the Rev. Charles Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond the Episcopal Church. However, Robertson told ENS that Alvarado Guerra faces an uphill battle in seeking asylum in Canada after being denied in the U.S.

Alvarado is also examining the possibility of getting a missionary visa for his son to do reconstruction work in the Bahamas. ■