Episcopal JOURNAL

10th ANNIVERSARY

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*Episcopal churches and schools have made numerous changes in ministry and worship, responding to COVID-19. Episcopal Journal presents a roundup of news to date, however, for immediate updates check **www.episcopalnewsservice.org**. For authoritative information on the pandemic, go to **www.cdc.gov** and **www.who.int**.*

As COVID-19 surges, Episcopal churches take various approachs to online worship, fellowship

ENS Staff
Episcopal News Service

More than three months into the COVID-19 pandemic, with cases surging in some parts of the United States, Episcopal churches continue to take different approaches to in-person parish activities based on the number of cases in their communities and the guidance of local, state and federal health officials.

In the U.S., COVID-19 cases have topped 2.5 million and more than 125,000 people have died since the first case positive case was diagnosed in Washington state on January 20. Globally, positive COVID-19 cases have surpassed 10.1 million and more than 500,000 have died of the disease (as of June 28).

Most Episcopal churches nationwide began shifting to online worship services and fellowship in mid-March, when COVID-19 cases surged on the East Coast, in Southeast Michigan and around Seattle. In late June, however, as East Coast cases declined, states in the South and Southwest, Oklahoma, Florida and California reported the highest number of new cases.

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Photo/courtesy of Eartha M. M. White Collection, Thomas G. Carpenter Library, University of North Florida

"The Harp (Lift Every Voice and Sing)"

This bronze sculpture by Augusta Savage is a small version of the life-sized work she created for the 1939 New York World's Fair. The figures are singing as a choir in the shape of a harp, with the hand of God holding them together. Savage was inspired by James Weldon Johnson's poem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" but the piece was renamed "The Harp" against her wishes. Savage was a member of the Harlem Renaissance and a pioneer in the field of sculpture.

Executive Council doubles down on anti-racism with $400K in grants

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

At its June 8-11 virtual meeting, the Episcopal Church's Executive Council doubled down on the church's anti-racism efforts, acknowledging in light of recent events that the church must do more to understand its own complicity in white supremacy and to dismantle it.

In order for that to happen in a mostly white church, there needs to be a paradigm shift, said House of Deputies Vice President Byron Rushing. During his meditation for Morning Prayer on the final day of the meeting, Rushing shared his perspective as a black man being acutely aware of racism every day and challenged white members of council to have that mindset.

Photo/ENS via Zoom

Members of Executive Council sing a hymn for Morning Prayer during the council's virtual meeting.

"We can't be honest about doing this work together until it is as equally important, every day, for you as it is for us, and that each of us know that," Rushing said.

The council passed several resolutions affirming the church's racial justice work, emphasizing efforts to respond to the recent killings of black Americans by police and white vigilantes and highlighting the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in communities of color.

One resolution will send $150,000 to the Episcopal Church in Minnesota and $150,000 to the Diocese of Kentucky to "support their continuing work of dismantling the systemic racism we have created in this country and still permeates our church and society."

George Floyd, an unarmed black man, was killed May 25 in Minneapolis while being detained by police. Officers pinned him to the ground for nearly nine minutes while one pressed his knee into Floyd's neck as he repeated, "I can't breathe." That killing prompted protests nationwide and around the world denouncing police brutality. Protesters also have drawn attention to the March 13 killing of Breonna Taylor, a black woman fatally shot in her Louisville, Ky., home by police who were executing a "no knock" warrant.

By providing substantial assistance to the dioceses that are responding to those two high-profile killings, Executive Council shows it is listening to Episcopalians who expect their church to take concrete action in opposing systemic racism, the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, said during a committee discussion.

"The church is waiting for us," she said, adding that this emergency spending is offered to the dioceses with no strings attached. The bishops and diocesan leaders will decide how the money can best support racial justice work.

Rushing also praised the work of the dioceses of Georgia and Atlanta in responding to the Feb. 23 killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a black jogger who was attacked and fatally shot by a white father and son in Glynn County, Ga. Rushing and other church leaders chose not to include those two dioceses in the emergency funding, partly because the dioceses' continued efforts don't appear to depend on new spending.

"They've done a tremendous amount of work, and we know where they are," Rushing told the Joint Standing Committee on Mission Within the Episcopal Church.

Rushing also helped draft two resolutions that reaffirmed the church's commitment to racial justice work after the killings of Arbery, Taylor, Floyd and other black victims. One of

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CONVERSATIONS

Yearning To Breathe Free: A Reflection On the Murder of George Floyd

By Pamela A. Lewis

"It demands great spiritual resilience not to hate the hater whose foot is on your neck, and an even greater miracle of perception and charity not to teach your child to hate."
— James Baldwin

America has been and is a place of irreconcilables. In contrast to the stalwart Pilgrims and other early settlers who survived perilous journeys to forge new lives are the indigenous peoples whose territories were taken from them and who became displaced persons within their own lands.

There are the soaring words of the Declaration of Independence, which speaks of humanity's God-endowed freedom and unalienable rights, penned in elegant calligraphy by a man whose slaves were not meant to be included in those words. America is a place where a black man has served two terms as its president, yet one where an unarmed black man can also die from a white police officer's pressing his knee on his neck.

While horrified by the chilling video of George Floyd's contorted face and by his gasped final words, "I can't breathe," that evoke the memory of Eric Garner's death some six years ago, I, like many African-Americans, am not surprised by this latest killing, because it is not new.

It has taken different forms, and has occurred in myriad places, but it goes back 400 years. But as Floyd's likeness has already become immortalized, as have those of so many martyred black men and women before him, on murals amid burned-out and looted stores in his home city of Minneapolis and elsewhere, Americans of all stripes have raised their fists and voices in enraged protest and taken to the streets.

This is rage born of frustration, of people who are ravenous for the justice they have been denied too long, and their rage is justifiably directed at white supremacist-fueled law enforcement, a kind of policing that is violently indifferent to the humanity they know they possess.

As Jelani Cobb, staff writer at *The New Yorker* magazine, has put it, "It's necessary and, at this point, pedestrian to observe that policing in this country is mediated by race." Floyd and many of the protesters have become one; they identify with the life he led, and they can envision themselves dying his manner of death.

At such moments, there is always the need to find parallels in history. We look back to the 1918 influenza pandemic in hope of understanding the COVID-19 outbreak; we see similarities between the conditions that gave rise to the riots of the 1960s and those that have informed the uprisings in the wake of Floyd's death.

However, the Christian community is always impelled to look at such events through a different lens. The glass of that lens is ground by Christ, and it is his kingdom we should see when looking through it, and the one I argue the protesters are struggling — albeit unwittingly — to bring into view.

Past historical events offer a secular and, arguably, partial understanding of those events. The faith community can derive more useful and powerful assistance from the Old Testament stories that speak of the sufferings of oppressed people, as well as in the New Testament accounts of Christ's life and his teachings of unconditional love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

We can understand today's people of color as latter-day ancient Israelites, who were oppressed by earthly power in the person of a Pharaoh, as well as by the power of the Roman Empire, that employed crucifixion to terrorize its Jewish subjects, most notably Jesus of Nazareth. We can understand these examples as the "state" imposing its power on the powerless, not unlike what many African-Americans in communities such as George Floyd's in Minneapolis have experienced in their encounters with the police.

It is this present and unjust "kingdom" which the protesters (and I speak of those protesters who are not engaging in destruction of property or in physically attacking other persons) seek to overthrow and replace with a kingdom of justice, love, and peace.

What has felt like an unending season of injustice and anger can be rendered finite only if it is followed by restorative justice, which is eternal, and without which reconciliation and true community are impossible. Because it is informed by and deeply imbedded in the Gospel, whose unchanging message asserts that humanity is made in the image of God, restorative justice differs in significant ways from criminal justice.

Whereas traditional criminal justice seeks to protect individuals' rights through formal, adversarial processes, the goal of restorative justice is to place the responsibility of resolving conflict on individuals themselves and through informal processes. Although it acknowledges that real conflict exists between peoples, restorative justice promises reconciliation by establishing the norms of the beloved community, which comprise security, well-being, contentment, and harmony.

Whereas in criminal justice, the police, prosecutors, and judges guide how disputes are handled, it is the commonly-held interests and desires of disputing parties that serve as the guiding principles in restorative justice. Restorative justice recognizes the fundamental dignity of the individual, seeing that each one is worthy of and treated with respect and care. Unlike criminal justice, which is concerned with enforcement of laws, restorative justice seeks to engage people in uncomfortable conversations whereby they confront equally uncomfortable truths towards resolving conflicts. In so doing, those who have been in enmity become "repairers of the breach."

After white supremacist Dylann Roof in 2015 murdered nine African-Americans at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, S.C., some family and members of Emanuel Church forgave him. Their act communicated to the world that they were not simply black people or victims, but *Christians*, fully committed to Christ's teachings of *agape* and forgiveness of one's enemies.

Theirs was not a racial or political statement, but a theological one, and they understood that, as Martin Luther King, Jr. observed in his 1957 sermon, "Loving Your Enemies," "Jesus Christ wasn't playing" when he gave this commandment, as forgiveness is the source of our redemption. He understood how extremely serious and difficult forgiveness and loving enemies are, yet he carried out these actions, even as he hung on the cross.

Depicting the countless immigrants who had come to America in their quest for freedom and opportunity, Emma Lazarus wrote movingly in her poem about the Statue of Liberty "The New Colossus," of the "huddled masses, yearning to breathe free," words now engraved on a plaque and set in the statue's pedestal. George Floyd, an American citizen, gasping under the pressing knee of Derek Chauvin, was, literally, yearning and begging to breathe free, but had his breath cruelly taken away. We the living are also yearning to breathe free, to breathe air that will one day be free of the choking smoke of racism. God grant that that day arrive in our lifetime. ■

Pamela A. Lewis is a member of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York. She writes on topics of faith. This column was first published in The Living Church.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

RECENTLY, CNN RE-RAN its series on the year 1968, with broadcaster Don Lemon noting apparent similarities between that year and this, particularly around the enormous issue of race in America. Riots in Detroit; Newark, N.J., and the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles before 1968 gave rise to the Kerner Commission, whose report concluded that "white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it."

Tempting as it is to compare the two years, we should realize that some circumstances differ. There was the Vietnam War then and a pandemic now. However, many are saying that the conversation about race — and that includes the 90 percent-white Episcopal church — are taking place now with an unprecedented openness because of the death of George Floyd.

I'm sorry that it took the public death of a man in agony to shake white people up enough to engage in these conversations. It reminds me of the public death 2,000 years ago of another man in agony. Floyd was no Jesus, just an ordinary guy who may or may not have committed a minor crime, but that's all the more reason why he should be walking around today.

In this atmosphere, corporations are setting up or renewing commitments to diversity programs and church groups are taking anti-racism courses. It's all to the good, but one of the most powerful agents of change is storytelling and personal responsibility.

I have heard stories of racist incidents from both black and white people in the past few weeks that further opened my eyes to the cocoon of whiteness I inhabit and to how I have failed to combat racism.

In the last year or so, we have given prominent space in this newspaper to the church's racial-reconciliation initiatives, but I now realize that I have not worked hard enough to find black artists and writers for our pages. I hope you will want to read more about Augusta Savage, whose work is on page one. The work of anti-racism continues and I am committed to it. ■

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NEWS

COVID continued from page 1

California saw its worst day for new reported cases — over 7,000 — on June 24. New cases there have increased 18% since June 19.

In the Diocese of San Diego, which covers the southernmost part of California and southwestern Arizona, Bishop Susan Brown Snook allowed churches to resume in-person worship starting on June 21 in accordance with state regulations (which set a 25% capacity limit) and any additional local measures, as well as diocesan guidelines.

In the diocesan churches, everyone must stand at least six feet apart, and choir and congregational singing is not allowed. Masks must be worn at all times, except when reading or preaching. The Eucharist may be celebrated, but only bread can be offered. The few churches that have submitted plans for reopening say they will also screen parishioners with touchless thermometers as they arrive.

However, San Diego County renewed its stay-at-home order on June 19. Although houses of worship are exempt, Snook urged churches in that county to only hold services outdoors. Snook also instructed churches in Imperial County and Arizona not to meet in person at all, due to high levels of transmission there.

Arizona is currently on the worst trajectory of any state, with a 42% increase in new reported cases since June 19. The state, which reopened for business on May 16, now has more documented cases per capita than hard-hit countries like Italy, Spain and Brazil. Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, is recording over 2,000 new cases a day, worse than New York City on its worst days.

The Diocese of Arizona is still in phase 1 of its COVID-19 plan, meaning there are no in-person worship services or gatherings.

"Our Arizona churches are still in the early stages of our journey with COVID-19," Bishop Jennifer Reddall wrote in a letter to the diocese. "We are not 'there' yet — and we are not going to be getting 'there' any time soon. This journey is not going to be a matter of weeks, but months or years."

The Navajo Nation, which is served by the Episcopal Church in Navajoland, is one of the hardest-hit areas in the U.S., with more reported cases per capita than any state. Weekend lockdowns are being reinstated on the reservation. Navajoland's churches remain closed for in-person worship until further notice.

Photo/Gloria Orellana

The congregation at St. Michael and All Angels, Portland, Ore. is represented by their photos in the pews. For Pentecost, little flames were added as well as doves above the main aisle.

Cases in Texas have increased 28% since June 19. Gov. Greg Abbott has reinstated some restrictions but is allowing businesses to remain open for the most part, and churches have been allowed to hold in-person services since early April under state law. Hospitals in Houston and Austin were preparing to expand capacity to address the surge.

Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, part of the Diocese of Texas, resumed in-person worship on June 21, with up to 60 people allowed in. Parishioners were required to register to attend, and to wear masks. Communion was celebrated with bread alone, and there was no congregational singing.

However, on the 25th, the dean of the cathedral announced that in-person worship was canceled for the 28th, citing the "startling" data coming out of the area's hospitals.

"All but one of the criteria that push Houston's COVID crisis meter into the red zone have now been surpassed: a 7-day average of greater than 100 new COVID cases, 7-day increasing trend in daily hospital population, and more than three days of greater than 15 percent ICU usage by COVID patients," Dean Barkley Thompson wrote. Online worship will continue.

Photo/Julie Murray

Photo/Ken Garner

Signage announcing online services from St. James, Cincinnati, top, and Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, Pa., bottom.

Florida, which began reopening on May 4, reported about 9,000 new cases on June 26. Reported cases there have increased 37% since June 19 — and 526% since Memorial Day. Gov. Ron DeSantis closed bars on June 26, but churches — which were never closed by a state order — can remain open.

The Diocese of Southeast Florida, which contains Miami, is still in phase one of its COVID-19 plan — meaning churches must remain closed for in-person worship, except for some feeding ministries and day care programs — until at least June 30.

"I am deeply aware that we are entering a time when congregational leadership will be coming under increasing pressure," Bishop Peter Eaton wrote to the diocese when extending his initial closure order in late May. "I am also aware that the matter of re-entry and re-gathering in places of worship has become politicized, and this only adds to the complexity of discerning wise and prudent timing. … The leadership of the diocese is motivated solely by our shared discernment of the moral imperative of the well-being of those who constitute our communities."

In the Diocese of Southwest Florida, churches have been allowed to open for in-person worship since May 31, with attendance limited to 25% of the church's maximum occupancy. Masks are "highly recommended" and parishioners are instructed to stay six feet apart. Communion may be offered as bread only.

In a letter to the diocese on June 23, Bishop Dabney Smith said he was concerned about the increasing spread of COVID-19 in the diocese but diocesan policies remain the same.

"It is our role to take care of our people; again I remind you this care includes some of our at-risk clergy," Dabney wrote, encouraging congregations to carefully consider their own practices.

Meanwhile, in the Northeast, governors in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut on June 24 announced that travelers arriving from hotspots outside the tri-state area would be required to quarantine for 14 days.

In the Diocese of Newark, where the governor has set the limit for indoor gatherings at 100 people or 25% of maximum capacity and at 250 people for outdoor gatherings, on June 23 Bishop Carlye J. Hughes issued a 36-page document containing guidelines for in-person worship.

In the Diocese of New York, which includes parts of New York City and stretches north into the Hudson Valley, in-person worship remains suspended through July 1.

"I write to you one week before the July 1 date at which limited resumption of public worship will be permitted in the Diocese of New York. I want to say at the start that I have no expectation that churches will resume public worship at this time. A significant number of our churches and clergy are telling me that they do not intend to reintroduce worship inside their churches until September or the end of the year. I completely respect those decisions," wrote New York Bishop Andrew Dietsche in a June 24 letter to the diocese, asking that churches continue virtual worship.

"From the start we have said that this is permission, not requirement. COVID is a very dangerous disease — fatal for too many — and a whole lot of our people, and our clergy, are high risk due to their age or underlying health conditions. Safety must be our first concern. We have learned how to have effective, enriching worship and a robust community life, even while distanced, over the last three months. Continuing those distanced practices and relationships until we see that it is safe to come physically together is a decision which is faithful and sensible. We are seeing that in other parts of our country which have 'reopened' early, churches are already being revealed to be centers of new infections. We cannot let that happen in our churches, and that means observing strict disciplines in our practices," Dietsche said.

In a June 19 letter to clergy and wardens in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, where the state is in the process of reopening, Bishop Ian T. Douglas and Bishop Suffragan Laura J. Ahrens urged people in at-risk categories and people age 65 and older "to stay home and stay safe," and for those parishes considering in-person worship to consider holding services outdoors.

"This is not a time to go rushing back to in-person worship as we have known it in the past," the bishops wrote. "We recognize that many parishes are beginning to resume in-person worship and are using the 'Living with COVID-19' protocols and directions that we have promulgated as guidelines. We appreciate the deliberate, careful and collaborative way that you, the clergy and lay leaders in ECCT, are considering what is best for your parishes in this new phase. Thank you for your ongoing faithful and inspiring leadership."

Massachusetts, initially one of the hardest-hit states, now has the lowest rate of positive COVID-19 tests in the nation, with a 7-day positive test rate average of 1.9% as of June 25. The Diocese of Massachusetts suspended in-person worship in late March, and the bishops' directive was extended until July 1. On June 15, the bishops told the diocese that congregations may reopen for in-person worship starting July 1, but strongly encouraged them not to. Parishes that wish to resume in-person worship must confirm that they will be able to meet state and diocesan criteria. ■

AROUND THE CHURCH

Washington National Cathedral announces layoffs as COVID-19 hits finances

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Washington National Cathedral announced on June 16 that it is making staff cuts "that are both necessary and hard to accept" as the economic damage from the COVID-19 pandemic mounts.

Effective July 1, the cathedral will reduce its full-time workforce by 15%, eliminating 13 full-time and 13 part-time positions. Another 12 full-time employees will be fully or partially furloughed, and most remaining part-time employees will work fewer hours, the Very Rev. Randolph Marshall Hollerith, dean of the cathedral, announced on Facebook.

"I want you to know that these are more than mere numbers on a spreadsheet; each decision involves painful change for treasured colleagues and friends, and it grieves me deeply," Hollerith wrote. "In my 30 years of ordained ministry, this is the hardest set of decisions I've ever had to make."

Hollerith said he and other senior cathedral staffers will take a 20% pay cut, all employees will see reduced benefits in the coming year, and all raises and new hires will be paused until further notice.

Though the National Cathedral has maintained a robust online presence, "three months of closure due to the pandemic have had serious negative consequences on our finances," Hollerith wrote, stressing that the cuts are the result of "forces beyond our control" and not mismanagement or poor planning.

In fact, after years of financial struggles — mostly due to the damage caused by a 2011 earthquake — the cathedral's finances had been on the upswing. The past four years had seen consecutive budget surpluses, and fiscal year 2019 saw major increases in membership, visitors and income. Congregational giving went up 39% from the previous year, and event and program revenue went up 50%.

Now visitors, events and programming — which make up over 20% of the cathedral's operating revenue — are gone for the foreseeable future. The staff cuts mostly affect the cathedral's tourism and events management departments, Hollerith said.

Photo/courtesy of Washington National Cathedral

Washington National Cathedral stands in the nation's capital.

"Out of a commitment to responsible and sustainable financial stewardship, we need to reduce the cathedral's footprint until a vaccine [for COVID-19] is developed and the public feels comfortable gathering in large groups once again," he wrote. "Cathedral life has shifted these last three months, and we need a budget that reflects our new reality, for as long as it lasts."

The cathedral will continue cultivating its online ministries, focusing on worship, music and "the two pandemics that plague us: COVID-19 and the sin of racism," Hollerith wrote.

"I ask you to join me in prayer for each member of our cathedral family who is impacted by these changes," he added. "We will make every attempt to support them personally and professionally, and we will walk with them through this transition." ■

General Convention may not take place in-person next year

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings on June 5 released a letter to the church concerning planning for the 80th General Convention, scheduled to take place June 30-July 9 in Baltimore:

Dear Bishops and Deputies:

As this pandemic season stretches on, our profound grief for those who have died is compounded by daily reminders of the economic hardship the plague has brought to many of our communities. Even those who have not suffered great losses are enduring smaller ones, such as the cancelation of graduations, summer camps and other occasions to gather in person. The experience and feeling of loss is real for us all, yet it is important for us to remember that our canceled plans represent our best efforts to love one another as Jesus commanded. That commitment to live and act in the way of unselfish, sacrificial love must guide all of our decisions and actions.

In light of our moral conviction and the realities we now face, it will come as no surprise to you that for many weeks, we have been considering how the pandemic will affect our plans to gather in Baltimore in 2021 for the 80th General Convention. Although we all pray that an FDA-approved vaccine or other safe and effective therapeutics will be available soon, we have concluded with regret that we must plan as if our traditional 10-day gathering of 10,000 people or more will not be possible in 2021.

Last month, we convened the chairs and vice-chairs, parliamentarians, and chancellors of both houses and the executive officer to consider alternative plans for General Convention. Our primary values are the common good and the health, safety and welfare of the people who would come to General Convention and the people we would encounter while traveling and meeting. With these priorities in mind, our task group is working actively to consider various scenarios, including virtual options and postponement, and will make a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements. That body will make a recommendation to the two of us, and we will ask Executive Council for their advice and consent to our decision about how and when the 80th General Convention will proceed. We hope to have more news to share as the fall begins.

As we explore new ways to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we share the authority and responsibility of governing our church, we are also committed to supporting our hosts in the City of Baltimore. General Convention represents economic impact of $21-23 million to that city, whose longstanding racial disparities and economic distress have been intensified by the virus. We are grateful for the counsel of Bishop Eugene Sutton of Maryland and his staff as we face these uncertainties together.

Thank you all for your faithfulness to the ministry of governance and your forbearance with what our friends in the Church of England call "the changes and chances of this fleeting world." May we all rest in God's eternal changelessness during these extraordinary times.

— Episcopal Church Public Affairs Office

Springfield bishop, standing committee hit impasse over timing of retirement

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The Diocese of Springfield's (Illinois) standing committee is in mediation with Bishop Daniel Martins to settle a disagreement over the bishop's retirement, with Martins planning to retire in June 2021 and the committee insisting he step down sooner.

In documents obtained by Episcopal News Service, the committee has informed Martins it is unhappy with its previously approved arrangement allowing the bishop to reside in Chicago and commute to the diocese, which encompasses the largely rural southern half of Illinois.

"Your continued residence in Chicago presents an untenable situation best addressed by advancing your previously announced retirement date," the committee said in a May 8 letter to Martins, threatening to revoke the permission it granted him to live outside the diocese.

The committee also referenced an April 15 letter to Martins, in which it urged Martins to move his retirement date up by eight months to October 2020. "This will give you the opportunity to preside at the annual synod and for the diocese to celebrate your ministry with us," the committee said in April, offering to make "appropriate financial arrangements" for him.

Martins refused, according to the committee.

The diocese now is working with a mediator to settle the dispute, with input from Bishop Todd Ousley, who leads the Episcopal Church's Office of Pastoral Development and regularly assists dioceses with their bishop transitions. In an email, Ousley declined to comment for this story, citing "this sensitive diocesan matter."

The Rev. Beth Maynard, president of the standing committee and rector of Emanuel Memorial Episcopal Church in Champaign, said by email she wouldn't respond to questions about the dispute because of the ongoing mediation.

Photo/Diocese of Springfield

Springfield Bishop Daniel Martins was consecrated in 2011.

Martins announced his retirement plans in October 2019 in an address to the diocesan synod. When reached by phone, he declined to talk for this story about the mediation and the standing committee's efforts to force his early retirement. He confirmed to ENS that he had asked for and received permission to live in Chicago starting in September 2018 because of a "personal family matter" while returning to his diocese to continue his ministry there.

He told ENS, however: "My hope is to remain in office until my successor is consecrated." The standing committee announced in December it was laying the groundwork for a bishop search, but Martins said this week he wasn't sure how far the search had progressed.

The standing committee outlined its dissatisfaction with Martins' living

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AROUND THE CHURCH

In disciplinary hearing, Albany bishop defends prohibition of same-sex marriage

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The dispute over Albany (N.Y.) Bishop William Love's prohibition of same-sex marriage in his diocese took a major step forward at a hearing on June 12, when the Episcopal Church laid out its charges of canonical violations against Love, whose counsel defended his actions as not conflicting with existing church canon law.

The hearing, conducted under the church's Title IV disciplinary process, was originally scheduled to take place on April 21 in Colonie, N.Y., but was changed to a Zoom meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Title IV hearings are held when clergy are accused of breaking their vows or violating the church's constitution and canons.

In this case, the church argued that, by prohibiting clergy in his diocese from using the same-sex marriage rites approved for churchwide use by General Convention, Love broke the vows he took when he was ordained a bishop to "conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church."

During the hearing, presided over by Rhode Island Bishop Nicholas Knisely, the church, represented by lawyer Paul Cooney, and Love, represented by the Rev. Chip Strickland, did not dispute the facts of the case — or the theological validity of same-sex marriage — but presented arguments over whether Love's actions violated church law. More than 700 people watched the hearing via Facebook Live.

The other members of the Title IV Hearing Panel are Assistant Bishop Jennifer Brooke-Davidson of the Diocese of Virginia, the Rev. Erik Larsen of the Diocese of Rhode Island, Melissa Perrin of the Diocese of Chicago and retired Southern Virginia Bishop Herman Hollerith. The panel is responsible for reviewing evidence and taking testimony in a setting similar to a court hearing before it rules on any disciplinary action.

Photo/ENS via Zoom

The Rev. Chip Strickland, lower right, speaks during the Title IV hearing for Bishop William Love of Albany (N.Y.), held on Zoom.

Knisely said that it may take several weeks for the panel to reach a decision in Love's case. The panel can either dismiss the matter or issue an order, which could include suspending or deposing Love — essentially stripping him of his spiritual authority.

Cooney argued that, by directing his clergy to continue complying with a diocesan canon prohibiting participation in same-sex marriages, Love had violated General Convention Resolution B012, which stipulates that "provision will be made for all couples desiring to use these [same-sex] marriage liturgies in their local congregation."

Cooney also noted that B012 contains a provision for bishops who are theologically opposed to same-sex marriage to have other bishops provide pastoral support to the couple and celebrant, if needed, and that Love also refused to do this.

In his defense of Love, Strickland, who also serves as the Diocese of Albany's chancellor, asserted that Resolution B012 does not hold canonical status and, therefore, Love had not committed a canonical violation.

In Strickland's interpretation of current church law, authorized trial rites (like the same-sex marriage liturgy in question) only have canonical status if they are proposed revisions to the Book of Common Prayer. Strickland argued that B012 does not fall under that category, presenting records from General Convention discussions in which that point was made clear and noting that language in a previous version of the resolution identifying it as a revision to the Book of Common Prayer was intentionally deleted from the final version.

Love's decision to allow only marriages that specifically conform to the current Book of Common Prayer and diocesan canons does not violate church canons, Strickland argued. While the church canon regarding marriage is now gender-neutral, existing rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer still define marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Hollerith asked Cooney how clergy are supposed to know which rubrics they are supposed to follow and which they can disregard. Cooney replied that it depends on the context.

"Does the rubric express an unchangeable tenet of the Christian faith or not?" Cooney said. "Do they state doctrine or do they just reflect it?"

Strickland pointed to the church canon that simply instructs clergy to follow the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer.

Love himself did not speak except for a brief introduction in which he thanked the members of the panel and the people of his diocese, and to answer a question from Hollerith about whether he had given any pastoral direction to address the pain of people to whom he had refused same-sex marriage.

"I've tried to be pastorally sensitive to that," Love said. "I have consistently met with same-sex couples and spoken to them personally. … I do know how difficult this is for all of us, and my heart is breaking for all of us. It's breaking for the church."

Though Title IV hearings are uncommon for sitting bishops, the Love case follows a 2017 hearing when then-Los Angeles Bishop J. Jon Bruno was accused of misconduct in a diocesan property matter. The panel concluded Bruno acted improperly, and he was suspended from ordained ministry. ■

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arrangement in its April 15 letter. "Your relocation has increased the financial burdens to the diocese as your level of involvement in the work of ministry in this diocese, and your physical presence in this diocese have greatly decreased," the letter said. "Full episcopal ministry is not being provided, and you are largely inaccessible."

That letter was drafted a month after Martins joined most bishops across the Episcopal Church in suspending in-person worship at Episcopal churches starting in mid-March in response to the nationwide surge in COVID-19 cases at the outset of the pandemic. Two months later, with new cases on the decline in Illinois, Martins began allowing congregations to return to their churches on a limited basis on May 31.

Some Episcopal congregations in the Diocese of Springfield have decided they will continue to gather online only, while virus transmission remains a threat at public gatherings. For those that chose to reopen, Martins initially had them cap attendance at 10 people. A week later, Martins raised that cap to 25 percent of church capacity, mirroring the approach to reopening taken by Roman Catholic churches in the region.

Martins also resumed his visitations, starting with St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alton on May 31. He visited Trinity Episcopal Church in Mattoon on June 7, and on June 14, he joined an outdoor worship service at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Havana. Worshipers sat in chairs spread around the churchyard so they could maintain the distance recommended by public health officials to slow the virus' spread.

Members of the congregation at St. Barnabas presented Martins with a drawing of their church, inscribed to him on the back "with much love, gratitude and thanksgiving for your guidance, leadership and episcopal support."

The Diocese of Springfield is known as one of the more theologically conservative dioceses in the Episcopal Church. Leading up to the 79th General Convention in July 2018, Martins was one of eight diocesan bishops who still refused to allow use of same-sex marriage rites in their dioceses, though most of those bishops, including Martins, reluctantly accepted a compromise resolution to make the rites available in all domestic dioceses. ■

NEWS

Black Episcopalians offer mental health resources

By Pat McCaughan
Episcopal News Service

The Union of Black Episcopalians, through its mental health task force, is offering resources and support to the entire Episcopal Church community, as anxiety and tensions continue to rise after another killing June 12 of a black man by a white police officer.

Recent federal census surveys reveal that Americans — and particularly black Americans and Latinos — already were struggling with high rates of anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected communities of color. Those rates spiked for African Americans after the May 25 killing of George Floyd.

Photo/Reuters

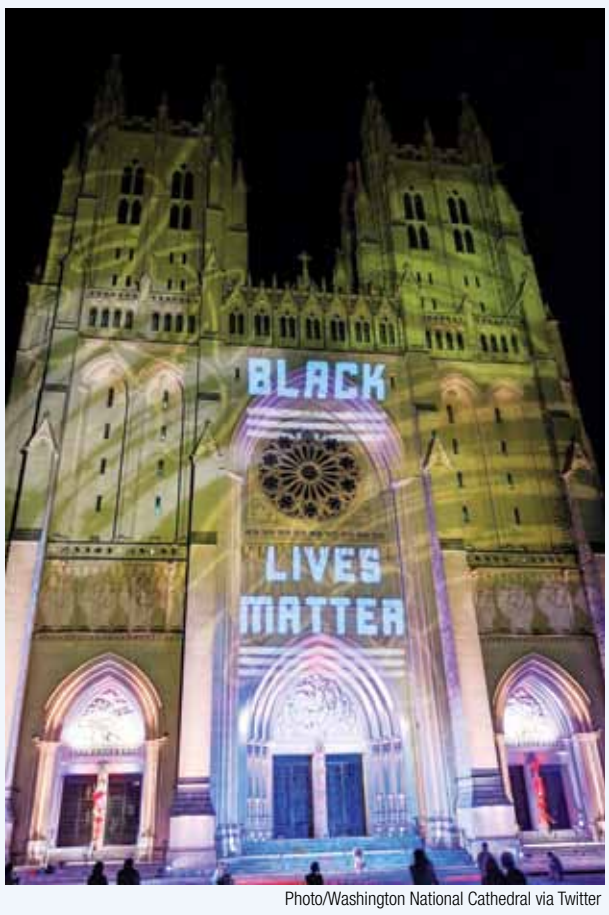
Protesters rally against racial inequality and the police shooting death of Rayshard Brooks, in Atlanta.

Floyd, a 46-year-old unarmed black man, died after being pinned to the ground for nearly nine minutes by police in Minneapolis, prompting worldwide protests and demands for racial justice reforms. Those calls for action were further fueled by the June 12 shooting death by police of Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year-old African American at an Atlanta Wendy's drive-thru. As protestors took to the streets again, the restaurant was burned.

A June 14 autopsy revealed that Brooks died from two gunshot wounds to the back. During a struggle with officers who were arresting him on suspicion of drunken driving, he had grabbed one officer's Taser. Pointing it at police as he ran away, he was shot by Garrett Rolfe, a white officer who has since been fired. Atlanta Police Chief Erika Shields also resigned.

John Robertson, an Orlando, Fla., psychologist who chairs the UBE task force, said repeated incidents like this heighten the sense of trauma and concern African Americans have for their safety. "Things are developing so quickly, in these fast-moving and stressful times," he said. The task force "feels very strongly that we need to be as active as possible in the process of healing.

He cited the recent deaths of other unarmed African Americans at the hands of either white police officers or vigilantes. They include Breonna Taylor, 26, an emergency medical technician shot eight times in her Louisville, Ky., apartment by police serving a no-knock warrant, and Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old, jogging in his Brunswick, Ga., neighborhood who was chased and shot by vigilantes who said they suspected him of being a burglar.



Photo/Washington National Cathedral via Twitter

In mid-June, Washington National Cathedral projects support on its façade for the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Very Rev. Kim Coleman, UBE national president, said the anxiety runs much deeper, and longer, dating to "the trauma black people have absorbed into our beings for the past 400 years, [and dealing with it] is even more important now during this pivotal period in our nation's history with racism."

The advocacy and civil rights group hosted a webinar, "YAYAs—Keeping It Together in the Face of Trauma," on June 21 to help address the issues.

On July 19, mental health task force members Ayesha Mutope-Johnson and Carrie Brown led another webinar, "For the Living of These Days: What Do We Do with Our Rage."

The task force was created about three years ago, after members began to address systemic racism as both a mental health and social justice issue, Robertson said.

From Florida to Texas, regional chapter members received training in Mental Health First Aid, a basic course that teaches participants to recognize signs and symptoms of mental health challenges and to offer resources.

Health and wellness coach Kimme Carlos, a task force member, conducted some of the UBE trainings, comparing them to "bringing in defibrillators and learning how to use them."

The trainings empower congregations to act because "church doors are always open," Carlos said. "People come to church seeking healing — physical, emotional and spiritual healing. Often, they are coming with brokenness, anxiety and a host of illnesses that we might not recognize until they are in a crisis."

She has conducted training at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Trenton, N.J., the urban congregation she attends, where homeless and mentally ill persons are frequent visitors.

"When people begin to learn what mental health is, it's not nearly as scary as we thought," Carlos said. "We can understand the behaviors and learn to set boundaries so everyone in the church feels comfortable."

The training also create a safe space to talk about mental illness — often considered a taboo subject and greeted with a wall of silence.

Carlos knows the silence all too well. She is the daughter of John Carlos, the 1968 Olympian who received a bronze medal in the 200-meter track and field competition. He held up a fist as the U.S. national anthem played. That action, symbolizing Black Power, unleashed a tremendous backlash that engulfed the entire family.

At age 12, she lost her mother to suicide. "Losing a parent is traumatizing and even more when nobody talks about it, and in 1978 nobody talked about it," Carlos recalled. "One day my mother was the most beautiful woman in the world to me and larger than life. The next day, she was gone, and nobody wanted to talk about it."

By 14, she had turned to alcohol to help ease her pain, recalled Carlos. As an adult, she married, had two children, divorced, bought a house and found career success as a financial services professional, "but personally, my life was a mess."

Now 54 and in recovery for 18 years, she has recognized, "I was suffering from undiagnosed depression and anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. But when I started talking about my addiction, folks would shush me."

About six years ago, she founded the New Jersey-based nonprofit Urban Mental Health Alliance and now offers training for corporations, congregations and other organizations. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March, requests for training have doubled, she said.

Christine Broome, 73, a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, said the training helped her counsel a grandson, frustrated when the stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of COVID-19 sent him home from college and restricted his daily activities.

"I was able to talk to him and we could figure out a way to channel his energies differently and more productively," Broome told ENS.

While "we're not professionals, the training helps because it opens our eyes to people who might be having difficulties," she said. "We approach it in terms of guiding them to where and how to find help."

Similarly, she was able to offer comfort to a friend feeling isolated, when separated from her 102-year-old mother because of a COVID-19 diagnosis. "Having the training gives you a perspective of what people are facing and how they might be dealing with it."

In Houston, Mutope-Johnson said the training supports the wider church's role in "helping people to understand that health care is not just about high blood pressure and diabetes."

A retired attorney and counselor, Mutope-Johnson teaches racial reconciliation classes at the Iona School for Ministry in the Diocese of Texas and serves as both a diocesan and Province VII anti-racism trainer.

She said she is astonished that people often don't make the connection between physical health and historic racial and socioeconomic disparities. Fallout from centuries of systemic racism continue to plague may people of color, "yet we as a country have not thought very much about what happens when people are subjected to it for generations, especially in the experience of African Americans," said Mutope-Johnson, 68, a UBE task force member.

After the end of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, systemic racism has continued to traumatize African Americans, whose behavior, while consistent with those experiences, is frequently stigmatized and criminalized by mainstream society, she said.

She hopes the entire church community will engage the task force's efforts to address the issues through raising awareness and introducing resources. The webinars and training are not offered "because we are a problem for society, but because this society needs to address its effects on both black and white people," she said.

White Americans "have a great deal of work to do, as the result of years of white supremacy, years of privilege, years of addiction to power. Unless we all do the work together, we are doomed. We will continue to treat each other in ways that are difficult and dangerous."

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NEWS

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the resolutions singled out Arbery's killing as a case of "violent racial vigilantism" that brought to mind lynchings and other historic forms of racial terror. Arbery's attackers, who said they thought he was a suspect in a series of recent break-ins, were not arrested in the killing for more than two months.

Executive Council "praises the prompt response of the Episcopal people and churches in the Dioceses of Georgia and Atlanta to publicly call for justice in response to this heinous crime," the resolution says.

A parallel resolution focuses separately on cases of deadly police violence toward African Americans, citing Floyd and Taylor by name and praising the response of Episcopalians in Minnesota and Kentucky. It also calls on all Episcopalians "to organize, advocate, and dismantle systems, policies, and practices that reinforce police violence and brutality."

Executive Council approved another resolution that outlines specific criminal justice reforms that would improve police accountability and help protect people of color from violence. The resolution encourages Episcopalians to advocate for the reforms, including bans on chokeholds, stricter protocols on use of force, creation of community oversight bodies and federal review of killings by police.

"Working to enact these policies is not a means to an end but one part in addressing systemic racism and providing long overdue protections to communities of color, ensuring that we live in a society that recognizes, values, and empowers all of God's children," the resolution concludes.

When it was brought before council, the Rev. Devon Anderson of Minnesota noted that the resolution seemed to preclude any of the various proposals that fall under the umbrella of "defunding the police," but ultimately offered her support, and the resolution passed.

Another resolution addresses the toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on communities of color, including indigenous communities, often because of barriers to adequate health care caused by poverty. Executive Council urged Episcopalians to "join with their communities in actively removing these barriers and addressing the social determinants of health."

The pandemic and national outrage over police brutality toward people of color also prompted Executive Council to adopt a new program of "rapid response" grants as part of its core racial reconciliation initiative, Becoming Beloved Community. Episcopal and Episcopal-affiliated entities are encouraged to apply this summer for grants of up to $10,000 to back immediate efforts "to address systemic racism and racial violence." Executive Council approved up to $100,000 for those grants.

While anticipating that the coming years will be some of the worst the U.S. economy has seen since the Great Depression, the Rev. Mally Lloyd, chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Finance, assured council that the church is in "solid financial shape." Short-term reserves are above their targeted amount, with $12 million in unrestricted funds immediately available, and 2020 expenses are below budget so far.

However, Lloyd and Treasurer Kurt Barnes warned that, while income in the first quarter was not seriously affected by COVID-19, they do not expect that to continue. Several dioceses have asked to defer their assessment payments, and two have requested emergency hardship assessment waivers. Council passed a resolution granting a full waiver of Colombia's assessment and a partial waiver of the Dominican Republic's assessment.

In light of expected income shortfalls from diocesan payments and investments, church staff were asked in April to identify immediate savings that could be implemented without personnel cuts. Staff identified $4.2 million in potential savings, and the finance committee went through the 2020 budget with those recommendations and other circumstances in mind. The committee ultimately put forward a resolution to make about $2 million in immediate budget cuts, much of it items such as travel expenses that are now moot. This sets a baseline for deeper cuts to be made as needed, in a "staged reduction" approach depending on how much income might decline. ■

Amid continued vandalism, St. John's in Washington erects security fencing

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

The church that has been seen around the world as the backdrop for the ongoing unrest over systemic racism and police brutality in America reluctantly decided to put up security fencing to protect the building after repeated acts of vandalism.

Photo/Leah Millis/Reuters

Police stand outside St. John's Episcopal Church while protesters take part in an anti-police brutality march in Washington, D.C.

St. John's Episcopal Church, the "church of presidents" across from the White House in Washington, D.C., told parishioners in an email on June 25 that the parish had accepted the city's offer to put up fencing around the property, which has been tagged with graffiti and damaged by fire since protests flared nationwide in response to the police killing of George Floyd on May 25 in Minneapolis.

"We as a parish support the protesters' fight for an end to systemic racism. As is often the case in these situations, we have also been faced with significant challenges," the Rev. Robert Fisher, rector, and the parish wardens wrote. "While we hate both the fencing and the boarded-up windows, one of our main responsibilities as rector and wardens is to protect the buildings. Our hope is to remove both the fencing and plywood as soon as practicable."

Church leaders also expressed concern over the unsafe activities of people camping near the church.

People "have built encampments on the church grounds, pitching tents, cooking on open fires in close proximity to the buildings, and relieving themselves in inappropriate places, resulting in a risk to the health and safety of protesters and others. At times, our staff has not felt safe traveling to and from work, or in their offices," the church leaders wrote.

St. John's has been used as a symbol by people on disparate sides of the conflict over racism and policing in America, which has simmered since the 2012 death of Trayvon Martin and escalated

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NEWS

Episcopal leaders hail Supreme Court ruling barring LGBTQ workplace discrimination

By David Paulsen and Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Episcopalians and church leaders are cheering the U.S. Supreme Court's June 15 ruling that protects gay and transgender Americans from workplace discrimination, a groundbreaking decision that follows decades of church advocacy for greater LGBTQ rights.

"The Supreme Court has spoken again for the equality of all God's children," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said, praising the court's 6-3 decision in remarks to church employees at the start of a two-day annual staff meeting.

In July 2019, Curry and the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, signed a friend of the court brief supporting the plaintiffs in the case.

Speaking to employees via Zoom, Curry put the ruling in the context of the court's June 2015 ruling that upheld same-sex marriage nationwide. That earlier decision was handed down just as the Episcopal Church's General Convention was getting underway in Salt Lake City, spurring bishops and deputies to approve trial-use marriage rites for same-sex couples.

Photo/Reuters

Joseph Fons, holding a gay pride flag, runs in front of the U.S. Supreme Court building after the court ruled that a federal law banning workplace discrimination also covers sexual orientation.

Jennings posted the news on Facebook, quoting from a July 2019 statement she made when she and Curry filed their legal brief on behalf of more than 700 interfaith leaders.

"As Christians, we bear a particular responsibility to speak out, because attempts to deny LGBTQ people their dignity and humanity as children of God are too often made in the name of God," Jennings said. "This way of fear is not the way of Jesus Christ, who teaches us to cast out fear."

The Supreme Court's majority opinion was written by Justice Neil Gorsuch, the court's sole Episcopalian. "An employer who fires an individual merely for being gay or transgender defies the law," he declared.

The court's ruling this week expands job protections under the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Gorsuch was joined in the majority by Chief Justice John Roberts and the four members of the court's liberal bloc.

The decision settled a series of lawsuits brought against employers by former employees who said they had been fired after revealing they were gay or transgender. The plaintiff in one of the lawsuits, Gerald Bostock, was working as coordinator of a program monitoring children placed in foster care in Clayton County, Georgia, near Atlanta, when he was fired in 2013. He had joined a gay softball league six months earlier.

"I'm elated, and words cannot fully express the gratitude I have for the justices," said Bostock, 56, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's report on his post-ruling news conference.

Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright also praised the ruling and highlighted the Episcopal Church's ongoing work toward greater LGBTQ inclusion in the church and society.

"Our joy flows primarily from the fact that this ruling affirms what God has ordained and what we already know, that every human being is made in the image of God and has inherent, dignity, value and worth," Wright said June 16 in a written statement. "And that prejudice in every form is incompatible with faith in God and with a nation whose goal is greatness."

TransEpiscopal, a group that connects transgender and nonbinary Episcopalians and advocates for their full inclusion in the church, celebrated the decision and thanked Curry and Jennings for their part in it.

"We feel the support of our wider church, particularly from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings, who were lead signers on an amicus brief," the group wrote. "Thank you."

However, the group tempered its celebration of the ruling by noting that just a few days before, the Trump administration eliminated an Obama-era regulation that banned discrimination against transgender people in health care, part of a broader effort by the administration to remove protections for transgender people throughout the federal government. Health care in particular, the group wrote, continues to be a major vector of inequality in America, made visible in recent months by the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on African Americans.

The group also lamented what it called a "horrific systemic pattern" of killings of transgender people of color in America.

Some Episcopal bishops joined Wright in celebrating the Supreme Court ruling. Washington Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde expressed gratitude for the years of advocacy work that led up to the decision. "What once seemed impossible happened today," she said.

Curry echoed their sentiments in a statement released to Episcopal News Service:

"The fundamental equality of humanity is God-given. It is enshrined in the Bible in the first chapter of Genesis when it says human beings are created in the image and likeness of God," Curry said. "There is no hierarchy of that image, we equally bear it. Later in Genesis, in the ninth chapter, verse six, the text picks up the theme of the image of God in human beings as conferring value so great that human life should not be taken.

"This decision is another one of those moments when our nation is living up to the ideals of America."

In recent years, some of the most intense debate within the Episcopal Church over greater inclusion of LGBTQ Christians has focused on same-sex marriage, though the church's opposition to anti-gay discrimination dates back even further. In 1976, General Convention passed a resolution affirming that "homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens."

Expanding that position to include gender identity, a 2009 resolution called for "enactment of laws at the local, state and federal level that prohibit discrimination." It also sought prosecution of violence against people for their gender identity as hate crimes.

And in 2017, the church's stance against discrimination nearly prompted Episcopal leaders to move the 79th General Convention rather than hold it as planned in Austin, Texas. At that time, the Texas Legislature was considering a "bathroom bill" that would have required anyone using a public restroom in Texas to use the facility labeled with the gender that matched the sex stated on the person's birth certificate or driver's license.

Curry and Jennings sent a letter to the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives in February 2017 saying if the bill became law, the Episcopal Church would face the "difficult choice" of moving General Convention to a different state rather than support legalized discrimination.

The bill was defeated in August 2017, and Episcopal leaders kept Austin as host city for the church's triennial gathering.

"We give thanks for all of the Texan Episcopalians, elected officials, business leaders, and advocates who raised their voices publicly against this proposed law and the physical, spiritual and emotional damage it threatened to do to transgender people," Curry and Jennings said at the time.

When General Convention met in Austin in July 2018, it passed a resolution reaffirming its support for transgender rights and pledged to support "legislative, educational, pastoral, liturgical, and broader communal efforts" to oppose violence and discrimination against transgender people. ■

VANDALISM continued from page 8

since Floyd's killing.

On June 1, police violently forced peaceful protesters and clergy out of the area in front of St. John's so that President Donald Trump could pose for photos holding a Bible in front of the church, an action condemned by Episcopal leaders. The church has since been the site of further protests and prayer vigils focusing on racial justice.

On June 22, "BHAZ" was spray-painted on the 204-year-old church's columns. The acronym was also spray-painted on a piece of plywood nearby, accompanied by "Black House Autonomous Zone," an apparent take on the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone in Seattle. That area, also called the Capitol Hill Organized Protest, is comprised of several blocks that were taken over by protesters and abandoned by police on June 8. One person was killed and two were injured in shootings there in late June.

Fisher and the wardens said that the vestry had met last week to discuss "the tension between support of the Black Lives Matter movement and keeping our staff and property safe," and then met with city officials to form a plan to "peacefully relocate" the people camping on the property. That plan was not enacted because police began clearing the area on June 22.

"We have much work to do. In the coming weeks we must return our attention to regathering and reengaging our congregation, while continuing the conversation on racial healing that we started the past two Sundays," the church leaders wrote.

St. John's, a national historic landmark where one of the pews is reserved for the president, has taken on a new symbolic status in recent months, becoming the backdrop for escalating conflicts in American society.

During riots that followed peaceful protests against racial violence and police brutality on the night of May 31, someone set a fire in the basement of the parish hall, destroying one room but leaving the rest of the property unharmed, except for some graffiti. ■

NEWS

As Supreme Court lets DACA stand for now, Episcopal leaders push for permanent protections

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

Photo/Reuters

DACA recipients and their supporters celebrate outside the U.S. Supreme Court after the court ruled, 5-4, that President Donald Trump's 2017 move to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was unlawful.

Episcopal leaders on June 18 welcomed the U.S. Supreme Court's surprise decision preserving protections for about 700,000 immigrants who were brought to the United States illegally as children. Even so, the Episcopal Church remains focused on advocating for legislation that will offer them permanent protection from deportation and, eventually, U.S. citizenship.

The court, in a 5-4 decision, ruled that the Trump administration's actions were "arbitrary and capricious" in attempting to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program known as DACA that was created in 2012 by the Obama administration. DACA, though not a path to citizenship, allowed recipients to work in the United States if they met certain criteria.

The Episcopal Church, acting on resolutions passed by its General Convention, has long advocated for protecting those immigrants. They often are referred to as DREAMers, based on the pending DREAM Act legislation, first introduced in Congress in 2001 but never passed.

"While today's Supreme Court decision provides reprieve for DACA recipients, the DACA program remains in peril," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in a written statement to ENS. "The Episcopal Church calls on Congress to pass the DREAM Act to provide permanent certainty for undocumented people brought to the United States as youth."

Episcopal leaders and other supporters of DACA recipients note that they are contributing members of their communities in the United States and often have no memory of life in their native countries.

"DACA recipients are a vital part of our common life, both in the church and in society as a whole," Curry said. "They are part of God's family. We must give them the peace of mind to know they also belong to the American family."

The Episcopal Church's Washington-based Office of Government Relations, working with Episcopal Migration Ministries, has stepped up its advocacy on the issue this year, in anticipation of the Supreme Court's ruling. The Office of Government Relations issued an action alert in April to its Episcopal Public Policy Network, and since January it has met with staff members in the offices of more than a dozen U.S. senators, said Rushad Thomas, a policy adviser with the Episcopal agency.

The church has urged senators to support DREAM Act legislation already passed by the House of Representatives or to consider compromise measures that would preserve protections for DACA recipients. Such efforts will continue, even after the Supreme Court's ruling, Thomas told ENS.

"Our position is still and will continue to be that Congress needs to enact permanent protection for DACA recipients," Thomas said. "This issue is a major focus for us, and we will continue to stand with DACA recipients and press for the DREAM Act that will give them permanent relief."

Popular opinion has generally sided with such efforts, which occasionally have drawn bipartisan support in Congress and sometimes even from President Donald Trump. The president otherwise has sought to reduce both illegal and legal immigration to the United States, and in September 2017, his administration ordered an end to DACA, arguing that these immigrants' legal residency status needs to be addressed by legislation, not executive action.

During oral arguments in November 2019, members of the Supreme Court's conservative majority appeared willing to agree with the Trump administration that it was justified in ending the protections, but on June 18, Chief Justice John Roberts joined the court's liberal bloc in ruling the administration had not followed proper federal procedures for doing so. The court did not rule on the legality of the DACA program itself.

"While we celebrate the news that protections for DREAMers will remain in place, The Episcopal Church continues to stand with DACA recipients in calling on Congress to enact a legislative solution that provides permanent protections for undocumented youth," the Rev. Charles Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond The Episcopal Church, said in a written statement.

"The Office of Government Relations and the Episcopal Migration Ministries Engagement Unit have put this issue at the top of the agenda in recent months. We will continue to make the case to lawmakers that DACA recipients must be protected."

The DACA ruling comes just three days after the Supreme Court ruled that employers could not discriminate against workers based on sexual orientation or gender identify, another decision that the Episcopal Church celebrated after years of engagement on the issue.

Washington Bishop Mariann Budde and Washington National Cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith issued a joint statement on June 18 acknowledging both decisions. "We give thanks to God for these rulings and for all those who have dedicated their lives to ensuring the legal rights and status of those previously marginalized in this country," Budde and Hollerith said. "We are a better nation when we recognize the full humanity and the gifts of all our people."

The church has been vocal in supporting humane immigration policies for decades. In 2018, the 79th General Convention, meeting in Austin, Texas, passed several immigration-related resolutions, including one that singled out the plight of DACA recipients.

This year, in addition to direct contacts with lawmakers' offices, the Office of Government Relations and Episcopal Migration Ministries have issued calls to Episcopalians to engage in advocacy on the issue. The two church agencies partnered to held webinars, in April and this month, to provide information and personal perspectives, including from Episcopalians who are DACA recipients.

The Rev. Nancy Frausto, a DACA recipient who serves as associate rector at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Long Beach, California, participated in both webinars. When reached by phone after the Supreme Court's ruling, her joy was clear.

"I think most of us were bracing ourselves to hear that DACA was going to be taken away, and this is very unexpected. It's huge," she told ENS. "And we also understand that it's not the end of it."

Frausto, 35, was just 7 years old when her parents took the family across the border into the United States from their native Mexico seeking greater opportunities. She said she didn't realize she was an undocumented immigrant until she began applying for financial aid for college and realized she was missing a Social Security number.

At that time, her family was attending worship services at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Los Angeles. The congregation raised money to help Frausto and other undocumented immigrants attend college, she said. ■

FEATURE

Vacation Bible schools, camps, youth trips on hold for summer

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Nine-year-old Caleb Barnett of Edina, Minn., wasn't the only one getting a bit teary in May when he reluctantly reached for his 2020 calendar and crossed off Christian camp, cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. His mother, Sarah, was as sad as he was. She runs camps for the Episcopal Church in Minnesota (ECMN) and knew he'd be missing a fun learning experience.

But she began to see raw material for Caleb's ongoing spiritual formation in the community that started showing up on their doorstep. Every day at noon, a group of his bike-riding friends — no longer tightly scheduled with organized activities — would swing by to get him and cruise the neighborhood.

Having gotten to know their parents, she decided to invite the families over every Friday for a socially distant backyard camp that's largely about Christian hospitality — and they've been coming. There are even matching T-shirts for all the kids.

"I've actually thought of that as how I could empower my camp families to be that kind of local presence in their neighborhoods this summer," said Barnett, the missioner for children, youth, camp and young adults with ECMN. "Maybe they just do a little picnic every Friday, invite their kids' friends' families and do this kind of relational ministry that Jesus was all about, even if it's not vacation Bible school format."

As the strange summer of 2020 arrives, families are finding that they can't count on the usual seasonal programming to help kids keep making progress in spiritual formation. Short-term mission trips are canceled. Christian camps and vacation Bible schools are taking the season off or pivoting temporarily to new models that can be administered at home, in small, socially distanced groups or online.

Photo/courtesy of Metropolitan AME

Youth take part in vacation Bible school during summer 2019 at Metropolitan AME in Washington, D.C. This year's VBS will be online.

That means parents can't rely solely on professionals to move the faith formation process along. Indeed, those professionals are doubling down on their roles as supporters and partners of family-based ministries. They're becoming equippers by innovating from within their formation traditions — first by assessing families' needs, then by adapting what they have to offer. Formation experts say it's a sound approach: experimenting — fully expecting failures — and frequently reassessing.

"Because we're designing something new, all bets are off," said Abigail Visco Rusert, director of the Institute for Youth Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary. "There are so many restrictions, so many hurdles — but that's where the opportunity lies, too."

Many parents feel torn. Sacred Playgrounds, a consultancy that conducted an April survey of about 2,500 parents who'd previously sent kids to mostly mainline Protestant camps, found that only 19% said they would send their kids to virtual camp programs this year. Another 41% said maybe; 40% said no, not even if it's free.

Parents who have already been looking beyond traditional programming for their kids find this summer nudging them further toward alternatives. A decade ago, Adrienne Davis of Durham, N.C., was a big believer in short-term mission trips and VBS, but now she and her husband use a broader array of tools for teaching their three elementary-age children.

"We really started interrogating, are those [types of programs] the only ways that our kids are growing spiritually?" said Davis, who grew up in an African Methodist Episcopal church and now attends a United Methodist congregation with her family.

They also began to question, she said, whether long-distance mission trips are necessary when so many needs exist near home. She said they aim to foster an environment where their kids learn to confront racism, to integrate faith into daily life and to express whatever doubts they might have.

In past years, the Davis kids have attended a nonreligious anti-racism day camp that's run by Christians whose values the Davises share. This year, they'll be doing safe outdoor activities such as hiking among peers and adults who speak a language of faith.

"Just being in nature, being reconnected to people and land in particular, is kind of our focus right now as we're trying to keep our kids sane," said Davis, whose children are 6, 8 and 11.

Other parents are interested in giving virtual camp a try. For Kari Duong-Topp of Apple Valley, Minn., camps offered through the Episcopal Church in Minnesota have given her two children exposure to a cross section of youth. She hopes that her son, now 17, will say yes to ECMN's alternative this year: weekly Zoom gatherings with his cabin mates from last year, interspersed with activities designed to be fun and reinforce faith commitments.

Photos/courtesy of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota

Campers and counselors in Minnesota pose in 2019.

Kits for making prayer beads at home were prepared by staff and sent to campers.

He's resisted attending church since he was in fifth or sixth grade, Duong-Topp said. But camp was a different story: "Camp gave him a place to talk about some of these things and hear other people talking about it and learn about being of service in a way that he tolerated," she said.

When pursuing formation goals, such as youth leadership in ministry, one helpful practice is human-centered design thinking, said Rusert, of Princeton's Institute for Youth Ministry. A concept borrowed from engineering, it begins with consideration of an end user's needs and context, then works backward to develop systems that are continually tested for user friendliness.

In youth ministry, it can involve identifying core constituencies, naming perceived needs and being willing to keep trying even if initial attempts don't deliver on a specific result, such as increasing biblical literacy among youth over the summer.

Formation is ongoing, Rusert said, never finished in youth or adults. For youth, it is a process of "unearthing" what God is already doing in their lives, rather than trying to mold them into an ideal "product," she said.

They're most affected when this unearthing ministry, which makes youth more aware of who they are and where they feel called, flows from loved ones close to them, such as parents and guardians.

"The thing that has been most successful for the churches that we've worked with is when they've integrated young people on the front end," Rusert said. "It has made all the difference to those young people feeling fed along the way."

What kinds of faith lessons can be learned, living with the constraints of a pandemic?

Formation happens in part by living out the faith's lessons in real-life situations, according to Christian camp consultant Jacob Sorenson of Sacred Playgrounds. In his view, nothing can substitute for a physical camp setting where kids are away from home, differentiating what they believe as individuals and navigating life together.

If a child leaves clothes on someone's bed, for example, and that person is annoyed, "there has to be some sort of reconciliation and forgiveness," Sorenson said.

"So it's not just learning about these things as a disembodied concept. … No, it's like, 'I have been forgiven. I ticked somebody off. I hurt somebody's feelings when I didn't mean to. I have been forgiven for it, and we now move forward as a community, because that's what we do at camp.'"

This year, none of that seems likely, at least in a conventional form, as summer begins. Though some states haven't ruled out mid- or late-summer camps for limited numbers, it's not clear whether that will happen. For instance, as of June 9, at least 81 of the 119 sites affiliated with Lutheran Outdoor Ministries had decided not to open for traditional camp.

Vacation Bible school is getting a remake in terms of format this year, though reconfigurations vary in approach. In Johns Creek, Ga., families are used to dropping kids off at Johns Creek Presbyterian Church for a four-day program that costs $40 for the week. This year, they'll pay a suggested donation of just $10 for supplies that they'll pick up, but they won't be on their own, according to Allison Shearouse, the church's director of Christian education.

VBS ambassadors, who might normally

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COMMENTARY

Recognizing moments of gratitude during a crisis

By Heather L. Melton

In normal life we hardly realize how much more we receive than we give, and life cannot be rich without such gratitude. It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison

The above quote was written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer while imprisoned in Germany near the end of WWII. Bonhoeffer, a German theologian and Lutheran pastor, was being held in prison for treason after participating in a plot to assassinate Hitler, for which Bonhoeffer was ultimately executed. The entire process of writing Letters and Papers from Prison relied upon individuals putting their lives at risk to bring Bonhoeffer writing supplies and to make sure his texts were delivered to those who would preserve them.

In this context, gratitude was likely much clearer, as the costs were especially high for those helping him. The quote makes clear that Bonhoeffer recognized that when everything is going perfectly (or as close to perfectly as we can encounter), it is easy to assume that we have achieved security, happiness or success on our own and overlook those that aided us. It is in moments of struggle that we then realize that our lives and achievements are woven tightly in with the lives of others.

For many of us, the past few months have been an opportunity to recognize that our lives are extremely dependent upon others. Even now, as I write this, the success of finishing the United Thank Offering (UTO) E-News is dependent upon the gift of time to focus, which is granted to me by my family. Writing has never felt like my gift, so I need quiet and time to stare at my computer.

It wasn't until now that I realized that quiet and time were both gifts given by others, in the past by those who cared for my children while I worked, and now from my family as they care for themselves. In the past, however, the quiet hours spent at my desk were not something I reflected on beyond, "It's my job to sit here and work, your job to go to school, and someone else's job to teach and care for you while I work."

Now, I can see the delicate balance of gift all of that was, and I can give thanks for that time and give thanks for the delicate balance that we now have found. Sometimes it takes trials to find our way back to gratitude because gratitude always requires us to acknowledge that we cannot exist without each other, that we cannot thrive without the gifts found in the creation around us and the people we share it with.

It is more comfortable to think that we can do all of these things ourselves; it's harder to acknowledge that we cannot do things alone; and it's challenging when the structures we depend upon shift, break, or disappear. But God has given us the gift of community, of being a part of humanity, to remind us that we are not alone, that we do not have to fix what is broken alone, and that we all have something to share.

Community has been something I have noticed in a more profound way over these months of staying at home. We are truly staying at home. My husband picks up groceries twice a month, other things are delivered, and we only have done a few pickups at other stores. I've not left the house except to go for two hikes with my family, and that felt like medicine for my soul. We do this not only to keep our family safe and healthy, but also to try to keep others who are working safe and healthy. All of a sudden, we are alone and yet connected, and that connection is fueled by gratitude. As I stay home, I find that I am even more aware of those that are out in the community. I see you all keeping those food pantries open, hustling to house the homeless in the midst of increasing restrictions, making sure that elderly folks can get groceries and aren't lonely. I give thanks for you.

> **"It is in moments of struggle that we then realize that our lives and achievements are woven tightly in with the lives of others."**

In fact, I've gotten to know some of you that I wouldn't have met otherwise. Thanks to Anne at Christ Church in Charlevoix, Mich., I was introduced by email to her awesome Episcopal church. I had to Google Charlevoix because I had no idea where it was except that it had to be in the north since there was snow on the ground in the photos. I got to see members of the Sunshine Committee at work in their community, singing songs from the sidewalk and spreading cheer. (Happy 90th birthday to Henry!) I highly recommend visiting the church's webpage to see what the faithful folks of Christ Church are up to, from delivering groceries to gathering to chat on Tuesday mornings to creating a space for people to share what they miss. I am really grateful for the chance to connect with Christ Church, which I'm certain wouldn't have happened otherwise. I am really grateful for all of you who have found your voice, ministry, and mission in your community.

As Bonhoeffer made clear, gratitude acknowledges that when one of us rises, we all rise. When one of us sees a need and a way to address that need, then we all benefit. Over the past few months, the UTO board also has witnessed all the amazing ways churches and church members are stepping up in the midst of the pandemic. Board members also have recognized that the shifting economic realities creating some of these opportunities to step up would also create hardships for congregations.

They looked back at the grant list from the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, they prayed, and they gave thanks. The results of that work, of seeing during this difficult time our connections and the importance to give thanks for those connections, is found in the 2021 UTO Grant Focus and Criteria. UTO's grants reflect expressions of gratitude from thousands of Episcopalians.

I want to make one last connection for those that might need it regarding the important work of racial reconciliation. Three years ago, the UTO board awarded $1.5 million in grants for projects within the church's focus of Becoming Beloved Community.

If you are wondering how you might address issues of racism in your community, please be sure to look at the UTO grant list or asset map to see if there is a site near you that might help you get started on the path to racial reconciliation in your community. I also commend to you our amazing Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation, Rev. Shaneequa Brokenleg, who is here to help you. You can also visit this webpage for some amazing resources. I am also happy to help connect you further with grant sites or staff, so please reach out if you need help. ■

The Rev. Canon Heather L. Melton is staff officer for the United Thank Offering. This article originally appeared in UTO E-News and has been edited for Episcopal Journal. Readers may subscribe to the newsletter at https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/uto/united-thank-offering-e-newsletter.

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have led stations at the church during VBS, instead might organize two or three families to do some of the activities together.

This is allowing us the opportunity to do VBS in a way that makes it more a part of their community and day-to-day life than maybe it had been in the past," Shearouse said.

At Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., VBS organizers are taking a different approach. Vacation Bible school will still meet nightly for a week as usual, but instead of three hours at the church, this year's program will be condensed into one hour per night by Zoom.

"Keep it engaging, keep it short, and don't overwhelm our people" is the approach, said the Rev. Thomas Brackeen, the minister to youth and families at Metropolitan AME. "We can extend our outreach beyond the church walls by providing these virtual opportunities."

The online mode suits Metropolitan, Brackeen said, because it's a commuter congregation. Most members live outside the city; many drive as far as 45 minutes each way. Unlike for Johns Creek, clustering in backyards for VBS activities won't work for Metropolitan's dispersed congregation. Yet the more frequently kids hop online to join friends and adults from church, the more they feel connected despite geographic distances. VBS will reinforce that habit this year. ■

Photo/courtesy of Paoli Presbyterian Church

The Joy Project was a youth-led effort at Paoli Presbyterian Church in Paoli, Penn.

This article originally appeared on the Faith and Leadership website, a learning resource for Christian leaders and their institutions from Leadership Education at Duke Divinity.

FAITH AND THE ARTS

A racial-justice book study turns personal at two South Carolina churches

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

It's been nearly four years since Grace Church Cathedral in Charleston, S.C., and its next-door neighbor, Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, first came together for a racial justice book study, but the chosen reading for the group's June 2 meeting took a back seat to participants' lived experiences.

It was the study group's first meeting since vast protests erupted in Charleston and around the country following the May 25 killing of George Floyd by white police officers in Minneapolis. Those events were still unfolding as the 60 or so participants joined the online meeting hosted by the two churches.

"It's been an emotionally tough week. Living under the burden of racism is tough," Tonnia Switzer told the group.

Grace, a mostly white Episcopal congregation, began the book study group in response to the June 17, 2015, massacre by a white supremacist of nine members of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church during a Bible study at the Charleston church. Two months earlier, a North Charleston police officer had shot and killed Walter Scott, an unarmed black motorist. The killings sent shockwaves through Charleston and ignited a national conversation about the legacy of slavery and the Confederacy and the systemic racism built into American institutions from the nation's founding.

With the city approaching five years since the massacre, Charleston was among the locations where violent unrest marred otherwise peaceful protests the weekend after Floyd's killing. Graphic cellphone video footage of the killing fueled national outrage. The video showed Minneapolis police pinning Floyd, an unarmed black man, to the ground for nearly nine minutes, with one officer's knee pressed against Floyd's neck as he pleaded, "I can't breathe."

The killing thrust discussions of race and policing to the forefront of America's consciousness, though people of color have long been victims of police brutality and white vigilantism, even before Floyd's death. "It certainly reminded me and haunted me afresh," the Rev. Kylon Middleton, senior pastor of the historically black Mount Zion, told the book study group.

This meeting, like others in recent weeks, convened online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Middleton and the Ven. Callie Walpole, the cathedral's vicar and subdean, allowed ENS to observe the session on Zoom.

Since forming in September 2016, as Charleston gunman Dylann Roof's federal trial was about to get underway, the group has read and discussed together more than two dozen race-related books. After recent discussions of Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me," the group on June 2 broke from its normal format to allow participants to share their thoughts on systemic racism and recent events.

"I think this topic is something that all, throughout the world, people have on their minds," said Abe Jenkins, grandson of civil rights activist Esau Jenkins. "Before we can ever reconcile racial relations, we've got to first acknowledge that the problem exists and have a conversation about it."

After 400 years of oppression, those are difficult conversations for African Americans to initiate with their white neighbors, Middleton said. Some in the white community resist calls for change by saying instead the descendants of slaves should simply get over it, an attitude that Middleton suggested is driven by fear rather than facts.

Photo/Reuters

Liz Alston, church historian of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., sits in the front row of the sanctuary after a Sunday morning service in 2018.

Middleton was a close friend of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, pastor of Mother Emanuel, who was gunned down by Roof along with the eight others from the congregation. In January 2017, a federal jury sentenced an unrepentant Roof to death for the rampage.

In May 2017, Michael Slager, the former North Charleston police officer, pleaded guilty to fatally shooting Scott in the back during a traffic stop for a broken taillight. A judge later sentenced Slager to 20 years in prison.

Three years later, a series of incidents in Georgia, Kentucky and Minnesota have become flashpoints for a new wave of protests against racial injustice. In addition to Floyd's killing, they include the February killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a black jogger by a white father and son in Georgia, and the March killing of Breonna Taylor, a black woman fatally shot by police during a raid of her home in Kentucky.

"Just being black, period — it's almost like living while black — you have [white] individuals who are automatically afraid," Middleton said. He told the story of visiting a parishioner in a hospital. While riding the elevator up, his mind was on finding the patient's room, until he noticed a white woman next to him, cowering and clutching her purse.

"You never really forget it. You never really get over it," he said.

Switzer, echoing other black participants in the meeting, said white acquaintances in recent days had expressed sympathy to her, saying they've followed news of the protests after Floyd's killing and didn't realize how seriously black Americans still feel the sting of racism — "we didn't know it was that bad."

To that, Switzer didn't hide her disbelief: "Are you living under a rock?"

In the days leading up to the book study, daily peaceful protests had given way overnight to rioting and looting in Charleston. "We had protests, we had curfews, we had riots, we had vandalism, and it was just awful," Middleton told ENS. He and other faith leaders had been working long hours to promote peace and prayer during the protests and to help to clean up their neighborhoods afterward.

Since that first weekend, violence in Charleston has subsided, according to the Post and Courier, as demonstrators continue to call for criminal justice reforms and greater police accountability. That spirit of engagement enlivened the churches' book study.

White participants outnumbered black participants by about three to one, but at one point, Walpole, who also serves as archdeacon of the Diocese of South Carolina, urged those white participants to hold off speaking so they could listen to others' perspectives on what had been happening in their community and around the country after Floyd's killing.

"It reminded me so much of Emmett Till, whistling or whatever to a white woman," Jenkins told the group. That was Mississippi in 1955, and the 14-year-old Till met the same fate. "They killed him."

He added that this younger generation of black activists is different, not afraid of police, not afraid of talking back, not even afraid of dying while fighting for change. "People are just fed up," Jenkins said. He doesn't want rioting to distract from what the peaceful protests are really about. "The core problem is the injustice."

What can white people of faith do to help? Get the facts about what is going on in the country, Switzer said. She usually tries not to make waves on Facebook, but she has begun posting links for white friends about how to become an anti-racist.

"I need you to do the work," she said. "I need you to get up and speak."

Defensive reactions like "I'm not a racist" aren't helpful, said Gail DeCosta,

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a black Episcopalian who serves on the vestry at Grace. "That's just too easy to say. People have got to be made to be aware they're doing racist things, whether they think they're racist or not."

Liz Alston, a member of Mother Emanuel, suggested that white neighbors who aren't sure how best to support racial healing shouldn't feel discouraged from the work. "Start slow, but do something," she said. Write a letter to the editor. Start a conversation in the neighborhood. Confront a relative who has expressed racist views.

"I'm not saying it's easy," she said, "but black life isn't easy either and we have stood up."

In 2015, Charleston was the flashpoint. The massacre at Mother Emanuel dominated national news. Walpole said some members of her congregation and other nearby Episcopal churches began opening their eyes to the prevalence and nature of racism that still existed in their community and the country.

"The way I describe it is, any veneer that might have existed was stripped away by the massacre, and we realized we had to be in relationship with one another and in conversation with one another," Walpole said in an interview with ENS before the book session.

But up to that point, there had been little relationship or conversation between Grace and Mount Zion, Middleton told ENS. With their churches separated only by a chest-high white wall and Grace's parking lot, the congregations mostly kept to themselves. In the 1970s and 1980s, "I definitely couldn't go into Grace Church when I was a boy growing up," said Middleton, now 48. In the ensuing years, the congregations made occasional attempts to come together, such as at joint Pentecost services, but those efforts didn't go much further.

Conditions slowly began to change in 2015. After Roof's arrest, details of his fondness for the Confederate flag prompted some Southern leaders to order an end to displaying the flag at statehouses and other public places, a sudden and dramatic reversal after years of resistance to calls for the flag's removal. Five years later, American institutions still face pressure to curtail public display of the flag and other Confederate symbols.

The massacre also inspired action by the Episcopal Church's General Convention. Meeting a month after the attack, bishops and deputies passed a resolution condemning the Confederate battle flag as "at odds with a faithful witness to the reconciling love of Jesus Christ."

That month, General Convention also elected the church's first black presiding bishop, Michael Curry, and it established racial reconciliation as one of the church's top priorities, along with evangelism and creation care. Two years later, the church would introduce its cornerstone initiative on race, Becoming Beloved Community.

At Grace, founded in 1846, work toward racial healing was just getting off the ground in September 2016. Walpole said some members of her congregation expressed interest in probing difficult issues of race and the history of slavery, by reading and discussing books on the topic. The aim wasn't to guilt white members for the sins of their ancestors, "but simply to allow our eyes to be opened and see where we might have been blind before," she said.

They started with Michelle Alexander's influential "The New Jim Crow," which makes the case that oppression of black Americans, far from ending with slavery and segregation, has evolved into a new racial caste system centered around mass incarceration. A 2015 General Convention resolution recommended the book by name.

Since then, the book study group has read and discussed Toni Morrison's "The Origin of Others," Jon Meacham's "The Soul of America," Henry Louis Gates' "Stony the Road" and C. Vann Woodward's "The Strange Career of Jim Crow," among other books, as well as Paul's letter to Philemon, for a biblical reading on slavery.

The Rev. Kylon Middleton, senior pastor of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., speaks during the Zoom session of the book study he co-leads.

Photos/ENS via Zoom

The Ven. Callie Walpole, vicar and subdean of Grace Church Cathedral in Charleston, S.C., is a co-leader of the book study group that meets Tuesday evenings at the cathedral.

"We take our time with these books," Walpole said, sometimes analyzing just a chapter at a time. Every Tuesday at 5 p.m. year-round, all are invited to the cathedral for the hourlong discussion, even if they haven't read the week's assignment.

Walpole, who grew up just outside Charleston on Johns Island, initially thought the book study would only draw five or six people, but it has grown to a regular turnout of 40 to 60 participants, with an even larger crowd when visited by a guest speaker, such as the mayor or police chief. On those occasions, the group often bonds over a dinner of okra soup, a Southern dish that Walpole says is "what you serve your family."

Many of the participants are from Grace and Mount Zion, but it also draws people from other congregations, a mix of local Episcopal churches, as well as AME churches and other historically black congregations.

"What has occurred is more than we ever imagined," Walpole said, and even more important now, with the country intensely focused on racial justice issues. "I feel there are people across the church and the country that are maybe ready to have these conversations."

Middleton, a Charleston native, has been senior pastor at Mount Zion since November 2015. He wasn't involved in the book study from the start, but a white member of Mount Zion who had begun attending asked Middleton to come along in fall 2016. At the time, he felt exhausted after long days at the federal court with relatives of Roof's victims observing his monthslong jury selection, trial and sentencing. "The last thing I wanted to do was come to a book study talking about race relations," he said.

But one Tuesday evening, he dropped by Grace Church Cathedral. The group was still discussing "The New Jim Crow." Middleton came and sat in a seat along the wall. He kept silent.

"They're reading this book, but they don't really have the context," Middleton recalled thinking. The black perspective was missing, he said, and the difference between white and black experiences left him bewildered.

After the hour, he went home. "And I never intended to come back," he said.

Middleton returned anyway and now leads the group with Walpole. He told ENS that he was compelled by a desire to help the group of white Christians expand its perspective, to think differently about the black experience and "the stain that continues to penetrate every area and facet of society because we have never fully dealt with the institution of slavery and the aftermath thereof."

He had read "The New Jim Crow" but had not studied it in an academic way, like the group was. He went back and read the book again so he would be prepared to discuss it with them.

"I have lived this," he said. "I didn't need to study it. But I do need to study your perspective."

In June 2015, Middleton was serving as pastor of a different AME congregation about 60 miles away in Georgetown when he got word of the massacre in Charleston. The call came from the wife of Pinckney, the Mother Emanuel pastor. She told Middleton he should come to Charleston immediately. He arrived that evening.

Pinckney and Middleton grew up together. They didn't live in the same community — Pinckney was originally from Ridgeland — but they became close while attending AME youth group events together. As adults, each served as godfather to the other's children. Pinckney "was like a brother to me," Middleton said.

The killings left a wound of grief that has yet to heal fully, and Middleton is surrounded by reminders. "It never goes away," Middleton said. "There's always a story that comes back up. … It's more than just a story in the news. It's personal."

Middleton said he and other black participants also sometimes feel ambivalence and weariness toward talking about racism with their white counterparts.

"It's a hard thing to keep talking about," Middleton told ENS. "Sometimes, my members become extremely exhausted because you're living this every day, so you don't want to keep talking about it every day."

But Middleton, who initially thought he'd never return, now has the 5 p.m. hour on Tuesdays blocked off every week in his calendar. He's always there, even though the discussion may prove frustrating or bring up painful memories.

"We have to keep talking about it," he said, particularly with white listeners "who are willing to talk about it and be moved into a position of empathy and understanding and awareness." Even when someone in the book study mentions the nine people killed at Mother Emanuel, "I don't like hearing about it, but every time I hear about it, it makes me want to do something else to make sure their lives were not lost in vain."

Like Grace Church Cathedral, the Episcopal Church's membership is overwhelmingly white — 90 percent white, according to the Pew Research Center. But among the subset of cathedral parishioners and other white participants who choose to attend the book study, Middleton and Walpole can challenge them to reconsider their assumptions on matters of race.

The sessions can be "grueling" but still worthwhile, Walpole said. Middleton, too, is dedicated to this work, even when he doesn't enjoy it.

A few months ago, a white member of the group stood up and declared herself to be a racist, a moment of public confession and self-examination that Middleton likened to a scene from an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. The woman later asked Middleton how he felt attending the book study.

"It feels like, when I come here for one hour, it's almost like being waterboarded," Middleton said. "For me, it's torture."

It was not until Floyd's killing that he fully understood why. His epiphany, he said, was embedded in a metaphor used by the Rev. Al Sharpton in his June 4 eulogy for Floyd to describe black Americans' centuries of struggle within a dominant white culture.

It can feel like you're drowning, Middleton told ENS. It can feel like you're trying to come up for air, trying to affirm your own experience, to explain so others will understand. The body is present, but it can feel like the emotional dynamic is somehow divorced from the physical. It can feel like to survive each moment requires compartmentalizing thoughts and feelings, constantly attentive to what is said and left unsaid.

And it can feel like someone is pressing his knee into your neck.

"When George Floyd was on the ground … that's exactly the black experience," Middleton said, echoing Sharpton. "The proverbial knee has been on our neck in so many ways, to oppress, repress, restrict and just marginalize us forever in this country.

"So, I get it. I cannot breathe." ■

NEWS

Nuevo Amanecer's virtual switch amid COVID-19 pandemic reflects change and growth in Latino/Hispanic ministries

By Shireen Korkzan
Episcopal News Service

When the coronavirus pandemic forced Nuevo Amanecer organizers to take the popular biennial Latino and Hispanic ministries conference online, they didn't expect to attract global participation.

Historically, most of the conference's attendees have come from the United States, as travel visa restrictions and costs prohibit wider participation from Latin America and beyond. But by quickly adapting the three-day in-person conference to an online format held one Saturday a month over six months, Nuevo Amanecer has nearly doubled its participation and expanded its audience.

Screenshot/Millard Cook

COVID-19 forced the biennial Nuevo Amanecer conference online, a twist that has increased the popular Latino/Hispanic Ministry conference's global reach.

Surprisingly, organizers found that 49% of participants joined the virtual conference by computers, smartphones and tablets from Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. About 700 people have registered for the 2020 virtual conference, up from 462 in-person participants in 2018.

"We've learned that we have a wider reach virtually," said Luis Enrique Hernandez Rivas, co-coordinator of Nuevo Amanecer. "It's amazing how the spirit works."

Now in its eighth year, Nuevo Amanecer, which in Spanish means "new dawn," celebrates and supports Latino/Hispanic ministries across the Episcopal Church by providing participants opportunities to network and grow together in discipleship. Previous conferences have taken place at Kanuga, a camp and conference center in Hendersonville, N.C.

The six-session conference is organized around the theme: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5), which calls for Episcopal Latinos and those involved in Latino ministry to think about how to build a new church in modern times. Each successive session focuses on a smaller theme.

"This virtual Nuevo Amanecer is really going in with the Revelation theme," the Rev. Juan Sandoval, an archdeacon in the Diocese of Atlanta and deacon for Hispanic ministries and pastoral care at the Cathedral of St. Philip, told ENS. "Who was to know that the COVID-19 pandemic was going to happen and we really did have to make all things new?"

The conference's first session, held in May, focused on COVID-19, while June's session focused on digital evangelization. The third session, scheduled for July 11 at 1 p.m. EDT, will center on women's leadership in the church and feature Dean Miguelina Howell of Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford, Conn., as the keynote speaker. Howell is the first Latina dean of an Episcopal cathedral.

The remaining three sessions' themes will cover inclusion of Latinos in the church and a celebration of Latino/Hispanic ministries' 50th anniversary, coinciding with Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs Sept. 15–Oct. 15.

Nuevo Amanecer's planning team had considered canceling or postponing the 2020 conference but decided to make it virtual so that registered participants and all others interested could engage in formation and fellowship.

"[The] coronavirus came to us fairly quickly this spring, and we had to decide how we were going to hold Nuevo Amanecer in a short amount of time," said the Rev. Anthony Guillén, The Episcopal Church's Latino/Hispanic ministries missioner and director of ethnic ministries. "Do we cancel it? Do we wait two more years, or do we do something virtually?"

The Episcopal Church's Latino/Hispanic ministries provide guidance to strengthen and support Spanish-speaking communities in the Anglican tradition. Efforts include assisting with church planting, providing bilingual resources for individuals and congregations, and offering educational opportunities for church members to serve their local Latino communities.

Individual parish ministries vary. For example, efforts may include growing community gardens, giving money and detergent to help parishioners do laundry, serving meals to the hungry, advocating for comprehensive immigration reform, offering sanctuary to undocumented immigrants and aiding farmworkers.

"Latino ministry is the church's ministry," Rivas said. "The conference certainly is focused on ministry among Latin people, but not only people from Latin America do Latino ministry. All are invited to and can feel empowered through this conference. … These opportunities benefit Latinos and non-Latinos alike."

Nuevo Amanecer is not exclusive to Latinos and Spanish speakers. People of all races and ethnicities are welcome to participate. For those who cannot attend the live sessions, recordings are available on the Episcopal Church's Latino/Hispanic ministries' Facebook page and at latinosepiscopales.org.

"For me, Nuevo Amanecer means an opportunity to learn more about what other ministers and churches are doing, how they worship and perhaps new prayers, new services and new faces," Sandoval said. "Networking is always my favorite part of Nuevo Amanecer, and each time I find I get to reunite with previous acquaintances and [make] new ones."

This helps keep ministries and friendships fresh for Latinos and non-Latinos. Nuevo Amanecer also helps non-Latinos who serve Latino ministries understand their cultures better and learn how to adapt worship for different circumstances.

"One of the things that was foremost on our minds: How do we foster the sense of community and new relationships virtually and still provide plenaries, worship and workshops?" Guillén told ENS. "Some people say that Nuevo Amanecer is like a big family reunion. It's a time for people in the ministry to come together, to network, to make connections and to learn from each other."

June's virtual session, held on the 13th, started with welcome and worship, followed by a plenary, titled "Digital Evangelism and the Future of the Church," which Guillén hosted. Participants then transitioned into four separate workshops of their choice: "Making 'New Things' in the Church," "Technology at Your Fingertips," "How to YouTube Evangelize" and "How to Livestream Events." Half of the workshops were offered in Spanish and the other half in English.

During the workshop portion, attendees briefly split into breakout rooms to collaborate on listing solutions to issues their workshop leaders addressed. After another short transitional break, participants engaged in a virtual coffee hour to network and share what they have learned. The total monthly session lasted three hours. Future sessions will be similarly structured.

Nuevo Amanecer is also offering a playlist of traditional Sunday school activities for children before it starts so that they can be engaged while their parents are attending the conference.

Adialyn Milien, Nuevo Amanecer's communications and social media team leader, said she's most looking forward to the final session in October because the keynote speaker will be Ana Victoria Lantigua Zaya, a woman from the Dominican Republic in her early 20s who served on the Episcopal Youth Planning Team in 2019.

"She will be ending the series because we want people to understand that there's room for everybody in the Episcopal Church; everyone is welcome and can play a role in the church," Milien said. "We mostly have old white men in positions of power, and so we are telling people that the future of the church is in our hands, especially in the Latino community."

Once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, Nuevo Amanecer conferences will return to Kanuga, but a virtual component will also be available for those who cannot attend in person.

"Someday we will return to the church buildings, and many will want to, but I don't think it will be the same," Rivas said. "We have opened the church doors to many new people around the world, and now they are a part of our family." ■

Shireen Korkzan is a Midwest-based freelance reporter who primarily writes about religion, race, ethnicity and social justice issues.

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Carlos agreed. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on African Americans and Latinos and the killings of black people by white police officers and vigilantes, compound the collective trauma experienced by the nation.

"More than ever, we have to be vigilant and acutely aware about issues of mental health and wellness," Carlos said.

She emphasized self-care, adding that while digital and online church worship offers connection and support, "it is also challenging and exhausting. Find other ways to stay spiritually and emotionally connected, reaching out via telephone and letters. Stick to your routines, get physical exercise and rest. Stay on top of your medicine and doctor appointments, even if it means tele-health care."

Coleman, UBE's national president, emphasized that engaging in peaceful and productive action is also required to ensure "long overdue transformation for people of color, particularly our black brothers and sisters, to channel our anger and outrage into changing the oppressive systems that direct our lives.

"That means blacks must vote and get others to vote," Coleman added. "We must complete the census, hold constructive conversations with our policing authorities that then hold officers accountable and support black organizations like the UBE — the only one of its type for the Episcopal Church.

"We are on the ground, doing the work. That's the way our mental anguish gives birth to reconciling change." ■

NEWS

South Carolina judge issues ruling contrary to state Supreme Court decision in church property case

Diocese of South Carolina

South Carolina Circuit Court Judge Edgar Dickson, tasked in November 2017 by the South Carolina Supreme Court with enforcing the final judgment of the Supreme Court, which ruled in August 2017 that the diocesan property and 29 parishes should be returned to the parties affiliated with The Episcopal Church, issued an order on June 19 that seems to be contrary to the Supreme Court's decision.

In his order, he ruled that the properties instead belong to each congregation, using the application of the neutral principles of law. His order indicates that the historic Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina has no interest in the properties of the breakaway congregations that left the historic diocese and the Episcopal Church.

While the August 2017 final judgement of the South Carolina Supreme Court was based on a finding that these specific diocesan properties had acceded to the 1979 Dennis Canon, Dickson found no explicit accession existed. As noted in the order, the 1979 Dennis Canon states the following:

"All real and personal property held by or for the benefit of any Parish, Mission or Congregation is held in trust for this Church and the Diocese thereof in which such Parish, Mission or Congregation is located. The existence of this trust, however, shall in no way limit the power and authority of the Parish, Mission or Congregation otherwise existing over such property so long as the particular Parish, Mission or Congregation remain a part of, and subject to this Church and its Constitution and Canons."

In his opinion with the majority in August 2017, Supreme Court Justice Costa Pleicones noted that a failure to recognize the "ecclesiastical nature of this dispute" would "impose a requirement that each local church must specifically accede to the Dennis Canon before it can be bound. Such a requirement entangles the civil court in church matters, for The Episcopal Church's Canons specifically provide that 'no such action shall be necessary for the existence and validity of the trust.'"

Dickson's on June 19 appears inconsistent with that final judgement. However, representatives of the diocese remain positive about the future. "This is not a final decision; it is yet another step on a long journey to full reconciliation within our diocese," said Diocesan Chancellor Thomas S. Tisdale Jr.

"While we are understandably disappointed that Judge Dickson has not enforced the Supreme Court's decision as directed, we are hopeful that the South Carolina Supreme Court will hear the matter promptly and correct any errors that exist in today's order," said Tisdale. "Our legal team has already begun working on a formal response to this order that will be filed in the near future." ■

Texas Supreme Court rules against Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth in property dispute

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

On May 22, the Supreme Court of Texas issued a ruling against the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth and in favor of a breakaway group now affiliated with the Anglican Church in North America in a dispute over which group legally controls the diocese's property.

The ruling reversed a 2018 appeals court decision that established The Episcopal Church's diocese, led by Bishop Scott Mayer, as the rightful controller of the Diocese of Fort Worth. In 2008, a majority of clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of Fort Worth voted to leave The Episcopal Church and join the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone over doctrinal differences on topics like same-sex marriage and the ordination of women. Now there are two entities calling themselves the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth: the original diocese associated with The Episcopal Church and the breakaway group that is now part of the Anglican Church in North America.


Mayer

The Supreme Court decision puts the ACNA-affiliated group in control of the diocese's $100 million worth of property.

"This decision is a disappointment to us all, but as followers of Jesus Christ, we live in hope," Mayer wrote in a letter to his diocese. "Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry joins me in acknowledging our disappointment and urging all of us to be gentle with one another during this trying time, with the important goal of continuing our worship of God and our ministries in this diocese in as uninterrupted [a] manner as possible. Now I, other diocesan leaders, and our legal team have to make decisions about our next steps."

Katie Sherrod, the Episcopal diocese's director of communications, said the diocesan leadership is "deeply disappointed and actually shocked by this decision" and will now consider whether to appeal to the United States Supreme Court.

"If we know anything about the people of the Diocese of Fort Worth, it is that they are resilient. They are faithful," Sherrod told ENS. "And they've been through this once before, when they lost everything and came back, and I suspect they'll do it again." ■

NEWS

Mississippi bishop joins calls for removal of Confederate flag from state's flag

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

As Americans re-examine the persistence of systemic racism in the United States in light of recent highly publicized killings of black people by police, the debate has gone beyond policies, sparking arguments about what symbols should be displayed in public places.

The push to remove Confederate monuments around the country, which gathered steam in the aftermath of the 2015 massacre at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., has gained further momentum in recent weeks. Those calling for the removal of statues of Confederate soldiers say the monuments honor and perpetuate the violent white supremacy that the Confederacy was founded on.

One symbol that is proving harder to remove than an individual statue is the Confederate battle flag that appears on the state flag of Mississippi. The flag now commonly known as simply "the Confederate flag" — which was used as a battle flag by Confederate troops and formed part of the Confederacy's official flag from 1863 to 1865 — has occupied the upper left corner of Mississippi's flag since 1894.

Photo/Rogelio V. Solis/AP

Members of Working Together Mississippi, including Bishop Brian Seage (second from left), hold a news conference calling for the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the current Mississippi state flag at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Jackson, Miss.

Bishop Brian Seage of the Diocese of Mississippi, like many other Mississippians, thinks it doesn't belong there.

"I believe this flag belongs in museums and in archives and in history books," Seage told ENS, calling it a "deeply pastoral and moral" issue rather than a political stance.

"When we see the Confederate battle flag, yes, it represents history, but it also represents a painful period for folks — a really painful period … for many of our African American brothers and sisters, of injustice and an intention to not really see their full humanity."

Seage and about 20 other Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith leaders — part of a group called Working Together Mississippi — gathered on June 11 to share that message at a news conference in front of the Roman Catholic cathedral in Jackson, the state capital.

"It is time for a new flag that truly represents all of us," Seage said at the news conference. "We call for our legislative leaders to act now."

In a 2001 referendum, 64% of voters chose to keep the flag, and numerous attempts to change it in the state legislature since 2015 have failed despite bipartisan support. Mississippi's state flag is now the only one that incorporates the Confederate battle flag; that symbol was removed from Georgia's flag in 2003, although the flag that replaced it is based on the first national flag of the Confederacy.

Democrats in the Mississippi legislature have revived the push to change the flag over the past two weeks, but their efforts so far have been blocked by some Republicans. On June 19, the NCAA announced that it will not hold championship events in Mississippi unless the state removes the Confederate banner from its flag.

In 2001 and again in 2016, the Diocese of Mississippi overwhelmingly

Photo/Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

The Mississippi state flag, which incorporates the Confederate battle flag, hangs with other state flags in the subway system under the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

passed resolutions encouraging the state to change the flag, Seage said. But his outspoken stance on the flag has gotten pushback from "people who really have a strong attachment to the family history that the Confederate battle flag represents for them," he said.

"They're difficult conversations, without a doubt, because it's very charged emotionally," Seage told ENS. "And one of the things that I always try to do is affirm the importance that it serves for their family … Unfortunately, what the flag also represents for a significant portion of Mississippi's population, namely the African American population — it represents a picture of non-inclusion. It represents, for them, violence … It represents a way of life that had the intention of keeping them enslaved." ■