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UTO grants help feeding ministries expand

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

A Caring Place didn't start as a feeding ministry. When the upstart nonprofit in Lexington, Ky., was founded last year by members of two closely aligned Episcopal and Lutheran congregations, its primary mission was to alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness among senior citizens in the area. One initial plan was to gather seniors for conversation over doughnuts once a week.

A Caring Place only hosted one such gathering, in March 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic forced widespread cancellation of in-person activities to slow the virus's spread, but organizers' emphasis on providing food to participants only grew.

"Food sources were drying up for a lot of people," said Roxanne Cheney, a member of St. Martha's Episcopal Church who chairs A Caring Place's board. At the onset of the pandemic, Meals on Wheels and other local feeding ministries suspended or reduced their services, so "these people who were in our program had no way to feed themselves."

Photo/Martha Goodwill

Volunteers harvest fresh produce at Benison Farm in St. Petersburg, Fla.

To fill that gap, A Caring Place implemented its own full-fledged feeding ministry, which now delivers hot lunches to about 20 recipients, five days a week. In October, the ministry was among the recipients of grants from the Episcopal Church's United Thank Offering, or UTO, which focused this round of grants on ministries that are responding to the pandemic in their communities.

The grants, which are approved by Executive Council and funded by UTO thank offerings, totaled $450,000 to support 21 ministries within the Episcopal Church and an additional five around the Anglican Communion. They offer a range of responses to the pandemic, and A Caring Place is one of several recipients focused on feeding ministries.

"This UTO grant that came along is just a godsend," Cheney told Episcopal News Service. A Caring Place, which started as a joint ministry of St. Martha's and Word of Hope Lutheran Church, will use the $20,800 to purchase enough ingredients to continue providing hot lunches to low-income and homebound residents for up to a year. Com-

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O COME, LET US ADORE HIM

A stained-glass window depicts the Nativity at Church of the Good Shepherd in Buffalo, N.Y. The window was created in the Willet Studios of Philadelphia, founded in 1898 by William Willet, an artist and leader in the American Gothic movement. Willet windows are also found in Trinity Episcopal Church in Buffalo, the United Nations Church Center in New York and Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco.

Photo/Church of the Good Shepherd

The religious legacy of the Pilgrims: it's complicated

By Peter C. Mancall

The 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' voyage to Plymouth is being celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic with a "remembrance ceremony" with state and local officials and a museum exhibit in Plymouth, England.

Yet as a scholar of early 17th-century New England, I've always been puzzled by the glory heaped on the Pilgrims and their settlement in Plymouth.

Native Americans had met Europeans in scores of places before 1620, so yet another encounter was hardly unique. Relative to other settlements, the colony attracted few migrants. And it lasted only 70 years.

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

Photo/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA

Plimoth Plantation, in Plymouth, Mass., is a living museum that's a replica of the original settlement, which existed for 70 years.

So why does it have such a prominent place in the story of America? And why, until recently, did the more troubling aspects to Plymouth and its founding document, the Mayflower Compact, go ignored?

Prophets and profits

The Mayflower arrived on Nov. 11, 1620, but the establishment of Plymouth did not occur in a vacuum.

The Pilgrims' decision to go to North America — and their deep attachment to their faith — was an outcome of the intense religious conflict roiling Europe after the Protestant Reformation.

Shortly before the travelers' arrival, the Wampanoag residents of Patuxet — the area in and around modern-day Plymouth — had suffered a devastating, three-year epidemic, possibly caused by

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CONVERSATIONS

Why I still watch 'Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown'

By Pamela A. Lewis

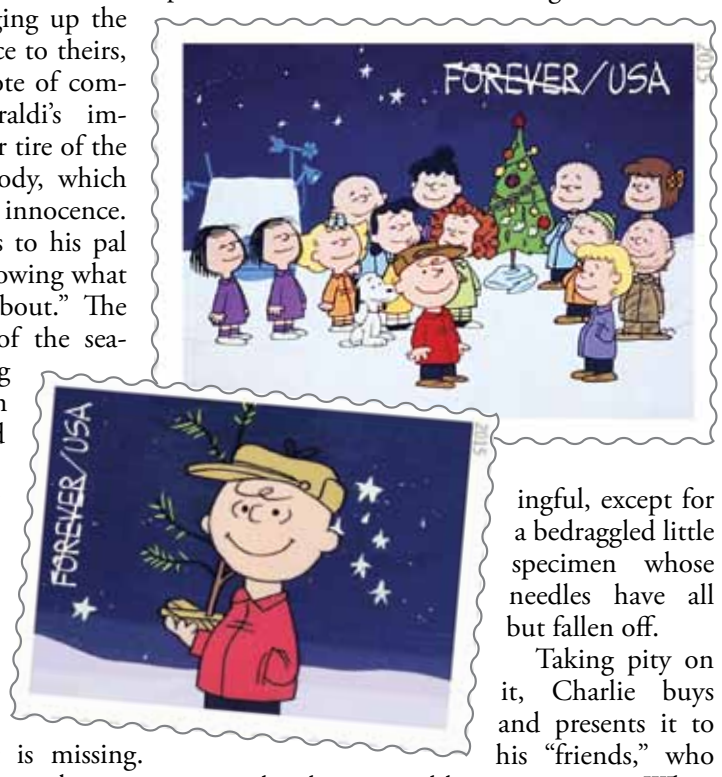
LIKE MANY Americans of my generation, I have been a big fan of "Peanuts," the cartoon created by the late Charles Schulz. As a kid, I impatiently awaited the delivery of the Sunday papers so I could turn immediately to the page where Charlie Brown, Linus, Lucy, Snoopy, and their motley group of friends held court and made me and my parents laugh at their amusing adventures and experiences.

I loved each of the main characters because of the way Schulz designed their physical characteristics: Lucy's big gaping mouth that either bossed others or was Snoopy's target for one of his dreaded sloppy wet "kisses"; Charlie Brown with his nearly bald pate and woe-is-me expression; or the rumpled Pig Pen, who was eternally surrounded in a cloud of dust. By some mysterious alchemy, Schulz gave his characters personalities that were at turns irritating and endearing.

The Peanuts gang also came across as real children; they were kids like me who went to school, struggled at times with their lessons, and were mystified by the grownups who raised and taught them. They played games (which Charlie Brown never succeeded in winning), teased one another, and developed crushes (see Lucy and Schroeder).

The Peanuts kids also celebrated our culture's popular holidays, and in 1965, Charlie Brown and his pals moved from the funny papers to the big time: Television. First, there was the Halloween special *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown,* where actors gave the gang their unique and now recognizable voices. But *Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown* would be different, playing to a wider audience and handling a more significant story.

"Christmastime is here, happiness and cheer," the kids sing in the film's introduction as they glide in a serpentine, Snap the Whip line across a frozen pond (with Snoopy bringing up the rear). I join my voice to theirs, reveling in every note of composer Vince Guaraldi's immortal score. I never tire of the uncomplicated melody, which evokes joy, hope and innocence. Charlie Brown frets to his pal Linus about not knowing what Christmas "is all about." The commercialization of the season, heavy with bling and glitz, leaves him feeling confused and kind of empty. Even Charlie's dog Snoopy has his canine pad rigged out with colorful and flashing lights. But for Charlie Brown, something is wrong with this picture. Something is missing. Yes, Charlie, I understand.



Charlie later gets what he thinks is a brilliant idea to solve his problem: put on an old-fashioned Christmas pageant, complete with the Three Wise Men and bleating sheep. "No, no, no!" objects know-it-all Lucy. It's got to have "Santa Claus, deck them halls, Ho-ho-ho, and pretty girls," she explains while batting her eyes at her love interest, Schroeder, whose task is to provide the pageant's music.

Despite his best efforts to organize the pageant, it doesn't come together. No one cooperates, least of all Snoopy, who prefers dancing atop Schroeder's piano rather than listening to his master's instructions.

Charlie and Linus' trip to the local Christmas tree market to buy one for the pageant doesn't help matters, either. Shiny and glammed-up trees are everywhere, but there is nothing real or meaningful, except for a bedraggled little specimen whose needles have all but fallen off.

Taking pity on it, Charlie buys and presents it to his "friends," who laugh it — and him — to scorn. When he places an ornament on one fragile branch, the tree bends deeply, nearly breaking under the bauble's weight. "Ugh, I've killed it," laments Charlie, believing again that he can't do anything right, not even choose a good Christmas tree.

"I can tell you what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown," says Linus very calmly, as they stand in the school auditorium where the pageant will take place. One spotlight sheds a beam on Linus (now without his trusty security blanket) as he takes to the empty stage. He recites the ancient verses from the Gospel of Luke (2:1-14): "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger …" Finally, Charlie Brown understands. The pathetic little tree that looked as if it wouldn't amount to much, then receives a loving and twinkling makeover from the kids, who present it to Charlie Brown. "It isn't such a bad little tree; it just needed a little love," says Linus wisely.

While "*Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown*" is essentially an animated cartoon, whose characters look funny, and behave broadly, and there are silly noises and pratfalls, Linus' recitation of Saint Luke's verses is its solemn core. For a few moments, the story's busyness is suspended to make room for a larger and more eternal story.

Charles Schulz's brilliance lies in having none other than Linus, often presented and judged (especially by his sister Lucy) as too babyish and meek to be taken seriously, to declaim the biblical narrative about another and very special child's birth.

Like the puny tree, which the other kids ridiculed and rejected, Linus emerges from his customary lesser status to be the one who knows the truth about Christmas. He "tells" that truth by reciting the Nativity story. Sometimes it takes a child — a blanket-toting, thumb-sucking Linus sort of child — to remind the Charlie Browns in the world what life, love, and other important things are all about.

This is why I added "*Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown*" to my DVD collection, and why watching this animated classic every year over these many decades is one of my cherished Christmas traditions.

Merry Christmas. ■

Pamela A. Lewis writes about topics of faith. This article was first published in the Episcopal New Yorker.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

AROUND MID-NOVEMBER, there was a video clip online of a young woman peering at a computer screen. Apparently, she had turned on an audio calendar whose voice intoned, "It is the 43rd of October."

We are looking at the horizon, seeing the end of 2020 in sight, but it feels as if we have lived about five years during this single one.

No one knows what Christmas celebrations will look like, except that they will be different in this pandemic year. As of mid-November, some countries and regions are considering returning to stringent lockdown for a few weeks in an effort to "save" Christmas.

"Save," in this sense, might mean packed churches, travel to big family gatherings, crowds out shopping, performances of sacred music.

Whom are we kidding? Most of those things aren't going to happen, or will take place online. This is Christmas in wartime and we need to muster the fortitude of those who have endured far worse, for far longer. We need to remember families like Anne Frank's, hiding for two years in an attic apartment from the Nazis.

All our Christmas trappings are ostensibly in praise of the One who arrived as a helpless infant in very humble circumstances. This year, surely dozens of priests are preparing sermons on remembering "the real meaning" of Christmas as we struggle with restrictions and the pain of illness, death and separation from those we love.

As we mark Advent, the time of quiet contemplation leading to the celebration of the birth of Jesus, perhaps we'll realize that losing some trappings means we will experience the season more deeply.

It might be hard, at first. If we don't have to run around shopping and attending events, doing all that baking and cooking a big dinner, what will we do with the time?

In Jesus' name, we can connect with each other, whether by cards, calls or video chats. We can "love thy neighbor" by intentionally considering how we can bring comfort to another.

If we are lucky enough to have work, we might consider donating what we would have spent on tickets or clothes.

We each have within us the spark to create a truly memorable Christmas. ■

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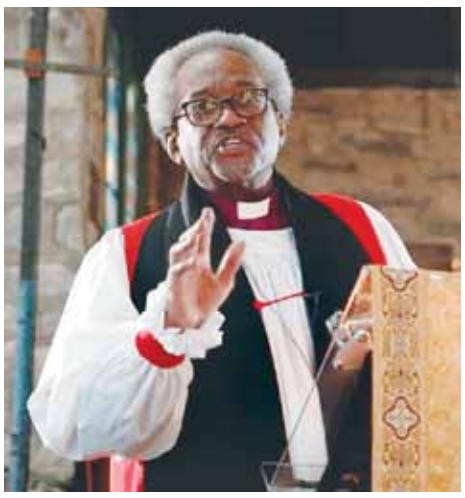
NEWS

National Cathedral's interfaith service traces a journey from grief to hope

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

On Nov. 1, with the most turbulent U.S. election in recent memory two days away and the COVID-19 pandemic causing widespread suffering and death, thousands of Americans tuned in to Washington National Cathedral's virtual interfaith prayer service, which brought together an array of Americans of diverse faiths, races and backgrounds — from internationally known leaders to middle school students — to heal and pray for the country.

Titled "Holding onto Hope: A National Service for Healing and Wholeness," the service led participants through three stages: confession and reckoning, lament and grief, and hope. It was a mix of live and pre-recorded segments featuring Scripture readings, musical performances, prayers from religious and civic leaders like the Rev. James Martin and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and a sermon from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.



Photo/via YouTube

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preaches from Saint Augustine's University during the "Holding on to Hope" service.

"Our ideals, values, principles and dreams of beloved community matter," Curry said in a passionate sermon that urged listeners to reject cynicism and hatred and stand up for justice.

"They matter because they drive us beyond service of self alone to commitment to the greater good of us all. They matter because they give us an actual picture of God's reign of love, and a reason to struggle and make it real. They matter to our lives as people of faith. They matter to our life in civil society. They matter to our life as a nation and as a world. Our values matter!"

Justice — especially as it relates to the racial, democratic, health, environmental and economic crises America faces — was a recurring theme throughout the service, which opened with an acknowledgement of the Anacostan and Piscataway tribes that once inhabited the land on which the cathedral sits.

The Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest known for advocating for more inclusive attitudes toward LGBTQ people in the Roman Catholic Church, led participants in an examination of conscience and confession of structural sin, or "sin that's built into our social, economic, political, and even ecclesial systems, sin that pervades society, and which we participate in sometimes in ways that are harder for us to see."

Martin encouraged them to think about when they knowingly or unknowingly participated in these sins, or allowed their privilege to prevent them from stopping them. Students, clergy and lay volunteers led prayers of confession for the systemic sins of white supremacy, police brutality, income inequality and "the idolatry of nationalism," making specific references to Native genocide and the veneration of the Confederacy.

Valarie Kaur, a Sikh filmmaker and speaker, spoke of the power of using "revolutionary love" to "be brave with our grief" — even the overwhelming grief for the 230,000 Americans who have died of COVID-19, for people of color killed by police and for the natural environment as it suffers from man-made climate change. Prayers of lament were offered by people on the "front lines" in the Diocese of Atlanta: a student, a priest, a deacon, a farmer, new parents and a nurse who prayed for Americans "not to remove the masks from our faces but the masks from our hearts."

Curry preached on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes) and connected it to other "mountaintop moments" in the Bible and in American history, like Moses' glimpse of the Promised Land and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech before his assassination — moments when followers of God can "behold not what is but what ought to be."

Curry, who spoke from the chapel at Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh, N.C., near his home, had earlier preached at the cathedral's morning worship service for All Saints' Day, which is also the fifth anniversary of his installation as presiding bishop.

During the national prayer service, he also preached on American texts like the Declaration of Independence and the Pledge of Allegiance, noting the similarity between the values they espouse and the Beatitudes — values that may sound simple but form the bedrock of democracy, and of society itself.

"Our values matter!" Curry preached. "A world, a society, a life devoid of values and ideals that ennoble, that lift up and liberate, is a world descending into the abyss, a world that is a dystopian vision of hell on earth."

Prayers for the nation were offered by spiritual leaders including Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rabbi Shoshanah Conover and Mohamed Elsanousi, and Rice, the former secretary of state.

"Dear Heavenly Father," Rice prayed, "we especially pray for our country as we go into this season of election. We ask you to help us to remember that we are, despite all of our troubles, a privileged people to be able to make our voices known, to choose those who would govern us. … Please be with each and every one of us, even as we are a divided people, to treat each other with respect, to treat each other with kindness, especially when we disagree, so that we might again make common purpose and common cause to be a people worthy of your grace."

The service was viewed at least 4,000 times on Facebook and YouTube, and was complemented by a live prayer hotline developed in partnership with the church innovation lab TryTank. "Whatever your politics, however you have or will cast your vote, however this election unfolds, wherever the course of racial reckoning and pandemic take us, whether we are in the valley or the mountaintop, hold onto the hope of America. Hold onto hope grounded in our shared values and ideals. Hold onto God's dream. Hold on and struggle and walk and pray for our nation," Curry said in his sermon. ■

AROUND THE CHURCH

Lambeth Conference dates announced for 2022

The archbishop of Canterbury has announced revised dates for the 15th Lambeth Conference. Hosted in Canterbury, Kent, the face-to-face conference is planned for July 27 – Aug. 8, 2022.

The conference has been rescheduled from the original 2020 dates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference organizers will continue to monitor the implications of COVID-19 and follow official health guidance in the months ahead.

With the theme of "God's Church for God's World: Walking, Listening and Witnessing Together," the conference will focus on what it means for the Anglican Communion — shaped by the five marks of mission — to be responsive to the needs and challenges of a rapidly changing world in the 21st century.

This will be the first Lambeth Conference to meet both face to face and virtually. As well as the meeting in Canterbury in 2022, the Lambeth Conference will now be planned as a conference journey that runs in phases

Photo/Anglican Archives

The bishops at the 2008 Lambeth Conference pose for the traditional group photo.

before, during and beyond the face-to-face gathering.

Starting in 2021, the focus of phase one will be on introducing some of the major themes and strategic pillars of the conference program. The conference community of bishops and spouses — and wider Anglican audiences — will be invited to take part in the Lambeth conversation in different ways. This will be facilitated through a combination of online, regional and intraregional meetings and supporting resources.

With bishops and spouses invited from 165 countries of the Anglican Communion, the conference community represents a diversity of cultures and Christian tradition. The virtual phase of the conference will give more time to meet one another, discuss conference topics and share insights and experiences from the various provinces and church communities.

It will also ensure that the use of conference resources and planning for future outcomes in the life of the Anglican Communion can be as effective as possible.

A working group is being appointed to shape the conference journey, comprised by representatives from around the Communion. These are Bishop Emma Ineson of Penrith (who also serves as a member of the conference design group); Bishop Anthony Poggo (the archbishop of Canterbury's adviser on Anglican Communion affairs); the Rev. Joseph D. Galgalo (vice chancellor and associate professor of theology at St. Paul's University in Kenya) and the bishop of Amritsar, Pradeep Samantaroy (The Church of North India — United). The group will work with the archbishop of Canterbury and wider conference teams to construct an engaging program relevant to key issues in the world and the life of the Communion.

Phil George, the CEO of the Lambeth Conference Company, said:

"With the message of 'God's Church for God's World,' it's vital that planning for our meeting of bishops and spouses responds to the new world we find ourselves in since COVID-19. Despite the challenges and disruption that the pandemic has caused, we've also seen huge creativity and adaptability as churches have started to meet virtually. The opportunities that technology provides for online meeting and engagement have opened up new ways for us to connect, pray and be community for one another. I'm looking forward to and deliver the Lambeth Conference conversation."

The timetable and further details for the pre-conference program will be released in 2021.

For more information, visit **lambethconference.org/dates**.

— Lambeth Conference Company

OBITUARIES

President of Saint Augustine's dies of COVID -19

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

The campus community at Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh, N.C., is mourning the loss of Irving Pressley McPhail, who died Oct. 15 of COVID-19 just months into his tenure as president of the historically Black college, which was established in 1867 by the Episcopal Church.

McPhail took over as president on July 15 and "made a memorable and positive impact in moving the university in the direction of being a 'Learning Centered' campus," Saint Augustine's said in announcing his death. Maria Lumpkin was named interim president.

Video posted to the school's Facebook page shows mourners on Oct. 16 placing flowers on the porch of the president's residence. The Rev. Hershey Mallette Stephens, dean of the campus chapel, also led a prayer vigil outside the residence. A memorial service at the chapel is scheduled for Oct. 27 and will be livestreamed on Facebook.

Saint Augustine's is one of two historically Black colleges — the other is Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina — that receive financial support from the Episcopal Church reflecting their Episcopal roots. The church's last two triennial budgets included more than $1.6 million for Saint Augustine's and Voorhees.

The church's longtime support was cited in December 2018 as a factor in Saint Augustine's success in turning the corner on its financial struggles and enrollment decline. Its accrediting agency had just taken

Photo/courtesy of Saint Augustine's

Irving Pressley McPhail had served as president of Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh, N.C., since July 2020.

the institution off probation. The next month, President Everett Ward announced he was retiring after five years.

McPhail drew on his years of experience in higher education administration when he took over as president this year. He had been in quarantine since mid-September after coming into contact with someone with COVID-19, according to the Charlotte Observer. An Oct. 12 update from the university, which noted that McPhail had not contracted the virus on campus, said he was recovering at a local hospital. He died there three days later.

"The loss is insurmountable," James Perry, chair of the university's Board of Trustees, told the Observer. "I learned from his wife that this was his dream job. He was committed to the students. He was one of those rare individuals with transformative leadership qualities. He was a person of strength and humility and vision, and he had an action plan to take the university where it needed to go."

McPhail is survived by his wife, Christine Johnson McPhail, and their son and daughter, as well as several grandchildren. ■

Welby pays tribute to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Anglican Communion News Service

The Archbishop of Canterbury paid tribute to Lord Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, who died on Nov. 7, just weeks after announcing he had cancer.

Sacks served as Chief Rabbi for 22 years before retiring in 2013. He was buried on Nov. 8 in a modest ceremony attended by just a few people due to England's current Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Photo/ACNS

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks with then-Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams at the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

In a brief statement, Welby spoke of his "deep sadness", and said that Sacks had "devoted so much of his life to reflecting on God at the most profound level — and we are all the beneficiaries of his wisdom."

Welby added, "At the same time, Rabbi Sacks was always someone who you could relate to instantly. He was always thoroughly part of the world and he relished that.

"He had a deep commitment to interpersonal relationships — and when you met him you couldn't help but be swept up in his delight at living, his sense of humor, his kindness, and his desire to know, understand and value others.

"It was that rare combination — profound depth, and equally profound commitment to relating with others — that made the leadership he offered possible.

"My prayers are especially with Rabbi Sacks's family, with all those whose lives he touched, and with the whole Jewish community as they come to terms with this great loss. May his memory be a lasting blessing."

The Council of Christians and Jews, the world's oldest inter-faith organization, described Rabbi Sacks as "a towering religious leader and intellectual. . . He developed friendships with successive Archbishops of Canterbury, [Roman Catholic] Archbishops of Westminster and other Christian leaders.

"His books, other writings, lectures and media appearances were followed and admired not only by the Jewish community but by millions of Christians and people of all faiths and none. His sparkling address to the Lambeth Conference in 2008 is still remembered today . . . His influence will endure for years to come through the many he inspired, influenced and touched with his warmth and wisdom." ■

AROUND THE CHURCH

Even with Albany (N.Y.) bishop's resignation, diocese's path toward same-sex marriage remains unclear

By David Paulsen and Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

Diocese of Albany (N.Y.) Bishop William Love's agreement to resign early next year removes one of the final barriers to marriage equality across the Episcopal Church's domestic dioceses, with some congregations considering whether to begin offering marriage rites to same-sex couples upon Love's exit.

Love was one of the church's most conservative bishops on the issue, and the only one to refuse to implement the compromise resolution passed by General Convention in 2018. A disciplinary panel determined on Oct. 2 that Love's refusal violated church canon law and his ordination vows.

On Oct. 24, at the diocese's convention, Love, 63, announced he had reached an agreement with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry to resign effective Feb. 1, 2021, rather than face further disciplinary action for blocking same-sex weddings in his diocese. The agreement is the final resolution of the disciplinary case against him.

In his announcement to the diocesan convention, Love called it a "very difficult, but necessary decision" that was made "after much thought and prayer, recognizing that whatever disciplinary action would be offered would not be anything I could in good conscience agree to."

"Given all that has happened, and that which was still to come, I believe that to stay any longer would be more of a detriment to the diocese than a help," Love said.

Under the agreement, which went into effect on Oct. 21 with the unanimous approval of the Disciplinary Board of the House of Bishops, Love will remain the diocesan bishop until Feb. 1 — three days before the 14th anniversary of his installation as the diocesan bishop — but will spend the preceding month on sabbatical.

Love's ban on same-sex marriage will remain in effect until Feb. 1, but so will the restriction on ministry Curry enacted in 2019 that prevents Love from taking disciplinary action against clergy or lay leaders regarding same-sex marriage. Love has also agreed to work with the presiding bishop's office "to help foster a healthy transition."

The diocese has no other active bishops. Under church canon law, the diocese's standing committee assumes ecclesiastical authority when there is no bishop. The standing committee will also oversee the election of the next bishop.

"I have tried by God's grace and the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit to faithfully uphold my ordination vows, despite the recent ruling of the hearing panel," Love told the convention. "I have tried to be faithful and obedient to God's Holy Word as best I understand it, as revealed through the Holy Scriptures, recognizing its authority over my life and the ministry entrusted to me."

The day after Love's announcement, the Rev. Glen Michaels, a supply priest in the diocese, led a Sunday service at Christ Episcopal Church in Greenville, N.Y. He avoided mentioning Love's resignation in his sermon, but "it was the talk before and after the service."

Photo/Diocese of Albany via Facebook

Albany Bishop William Love speaks in October at the diocesan convention.

"The hope people expressed was that we can move past this controversy," Michaels said in a phone interview with ENS. "I think most folks in the pews seem to consider Bishop Love's strong anti-gay stance to be distracting from the main work of the church."

Even without Love as its leader, Albany still is known as a conservative diocese. It is based in New York's capital city and includes more than 100 congregations, most of them in small communities from the northern Catskill mountains to the Canadian border.

Many of the diocese's priests and deacons were supportive of Love's stance on same-sex marriage, but other clergy and some Episcopalians were frustrated that he continued to deny gay and lesbian couples the ability to marry in their churches. Uncertainty still looms over the diocese's future.

"I don't think anyone should plan on wedding bells on Feb. 2. There's a lot of healing that needs to be done here," said Louis Bannister, a member of the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany who serves as a lay leader on the cathedral's chapter.

Bannister, who is gay, has been a vocal proponent for allowing same-sex couples to get married in the diocese under General Convention's Resolution B012.

Love received support throughout the process from bishops affiliated with Communion Partners, a group of Anglicans dedicated to preserving traditional marriage and advocating for tolerance of their views across the Anglican Communion. Love's supporters included most of the U.S. bishops who oppose same-sex marriage but have allowed it in their dioceses under the canonical provision that allows another bishop to provide pastoral oversight. ■

General Theological Seminary dean to step down at end of academic year

Dean Kurt H. Dunkle announced on Nov. 9 to the board of trustees of General Seminary that he was resigning as dean and president, effective at the end of the current academic year.

Dunkle

"I am eager to model a healthy transition of leadership," Dunkle said. "Part of a 'normal process' of leave-taking is the excitement of imagining the possibilities ahead. General's future is very bright. Our focus will continue to be how to best serve the church."

Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright, board chair, commented, "Dean Dunkle served marvelously over the season he led General, remaining clear-eyed and steady-handed through many challenges. As he leaves us, he leaves the seminary strongly positioned to fulfill its mission statement of educating and forming lay and ordained leaders for the church in a changing world."

The Rev. Susan Wrathall, president of the alumni executive committee, said, "Dean Dunkle's enthusiasm for General has been infectious. The alumni executive committee's relationship with the board of trustees has significantly improved over his tenure, and I am grateful that he is leaving the seminary in a position of health."

Dunkle was installed as the 13th dean and president of General Theological Seminary in 2013. Since then, Dunkle has overseen the reaccreditation of the seminary. In five years, he led the seminary from a $3 million structured deficit to a balanced budget. The seminary has maintained a surplus in several recent years.

Dunkle oversaw the creation of two new degree programs: the Doctor of Ministry program welcomed its first cohort this year, and Master of Arts in Ministry, accredited in 2017, was the first new degree program for General in 20 years.

Annual giving has increased each year, and about $3 million was raised for the chapel, in addition to new grants, including from the Lilly Foundation.

He also oversaw a 10-15% increase in admission applications every year since 2015 with the largest entering class in 2020, with 40 students, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Committed both to the focus on worship and the highest standards of health and safety, more recently Dunkle oversaw the creation of the new outdoor altar, the first altar consecrated for the seminary in 140 years.

The board said it will announce a transition process by Dec. 15, 2020. Dunkle said he anticipated that his last day will be at the end of May or June 2021.

— General Theological Seminary

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mercial kitchen space was donated, and volunteers came forward to prepare and distribute the meals.

"We're feeding the soul and the body," Cheney said.

The pandemic has brought renewed attention to many chronic community needs, though the needs served by feeding ministries are "at the base of the pyramid of survival," said Sherri Dietrich, president of the UTO board.

"Nine of the 26 grants UTO funded this fall will ensure that thousands of people around the United States and the world will have food to help them survive this pandemic," Dietrich said in an email. "And I know that these ministries will also offer other support and embody the love of Christ to those they serve."

In Jasper, Ala., St. Mary's Episcopal Church received a $10,000 UTO grant to buy a walk-in cooler and freezer for its food bank, which will allow church volunteers to provide milk, cheese and fresh produce to local residents struggling during the pandemic.

Another $10,000 grant was awarded to the Church of the Guardian Angel in the Diocese of Maryland. The church's food pantry provides bags of groceries and household supplies to more than 70 households in Baltimore, and during the pandemic, the grant will allow the pantry to hire a part-time director to help respond to increased demand.

UTO also is helping to sustain Charlie's Place, a feeding ministry in the Diocese of Washington. With its $25,000 grant, it can continue serving meals five days a week to neighbors struggling with food insecurity, some of whom also come to Charlie's Place for a range of other services, such as haircuts, fitness classes, medical checkups and clothing.

And in St. Petersburg, Fla., UTO is building on its previous support for Benison Farm, which makes use of formerly vacant land at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church. The historically Black congregation, through a partnership with the mostly white congregation of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, got the gardening ministry up and running after receiving an initial UTO grant in 2018. Volunteers had begun distributing Benison Farm's fresh produce to food pantries and at a church farmers market when the pandemic disrupted both harvesting and distribution.

"When things first shut down, we just lost almost all of our volunteers," said the Rev. Martha Goodwill, a deacon at St. Thomas who has helped coordinate the food ministry. Schools stopped sending students to work in the churches' gardens, Goodwill told ENS, and the threat of COVID-19 decreased turnout among members of St. Augustine's, many of them senior citizens who are more vulnerable to severe complications.

Photo/courtesy of Roxanne Cheney

Volunteers with A Caring Place prepare hot meals every weekday and distribute them to 20 senior citizens in Lexington, Ky.

Goodwill, however, saw a silver lining in the pandemic's timing. Summer, because of the heat, typically is an off season for planting in Florida. Benison Farm took advantage of the down time and, with its remaining volunteers, doubled its planting capacity by adding 24 more raised beds. In October, it received a new UTO grant of $25,000 to add facilities to handle the increased harvest of greens, onions, cauliflower, broccoli, sweet potatoes and eggplant.

"Now that we have twice the produce, we need the ability to harvest and clean it and store it," Goodwill said. With the grant's help, the farm will be able to store larger amounts of food until it's ready to be delivered to one of the local food pantries. The monthly church farmers market will resume in December.

Benison Farm's mission always has focused on providing fresh, healthy food in St. Augustine's neighborhood, which has been identified as a "food desert," an area with limited access to healthy, affordable food sources. "There are people who can afford fresh produce … but they don't have access to it," Goodwill said.

The need is especially great in St. Augustine's neighborhood, which has a large Black community. The pandemic has hit people of color particularly hard. Black, Latino and Native Americans are about five times as likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19 as white Americans, and African Americans are twice as likely to die from it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC notes that a variety of underlying causes are to blame, including disparities in access to health care and greater occupational risks.

In Lexington, A Caring Place expanded its Comfort Care Phone Program during the pandemic, with 46 residents now receiving regular check-in phone calls from program volunteers. "It's like a pen pal, but it's a phone pal," Cheney said. Some of those participants also have enjoyed joining others in conversations on various topics during A Caring Place's hour-long Virtual Welcome Center sessions, held at least twice a week on Zoom.

The feeding ministry, meanwhile, is limited to participants whose finances fall below 130% of the federal poverty line. The UTO grant will feed 16 participants for a year, and A Caring Place has now extended its outreach to 20 meal recipients.

Volunteer Sharon Asbury plans the meals and purchases the ingredients, and with help from family members, she gets up early each weekday to prepare the meals so they are ready to be delivered starting at 9 a.m. Other volunteers take turns as delivery drivers, and one delivery shift usually takes about three hours to drop off the meals at the homes of each recipient.

COVID-19 has limited the amount of interaction between volunteers and the people they feed, but Cheney said it still is serving A Caring Place's broader goal, "to reach out as Jesus did to those who had nothing and to show compassion and mercy." ■

Anglican leaders call for 'equitable' global access to COVID-19 vaccines

Anglican Communion News Service

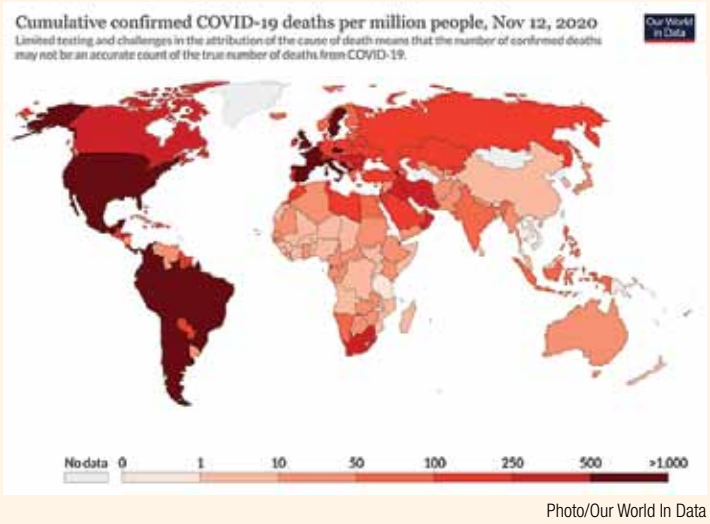
Potential COVID-19 vaccines should be made available to the world's poorest people, the primates (international, national and regional leaders) of the Anglican Communion said. They made their call in a communiqué published Nov. 12 after an online meeting held Nov. 5-6 to discuss the global health emergency.

During the meeting, they were briefed by two representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and discussed regional reports from each other on the impact of the pandemic.

The WHO's Executive Director for Health Emergencies Preparedness and Response, Mike Ryan, told the Anglican leaders that "epidemics are about communities. Communities stop epidemics. For this reason, we are eager to work with faith leaders to build solidarity and uphold social justice — enabling you to speak to communities in a credible and understandable way."

Sylvie Briand, Director for Global Infectious Hazards Preparedness in WHO's Health Emergencies Program, gave a global overview of the pandemic, before taking questions from the primates.

Speaking at the meeting, which took place before the announcement of a potential vaccine by pharmaceutical company Pfizer, Briand said: "We have effective vaccines for many deadly diseases, WHO is doing the utmost to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is both safe and effective."



Photo/Our World In Data

This map shows cumulative confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people, as of Nov. 12, 2020.

She added, "together, I hope we can create a partnership to empower and engage communities. It is certain that the most vulnerable in communities suffer the greatest impact of any epidemic, and these vulnerable communities are most in need as the vaccine rollout begins next year. It is clear that there is opportunity for mutual collaboration between the Anglican Communion both locally and globally in this regard."

In their communiqué, the primates called for "the equitable rollout of anticipated COVID-19 vaccines, to prioritize health workers and the most vulnerable first in a highly politicized world."

And they appealed "to the governments of those countries developing vaccines to work closely with the WHO to ensure that distribution is on a just and fair basis, to the most vulnerable and not merely to the richest."

The primates also expressed "their deep thanks to the WHO for their service to the world."

Two new global Anglican bodies, currently being formed, are expected to work together on Anglican responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: an Anglican Communion Health and Community Network and a Anglican Communion Science Commission.

The primates' meeting is one of four "instruments of communion" in the worldwide Anglican Communion. Convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, it brings together the senior archbishops and bishops of the 41 national and regional member churches.

It usually meets every couple of years and last met in-person in January this year in Jordan. Last week's online meeting was called to address the global health emergency, also discussed internal matters to the Communion. Primates from 37 of the 41 Anglican provinces took part in the meeting. ■

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leptospirosis, a bacterial disease that can lead to meningitis, respiratory distress and liver failure.

It was during these two crises that the histories of western Europe and indigenous North America collided on the shores of Massachusetts Bay.

Despite a number of advantages, including less competition for local resources because of the epidemic, Plymouth attracted far fewer English migrants than Virginia, which was settled in 1607, and Massachusetts, which was established in 1630.

The Pilgrims, as they told their story traveled so they could practice their religion free from persecution. But other English joined them, including some migrants seeking profits instead of heeding prophets. Unfortunately for those hoping to earn a quick buck, the colony never became an economic dynamo.

Photo/NGC Coin

A coin honors the 250th anniversary of the Pilgrims landing in Plymouth, Mass.

A shaky compact

Plymouth nonetheless went on to attain a prominent place in the history of America, primarily due to two phenomena: It was the alleged site of the first Thanksgiving, and its founders drafted the Mayflower Compact, a 200-word document written and signed by 41 men on the ship.

Generations of American students have learned that the Compact was a stepping stone towards self-government, the defining feature of American constitutional democracy.

But did Plymouth really inspire democracy? After all, self-governing communities existed across indigenous New England long before European migrants arrived. And a year earlier, in 1619, English colonists in Virginia had created the House of Burgesses to advance self-rule in North America for subjects of King James I.

So American self-government, however one defines it, was not born in Plymouth.

The Mayflower Compact nonetheless contained lofty ideals. The plan signed by many of the Mayflower's male passengers demanded that colonists "Covenant & Combine ourselves into a Civil body politic, for our better ordering, & preservation." They promised to work together to write "laws, ordinances, Acts, constitutions." The signers pledged to work for the "advancement of the Christian faith."

Yet as the years after 1620 bore out, the migrants did not adhere to such principles when dealing with their Wampanoag and other Algonquian-speaking neighbors. Gov. William Bradford, who began writing his history of Plymouth in 1630, wrote about the Pilgrims arriving in "a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men" even though Patuxet looked more like a settled European farmland.

The Pilgrims exiled an English lawyer named Thomas Morton, in part because he believed that indigenous and colonists could peacefully coexist. And in 1637, Plymouth's authorities joined a bloody campaign against the Pequots, which led to the massacre of indigenous people on the banks of the Mystic River, followed by the sale of prisoners into slavery.

The Compact was even used by loyalists to the British crown to argue against independence. Thomas Hutchinson, the last royal governor of Massachusetts, pointed to the Pilgrims as proof that colonists should not rebel, highlighting the passage that defined the signers as "loyal subjects" of the English king.

History told by the victors

After the American Revolution, politicians and historians, especially those descended from Pilgrims and Puritans, were keen to trace the origins of the United States back to Plymouth.

In the process, they glossed over the Pilgrims' complicated legacy.

In 1802, future president John Quincy Adams spoke at Plymouth about the unique genius of the colony's founders and their governing contract. He announced that the Pilgrims would arrive at the biblical day of judgment "in the whiteness of innocence" for having shown "kindness and equity toward the savages."

In the mid-19th century, the historian George Bancroft claimed that it was in "the cabin of the Mayflower" where "humanity recovered its rights, and instituted government on the basis of 'equal laws' for 'the general good.'"

Nineteenth-century anniversary celebrations focused on the colonists, their written Compact, and their contribution to what became the United States. In 1870, on the 250th anniversary, celebrants struck a commemorative coin: one side featured an open Bible, the other a group of Pilgrims praying on the shoreline.

Photo/Library of Congress

The signatories of the Mayflower Compact aboard the Mayflower as seen in Jean Leon Gerome Ferris' "The Mayflower Compact, 1620."

Missing, not surprisingly, were the Wampanoags.

The front of the coin, which features praying Pilgrims reads, "Pilgrim Jubilee Memorial," while the back reads, "Whose faith follow" above the Bible.

A more nuanced view

By 1970, the cultural tide had turned. Representatives of the Wampanoag nation walked out of Plymouth's public celebration of Thanksgiving that year to announce that the fourth Thursday in November should instead be known as the National Day of Mourning. To these protesters, 1620 represented violent conquest and dispossession, the twinned legacies of exclusion.

The organizers of an international group called "Plymouth 400" have stressed that they want to tell a "historically accurate and culturally inclusive history." They've promoted both the General Society of Mayflower Descendants and an exhibit featuring 400 years of Wampanoag History. Unlike earlier generations of celebrants, the organizers have acknowledged the continued presence of Native residents.

Prior celebrations of Plymouth's founding focused on the Pilgrims' role in the creation of the United States. By doing so, these commemorations sustained an exclusionary narrative for over two centuries.

Perhaps this year a different story will take hold, replacing ancestor worship with a more clear-eyed view of the past.

*Peter C. Mancall is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. This article was first published at The Conversation (**www.theconversation.com**).*

NEWS

Episcopalians train to be a 'peaceful and prayerful presence' during elections

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

With the threat of voter intimidation and suppression hanging over the U.S. general election, the Episcopal Church organized training for clergy and lay chaplains to serve as "poll chaplains" on Election Day.

A partnership with the nonprofit group Lawyers and Collars, the effort recruits volunteers to "provide a calm and loving presence in the way of love, peace, justice and reconciliation" at polling places.

Unlike poll workers, volunteers who served as poll chaplains did not have any formal capacity or specific duties, but served as a nonpartisan "peaceful and prayerful presence" and were on the lookout for any potential voter intimidation, said the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care, during an Oct. 20 training webinar.

"I really believe that protecting every single voter and every single vote is not only essential for the health and integrity of our democracy — I really see it as an act of Christian discipleship," said the Rev. Adam Taylor, interim president of Sojourners, who helped lead the training. "If we truly believe that every person has been made the image of God … then that means any person that is intimidated or is dissuaded or suppressed from voting — that that is an assault on the very image of God."

During the webinar, volunteers learned about what voter intimidation or suppression can look like and what makes this election different from previous ones. Motivated by false claims of voter fraud, election officials around the country have made voting more difficult in recent years through tactics like requiring more stringent forms of identification, limiting the number of polling places and purging massive numbers of voters from the rolls.

Photo/Jonathan Drake/Reuters

Voters wait to enter a polling place and vote early in Durham, N.C.

In the weeks leading up to the Nov. 3 general election, some people caused problems near early voting locations by harassing volunteers, yelling through megaphones and holding armed militia demonstrations. Though such behavior is generally not illegal if the actions taken are done beyond the legally defined distance for electioneering (which varies by jurisdiction), some voters have reported that they felt intimidated.

"Voter suppression is real," Taylor told volunteers during the training. "But voter fraud is an exaggerated myth. And we have seen in this election an effort by the president and other allies of his to sow chaos, fear and confusion into our election system and to — without any real shred of evidence — allege that the election is already rigged. That is dangerous rhetoric. And we have been working for over two years to try to sound the alarm about the real threat, the real legitimate threat of voter suppression."

Taylor told volunteers that they should stand outside the polling place, let election workers know who they are and why they are there, and be calm and unobtrusive but ready to respond to an incident of potential voter intimidation — a term that has a broad interpretation but could look like some of the examples Taylor provided.

"It could be, in an extreme form, an armed militia member harassing voters while waiting in line," Taylor said. "It could be an overly aggressive poll monitor who's following voters to the polls and taking photographs of voters' license plates in the parking lot. It could be people falsely telling voters that if they vote, someone will check if they have outstanding warrants or debts. It could be someone threatening to call ICE because a voter 'looks illegal.' It could be displaying false signs about voter fraud that threaten criminal penalties. It could be harassing or aggressively questioning voters who are speaking another language."

If they see behavior like that, the poll chaplains have been trained to notify election officials, go to the aid of the person being harassed and de-escalate the situation. They should not try to argue with someone who is being belligerent or intimidating, Taylor said, and instead ask how the potential victim is feeling and how they can help.

In the nine states where Lawyers and Collars is focusing its efforts, the group has set up a special hotline, staffed by lawyers, for poll chaplains to report problems. It also has a general hotline — 866-OUR-VOTE — that anyone can call. But Taylor stressed that poll chap-

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Episcopal priest wins election, becoming Georgia's first LGBTQ state senator

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

In last week's general election, LGBTQ candidates made history with milestone victories around the United States. Among them was the Rev. Kim Jackson, a priest in the Diocese of Atlanta, who is now the first out LGBTQ person ever elected to the Georgia state Senate.

Jackson won with nearly 80% of the vote in the race to represent Atlanta's eastern suburbs, where she lives with her wife. It's the fulfillment of a lifelong dream for Jackson, who has wanted to be both a pastor and an elected official since she was a girl. In addition to her new job at the Georgia Capitol, she will continue in her role as vicar of the Church of the Common Ground, a congregation of homeless and vulnerable people that worships in a park a few blocks away.

Jackson ran as a Democrat in a reliably blue district, so her election was no surprise, but she was blown away by the "extraordinary" voter turnout, a phenomenon that rippled across the state and country.

Courtesy photo

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

"[About] 90% of registered voters turned out in my district, and that's unheard of," Jackson told Episcopal News Service. "I was really committed to trying to do my part to turn out my district, because getting people out to vote is just so crucial to our democracy."

With such a decisive win, Jackson's race saw none of the disputes over election results that have happened in the presidential race. But Jackson says that's not just because of the overwhelming margin she won with; it's also because of the respect she and her opponent, Republican William Freeman, have for each other and for the democratic process.

"My opponent, particularly, has consistently reached out during this time, and we had a commitment and agreement that we would run our races in ways that were respectful and civil, and we made that commitment as soon as I won the primary," Jackson said. "And I think that that, honestly, is characteristic of the nature of my district and perhaps even maybe Georgia, more broadly speaking, that bipartisanship. I mean, the truth is that you can't pass anything in Georgia if you don't have Republicans on board. And so, when it comes to making positive change for Georgians, we work together."

Jackson got Atlanta Bishop Rob Wright's approval before running — "as Kim Jackson, not the Rev. Kim Jackson," she said — and she did not campaign in her capacity as a priest, in keeping with laws that limit political activity by churches. Though her election is unusual, it's not unprecedented. Former three-term U.S. Sen. John Danforth, a Missouri Republican, is also an Episcopal priest, though he never served a parish. One of the two Democrats in the upcoming runoff elections for Georgia's U.S. Senate seats is the Rev. Raphael Warnock, senior pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Jackson's congregants at the Church of the Common Ground were "thrilled and excited" to hear the news of her election, she said.

"I think they're just incredibly proud," Jackson told ENS. "They know that I am committed to bringing their stories and bringing even my congregants, when they want to, inside of the Capitol, so that they understand and know that the Capitol is their house, too."

The historic nature of her win has drawn media attention from around the country, but it's not the first time she's broken a barrier. Jackson was also the first Black openly LGBTQ priest in the Diocese of Atlanta.

"It's ironic that a portion of my identity that, for so long, caused a great deal of grief in my family — I had to reconcile it religiously, spiritually … has resulted in jubilation and joy and celebration in another part of my life."

She's still not exactly sure how her roles as a priest and a state senator will overlap, but she is confident in her ability to navigate her "intertwined" vocations.

"I'm just kind of walking by faith here," she told ENS, "and we'll see how it all turns out." ■

NEWS

For voters, church becomes a sanctuary of democracy

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

On the morning of Nov. 3, when tensions were high and nerves frayed across the United States — with fears of voter intimidation, voter suppression and even violence — Grace Episcopal Church in Newton, Mass., was an oasis of quiet calm for the voters who trickled in on Election Day.

The stately stone church overlooking a park in this Boston suburb served as one of the town's polling places. Around 10:30 a.m., a few hours after the polls opened, there were no lines, no opposing crowds of sign-waving supporters. In fact, it was extraordinarily quiet, with a slow stream of voters, but that didn't indicate voter apathy. In Massachusetts, 2.3 million people had already voted by Election Day — about 70% of the total turnout in 2016.

The Rev. Regina Walton

That included the Rev. Regina Walton, Grace's rector. She voted early in nearby Arlington, where she lives. But she and Rowan Larson, Grace's youth minister and parish administrator, were at the church overseeing operations.

The church has been a polling place since 2016, when the town chose Grace to replace a polling place at a fire station, largely because it is easily accessible for handicapped people, Walton said.

Town workers came early in the morning to set up voting booths in the parish hall, but the parish also did some setup of its own. The traditional Election Day bake sale was underway at a table just inside the entrance, although this year, the baked goods were prepackaged to prevent coronavirus transmission. All proceeds were donated to the local food pantry.

"That's one of the ways we try to just be a good neighbor," Walton told ENS.

"At the March primary, right before the COVID lockdown, we raised about $600 for the food pantry, and with the timing of when they received that check, they were inordinately grateful," Larson said.

Coronavirus precautions were the biggest obvious difference from previous elections at Grace. Masks were required to enter the building, and hand sanitizer was provided. While the parish hall is safe for a small number of people to be in at the same time, the sanctuary, which has very little ventilation, is not safe to hold services in, Walton said.

On Nov. 1, Grace held its first in-person worship service in eight months, on the front lawn, with snow still on the ground from a storm a few days earlier. Walton said she is planning to continue holding short outdoor services through the winter.

Although Grace's sanctuary was closed, some other churches opened temporarily for public prayer on Election Day, including Washington National Cathedral, which also hosted a livestream "Service for Healing, Unity and Hope" on Nov. 4.

Having Grace as a polling place increases its visibility in the community, and even though there is no evangelizing, it does get people in the doors and familiar with the parish. A local dance instructor started renting space at the church for performances after voting there, Larson said.

Photos/Egan Millard/ENS

Voting booths are set up in the parish hall.

"It has made us much more known in the community," Larson said. "I do get calls and emails from people who say, 'Oh, I know your church because I voted there' and then have whatever other question they have, throughout the year."

"A lot of people do appreciate the opportunity to donate to the food pantry — they see friendly people from the church there at the baked goods table, and I'm often around. I always wear my collar, just so people sort of know who I am and that we have a woman priest here," Walton said.

This year, having a polling place at Grace stands to benefit the church as it petitions for public funds to restore its bell tower, which is in critical disrepair. Architect and vestry member Scott Aquilina was available at a table near the entrance to answer questions people might have about the project or the petition, which is not on the ballot but will go before the city council.

"Being a polling place is really meaningful to the city councilors, in particular, because it was just another point of evidence that we're vital to the community and we're engaged in the community," Aquilina said.

Aquilina, Larson and Walton were pleased, but not surprised, that things went smoothly on Election Day, although there was one thing that Larson missed.

"One thing I do miss this year is that parents aren't bringing their kids as much, especially their younger kids. There are usually lots of babies and toddlers that come to vote. It makes me sad!" Larson said. "I mean, I am a children's minister. I like seeing kids."

Overall, though, spirits were high, and the only sounds that could be heard were quiet conversations by the entrance, occasional laughter, and the rustling of paper ballots and plastic cookie wrappers.

"We have this giant space, we have an accessible space, and it's nice to be able to offer it for something that's really, really important in community life," Walton said. ■

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lains should not put themselves in danger if they feel unsafe.

"We are not asking, nor are we recommending, that any of you intervene directly in a violent situation or try to confront directly the people that are instigating violence," Taylor said. Instead, poll chaplains should "come alongside those who are being harassed or intimidated and be their ally in that moment, to try to deflect attention from the aggressor."

Part of the intention of the poll chaplain program is that their mere presence at polling places — especially ordained chaplains wearing clerical robes or collars — may serve as a deterrent against intimidating behavior in the first place. Although one volunteer asked during the training whether some voters might be upset by seeing people in clerical garb during a pointedly secular event, Taylor said he wasn't aware of any such complaints in the past.

"We won't know entirely how much your presence deterred others from taking nefarious action, so we hope that most of you are very bored at your polling sites," Taylor said.

The Rev. Melanie Mullen, the Episcopal Church's director of reconciliation, justice and creation care, and Rebecca Linder Blachly, director of the church's Office of Government Relations, directed trainees to the church's comprehensive array of election-related resources, including a similar training for "protest chaplains."

The Rev. Charles Robertson, the presiding bishop's canon for ministry beyond the Episcopal Church, reminded trainees of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's call to partisan neutrality but not moral neutrality, and stressed that participating in activities like this is a way to bring people together.

"Poll chaplains can help to remind us that we are fellow Americans first," Robertson said. "Our identity as people of faith — and our commitment to each other's dignity — matters more than our commitment to a political party." ■

FEATURE

Texas priest pays tribute to legendary church planter with 70-mile prayer walk around Austin

By David Paulsen
Episcopal News Service

On a mild but windy morning in Austin, Texas, the weather prompted no complaints from the Rev. David Peters, who was "ambling along" west of downtown. But gusts of up to 30 mph were making it difficult for the priest to describe his 70-mile prayer walk to the reporter who had reached him by phone.

"Let me get to a little quieter spot here," Peters told Episcopal News Service. He hung up, ducked into a supermarket and called back. Audio clarity was established. Taking a break from his travels, Peters explained why he is spending several days on foot honoring the Rev. Malcolm Riker, the legendary Diocese of Texas church planter.

Riker, who died in 2002, is renowned locally for establishing eight new churches in the Austin area starting in the late 1950s. His admirers attribute that success partly to his seemingly boundless energy and stubborn determination. He also had a good sense for timing and location, Peters said, in an era when Austin was starting to boom.

"The way Malcolm planted a lot of churches, he would get 20 people together from other churches that lived in a certain area, and then they would just buy land," Peters said. "He had a pretty good sense for where the neighborhoods were about to be built."

Peters' admiration also derives from his own experience as a church planter. He leads the congregation of St. Joan of Arc, which meets at a wine and beer bar called the Three Legged Goat in Pflugerville, about 10 miles north of Austin. The coronavirus pandemic this year initially forced Peters to suspend in-person gatherings, but the congregation has since resumed Sunday worship services on the bar's outdoor patio. Peters also leads daily worship services online through Zoom.

Courtesy photo

The Rev. David Peters stands before St. John's Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas.

On Oct. 29, he had just finished leading Morning Prayer from the road when ENS caught up with him. It was Day 2 of his prayer walk, and he was on his way from St. Mark's to St. John's Episcopal Church. Those church's biblical names were no accident, Peters said. Riker's church planting started with the Gospels.

"Matthew, Mark, Luke and John," he said. "Those were his first four churches."

Peters had another, more personal reason to set out this week on a long prayer walk. He is a long-distance runner who completed the 2020 Austin Marathon in February while wearing a floor-length cassock — "I'll never do that again, probably," he told ENS — and in May, he completed a marathon distance again by looping many times around his house.

On Oct. 30, he turned 45, and for previous birthdays, his goal was to run as many miles as his age. The pandemic, however, has disrupted his training, so running 45 miles wasn't realistic.

Instead, he chose to walk to each of Riker's eight churches, starting in the afternoon of Oct. 28 at St. Alban's Episcopal Church on Austin's far south side. On the first day, he traced a route of about 10 miles to St. Christopher's Episcopal Church. Then, he stopped and caught an Uber home for the night. "I'm not roughing it at all," he said.

Peters was up before sunrise the next morning to resume walking. He planned to complete the journey in segments with a final stop at St. Richard's in Round Rock, north of Austin.

Peters navigated the city's sidewalks and paths while wearing his cassock. Clipped to the robe was a blinking light, for safety. He topped himself with a Roman hat, or a "saturno," a circular-brimmed clergy hat. His pack did not contain much more than some water and a battery charger for his phone, a necessity for this prolific Twitter user. "I'm doing a lot of posting, and GPS drains batteries real fast," he said. For food, he stopped at eateries along the way.

Peters also used the pilgrimage to call attention to the Diocese of Texas' three newest church plants.

A new congregation doesn't establish lasting roots overnight, he said. "I'm hoping this prayer walk pilgrimage will help me, and hopefully others, see that this is a long journey," he said. "It was a long journey for Malcolm."

Riker spent years getting his churches off the ground, though in some ways, the church planter's true role is that of the cheerleader, Peters said. To find success, "it's real people showing up, sharing the vision and working hard, inviting people who don't go to church."

Riker, an Austin native, was something of an "enigma" who approached the priesthood like a military commander, Peters said. During World War II, Riker enlisted in the Navy and saw combat in the South Pacific.

As a priest, he was known as a traditionalist who opposed fundamentalism but also opposed women's ordination, and he insisted on following Rite I in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

"He was definitely a very stubborn and determined leader," Peters said, and that personality sometimes turned people off. Even Riker's family obituary alluded to his "egocentric" reputation.

"It's a similar problem to most startups. There's the determination that people have to keep going. Hopefully in church planting, it's fueled by the Holy Spirit. … But I think the Holy Spirit works with our personality to say, 'I'm not going to quit,'" Peters said.

At the same time, he doesn't see Riker as the norm. "Most church planters are not big, bombastic figures. They just love people and love God."

The pandemic has been particularly challenging for priests like Peters who are growing new congregations that aren't based at traditional worship spaces. "Most of my job was mingling, showing up, getting to know people," he said. "That's something that's not impossible right now, but it sort of has to be rethought and redone. … God's calling people, even in pandemics, to a life of community." ■

Texas church hosts drive-through baby shower

More than 80 expectant mothers in east Harris County were treated to a one-of-a-kind baby shower in a drive-through event on Oct. 30. Mothers were given baby clothes, fresh food, diapers, cleaning supplies and other goods to help meet their needs during the pandemic.

The collaborative effort was hosted by church planter Maria Bautista Vargas at Northshore Episcopal Church, Houston (a church plant in the Diocese of Texas). Seven other nonprofit organizations from the Houston area, including United Healthcare and East Harris County Empowerment Council (EHCEC), joined forces to help make this event a success.

"I was happily surprised by the team and support we received for this initiative," said Bautista Vargas. "It was a huge blessing how everything came together."

Northshore Episcopal, United Healthcare and EHCEC packed over 400 different outfits for the soon-to-be-born babies.

Connie Claros from United Healthcare explained that before COVID-19, the health care organization held large baby showers in different parts of Harris County for low-income mothers enrolled in their program every quarter, but the pandemic put a halt to those events.

As Bautista Vargas and Claros started to accumulate large amounts of baby clothes at Northshore Episcopal, Claros decided to reach out to EHCEC to see how they could best host a safe but enjoyable baby shower for mothers in need.

Photo/courtesy of Diocese of Texas

Members of participating nonprofits are waiting to greet and give gifts to expectant mothers.

Their efforts resulted in putting together a successful event, and they plan on hosting another baby shower drive-through around Easter.

"We appreciate the opportunity Northshore Episcopal Church is giving us to host this event for the moms in the area," said Claros.

— Diocese of Texas

FEATURE

International Black Clergy Conference brings people together across the African diaspora

By Pat McCaughan
Episcopal News Service

Against a backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic and social, economic, political and racial upheaval — including conflicts over policing in the United States — Episcopalians and Anglicans from across the African diaspora gathered virtually to proclaim: "We are woke and ready to go."

Several hundred viewers joined the Nov. 10-12 International Black Clergy Conference, themed "The African Diaspora United: Woke and Ready to Go," organized by the Episcopal Church Office of Black Ministries. The conference included multilingual worship and provocative conversations and sermons that addressed Scriptural themes such as "pray and watch, rise and go," taken from Mark 14:38-42. Laity were invited to join the conference on the final day.

"We know we have challenges out there that we have to face," said the Rev. Ron Byrd Sr., the Episcopal Church's missioner for Black ministries. The conference, he said, was intended to strengthen congregations and relationships across the African diaspora and to highlight a new direction, new programs, resources and even a name change for his office.

Photo/ENS

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry speaks to clergy and laity during the virtual International Black Clergy Conference.

Bishops from Latin American and Caribbean dioceses, including Cuba, Colombia, Honduras, Central Ecuador and the Virgin Islands, as well as Archbishop Julio Murray, primate of the Anglican Church in Central America, sent prerecorded blessings to conference attendees. Similarly, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, Haitian, Sudanese, East African, West African, Liberian and South African clergy shared prerecorded stories of their ministries.

Bishop Carl Wright, bishop suffragan for the armed forces and federal ministries, sent prerecorded prayers and blessings commemorating Veterans Day on Nov. 11.

Keynote speakers, including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry; Atlanta Bishop Robert Wright; the Rt. Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the first Black female bishop in the Church of England; and Elizabeth Henry, the Church of England's former national adviser for minority-ethnic Anglican concerns, celebrated a common heritage of resilient faith in spite of challenging times.

A diverse group of clergy and laity from around the world joined the conference.

Being 'woke'

Curry said the international gathering felt like a family reunion. Being woke, he said, is what the first chapter of John's Gospel describes when it says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." From his home in Raleigh, N.C., the presiding bishop told the gathering, "We need to be a seven-day-a-week church."

"Like Jesus, we can refuse to internalize oppression," Curry said. "We know what it means to be oppressed. We know what it means to have the gospel used as a weapon against us."

The real gospel "will show us the way for us to be free and for us to be agents of setting other folks free. That's the joyful liberty of the children of God," Curry said.

Or, in the words of Wright, who recalled the image of the prophetess Miriam dancing for joy after the escape from Egypt in Exodus 15:20-21, "Did you bring your tambourine?"

Hudson-Wilkin said she participated in demonstrations in the United Kingdom in the wake of George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police. "As part of the African diaspora," she said, "we have been there as a people, experienced and still experiencing oppression … because as long as there is one person from the African diaspora experiencing oppression, then we are too."

And yet, she added, "We do have a message to proclaim. A message of liberty and release. We cannot just stand at the street corner and proclaim it. We have to engage with the authorities in our proclamation in order to see and bring in the changes that are needed."

Similarly, Elizabeth Henry, the chief executive of the advocacy group Race on the Agenda, shared images of Black Lives Matter advocates in Bristol, England, toppling a statue of a civic leader and former slave trader after "we saw and we witnessed and we heard our brother pleading, 'I can't breathe.' That statement has, across the world, become symbolic around oppression and exclusion," she said.

The Very Rev. Kim Coleman, national president of the Union of Black Episcopalians, said hearing about the struggle for racial justice in the U.K. "reminded (us) of the common ground that binds us together and extends beyond our identity as Episcopalians and Anglicans."

"On the other hand, it is invigorating to be reminded that today, right now, we are being called to make our gift of Blackness count towards achieving justice for others who bear the burden of color-based oppression," Coleman said. "If I am nothing else after attending this conference, I certainly am 'woke and ready to go.'"

The church as thermostat

During a prerecorded conversation on Nov. 11, Curry and Dean Kelly Brown Douglas of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary in New York, discussed what the church might learn from the Black Lives Matter movement.

Like the Black Lives Matter movement, the Black church — the church created by slaves who would "steal away, steal away to Jesus" — declared freedom "in spite of what they had been told in catechisms that distorted Christianity," Curry said. Both send the message that "you are not what this world tries to make you out to be. You are a child of God. Live like a child of God. Walk like a child of God."

He added that the church must become "an incarnational institution in the community where it dwells … by becoming part of that community, becoming a part of the issues of that community."

"We have to learn from those people on the ground," Douglas said. "Martin Luther King said that, instead of being a thermometer, the church needs to be the thermostat. To set, in essence, the temperature. That's where we have to get to, to lead the way" in the creation of just and safe communities.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and political and societal upheaval, she asked: "How are we setting the thermostat in all this?"

"We are stepping into a legacy of people who fought for freedom even when they knew that the freedom that they were fighting for was a freedom they would never ever see. But they fought for that freedom anyhow. They believed in the freedom that was the justice of God. That has to haunt and to inspire all of us who are in this diaspora of people blessed with ebony grace," Douglas said.

Addressing changing times

Byrd said the conference was intended to build on his highest priority since he became missioner for Black ministries two years ago: "to work toward ensuring an inclusive face for all persons of the African diaspora."

The office has established eight convocations representing diasporic diversity and hosted its first gathering, of East Africans, in Los Angeles, in 2019. "Plans are underway for a second, with the South Sudanese, for April in Kansas City, Mo., COVID allowing," he said.

Conference participants were asked to participate in a survey to determine a possible name change for the office to reflect that diversity. In consultation with the presiding bishop, the choice between the Office of Black/African Diaspora Ministries or the Office of Black/African Ancestry Ministries will be announced early next year, he said.

The name change was proposed because, "In our context, the descriptor 'Black' is often considered as referring to African Americans," he said. "This has been perhaps an impediment for some members of the diaspora from engaging, participating, from feeling a sense of welcome and inclusion."

The Office of Black Ministries continues to provide resources and support to congregations across the diaspora, he said. His office's Healing from Internalized Oppression program continues to address "the way we treat one another," Byrd said, as well as issues of conflict and isolation that create dysfunction in churches.

Additionally, Bishop Edward Ambrose Gumbs of the Virgin Islands, told the gathering that Byrd has been designated an honorary canon of All Saints Cathedral in St. Thomas and that the Rev. Sandye Wilson will begin serving as interim dean there in January.

All conference presentations will be available for on-demand viewing on the Office of Black Ministries page. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

Books reveal a remarkable treasury of Christian art

Review by Stephen Platten

These two books could hardly exhibit a greater contrast; one is an interpretative gallery and the other a reference directory to Christian art. Of contemporary theological writers, Richard Harries is the closest we come to a "Renaissance man," a true polymath.

In this, his 40th book, he returns to his interest in religion and art. Challenged to choose 30 images by different artists, he alights upon a variety of artists straddling the centuries, from the sixth to the 20th.

The images are grouped under three headings: Time–Creation; History–the Judaeo-Christian Tradition; Christ–the Christian and divine lives. There is a brief theological commentary on each subject, relating the image to contemporary life. Each piece concludes with an attractive and appropriate prayer.

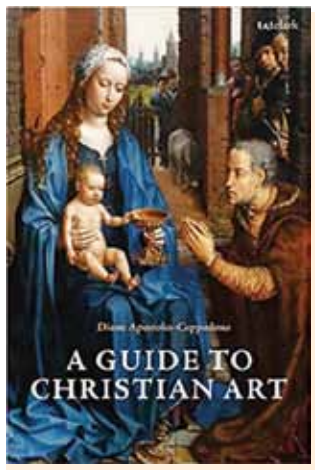
We begin in Monreale Cathedral in Sicily, with a fascinating mosaic depicting creation; here the commentary is accompanied briefly with reference to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose work is credited alongside other extracts. Poetry frequently makes an appearance as do both fiction and non-fiction. There follow images from the Renaissance.

Masaccio and Piero della Francesca ("The Baptism of Christ") are featured. Later artists follow, including Lucas Cranach, Caravaggio and Rembrandt.

The 14th-century fresco, "The Anastasis," is a strong representation of the Resurrection. This image is currently imperiled as the Turkish government has converted the Church of St. Saviour in Chora in Istanbul into a mosque. The status of the Christian artworks is unknown.

Photo/Wikimedia Commons

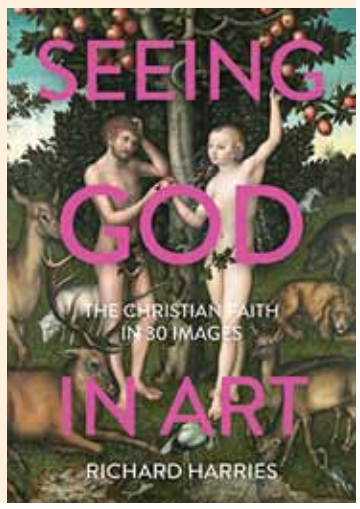
The 14th century fresco, "The Anastasis," depicts the Resurrection.



A Guide to Christian Art

By Diane Apostolos-Cappadona

T&T Clark/Bloomsbury
pp.298. $26.95



Seeing God in Art: The Christian faith in thirty images

By Richard Harries

SPCK, pp.144. $21.69

Harries is a noted speaker and writer on icons and Byzantine art. He cites the powerful "Ascent of Christ from Hell," which depicts Christ dragging Adam and others out of the eternal fire. Harries' theological reflections are always enriching although, at times, almost gnomic.

Perhaps a little more space for these would have been a bonus. The 20th century images are equally powerful, such as Marc Chagall's "Exodus," which bridges Judaism and Christianity

Stanley Spencer's "Scorpion" is telling, depicting the testing and temptation of Christ. Nicholas Mynheer's 2003 "The Spirit Descends to Live Within Us" is both intense and surprising.

Towards the end, we are offered slightly longer reflections: the mosaic at Hosios Loukas Monastery in Greece of "Christ's Questioning" is one distinctive example here. The use of David Wynne's sculpture Noli me tangere and Tom Denny's window in Hereford Cathedral, designed in memory of Thomas Traherne, are both powerful, albeit using very different artistic media. This book would, amongst many other things, be a very useful contribution to a course of confirmation training.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona explains that "A Guide to Christian Art" is intended as a tool for "reading" Christian art. Quite explicitly, this is intended as a reference book, a volume for "both students interested in Christian art from varied disciplines of art history, biblical studies, church history, history of Christianity and Christian theology, as well as the museum visitors who have found the wall text descriptions or catalogue entries of a work of art insufficient to satisfy their curiosity about why certain flowers or animals are include in a particular painting."

Having personally been guided around the Upper Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, with its remarkable "Life of St. Francis," and in company with a scholar of art history, the Giotto paintings took on for this reviewer so much more meaning. This book is intended as a general introduction to such interpretation.

Apostolos-Cappadona is systematic, almost to a fault, in her pursuit of this aim!

The book falls into two distinct sections, the first dealing with narratives of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The earliest illustration she uses is from the workshop of Quentin Massys, depicting "St. Luke Painting the Virgin and Child."

The legend of Luke as a painter and physician is chosen as perhaps the earliest reference to art in Christianity. Jan Gossaert's "The Adoration of the Kings" is used to introduce representations of Jesus, with attention to narrative and

continued on page 16

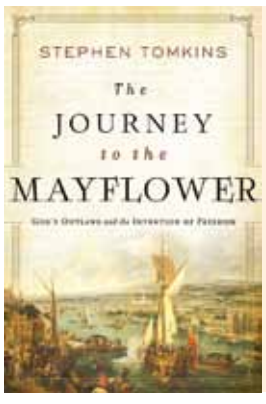
Desire for church reform led to Mayflower voyage

Review by Chip Prehn

More recently than I ought to admit, a distinguished schoolmaster taught me the difference between a New England Puritan and a New England Pilgrim. In his 1996 history of Roxbury Latin School, F. Washington Jarvis notes that John Eliot (1604-90), the founder of that oldest and still superlative American school (1645), considered himself a member of the Church of England.

How could this be, since Eliot lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony? The answer is that Eliot and most other members of the Bay Colony were bent on reforming the Anglican Church, refashioning the established church along the lines of what the New Testament persuaded them was correct.

But unlike the Puritans, the Pilgrims who founded Plymouth Plantation 10 years before the Bay Colony, in 1620, were separatists. Separatists were not interested in an established church at all. Whether governed by bishops or presbyters, they rejected establishment altogether in favor of local churches governed by the people. It is of the English progenitors of the Pilgrims that Stephen Tompkins writes in "The Journey to the Mayflower."



The Journey to the Mayflower: God's outlaws and the invention of freedom

By Stephen Tompkins

Pegasus,
pp. 304, $28.95

Tompkins's book is an excellent study of the religious situation in England in the latter part of the 16th century and in the early Stuart era. His purpose is not to show how but why English separatists left England to make themselves at home in the Low Countries and the North American wilderness.

Tompkins reminds us that there was a long history of persecution in English-speaking Christianity, and that the suffering experienced by separatists and earlier martyrs was the price to be paid to establish religious freedom in the English-speaking world. Tompkins thus avers that the early-modern separatists were courageous, enlightened prophets of the liberty of conscience.

Tompkins writes in flowing prose but "Journey to the Mayflower" is also impressive scholarship. His book reconstructs the beliefs, alliances, sudden separations, and surprising reunions of believers who dropped out of English parochial life in order to worship as they pleased. Tompkins gives us a fine picture of the lived religion of many hundreds of Elizabeth's subjects — mostly but not always of tradesman class — who did not care for bishops, "set prayers," vestments, or practices not illustrated in the Bible.

While they spoke and wrote against conventional Anglican practices, the leaders of the underground church wanted most of all to worship their way in peace. For them, the Bible had more authority than a monarch, a pope, or a bishop.

Tompkins judiciously allows that the state church faced profound challenges that would have made any establishment jealous of its privileges and afraid of dissent and disunity. The Northern Rebellion (1569) seemed for a time likely to wreak havoc in the realm.

In 1570, Pope Pius V declared Elizabeth excommunicate and her heretical reign in England null and void. The stunning 1571 victory over the Ottoman Turks by a coalition of Catholic navies sent the fear of God into every Protestant in Europe. As soon as the greatest fleet in the world was refitted and revictualed, Philip II of Spain intended to invade and conquer England.

Thence heretics would be rounded up and forced to recant or pay the price. one of the unintended consequences of the miraculous and total defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was that the Archbishop of Canterbury and his servants regained the leisure to hunt down dissenting Christians.

Several of the queen's trusted advisors — for example, Leicester and Walsingham — admired the more gifted separatists (e.g. George Gifford) and likely protected them behind the scenes. But

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FAITH AND THE ARTS

In the year of the pandemic, a printmaker seeks to honor those we have lost

By Jerry Hames

Troubled by thoughts of the increasing pandemic death toll across the nation, the Rev. Mark Harris, a retired Episcopal priest and creative printmaker, struggled with how he could memorialize those who had fallen victim to COVID-19.

"I was trying to work out how to make real the number of those who had died, how to make it something I could handle, make manifest in some sort of art object," he said.

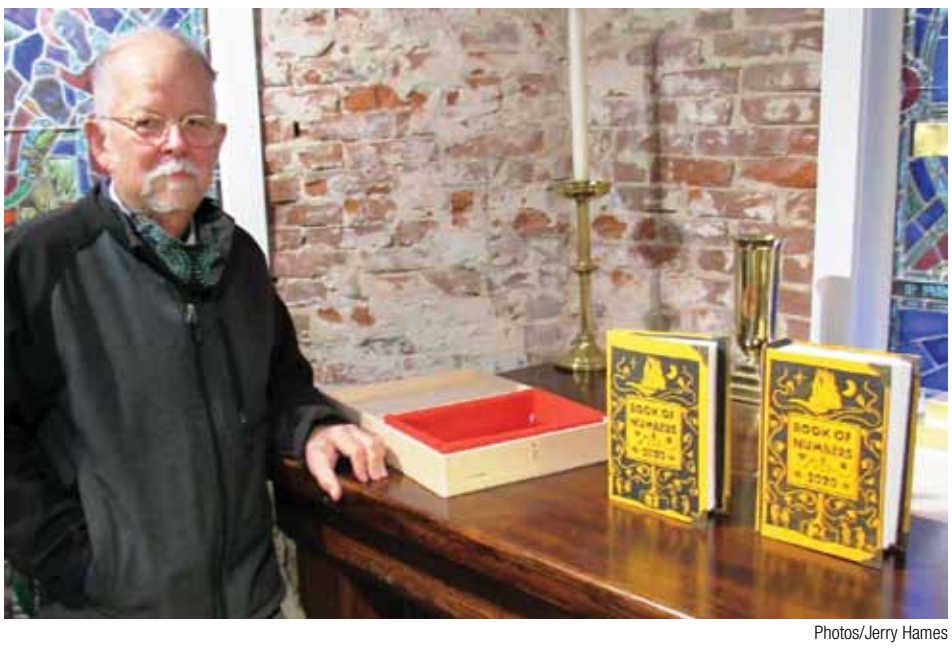
Unexpectedly, the answer came in a dream. "What came to me was the idea of a book in which each person who had died would be tallied with a mark of some sort, and the whole collection of those marks would be a book of many pages. I decided to have the book represent all the American dead from January to November 1. The book would be completed and added to the remembering on All Saints Day," he said.

By the first week of October he had carved out of wood a plate for the book cover and more or less determined the way he would construct the book. To mark each death from the virus he decided to use the numeral "1."

He selected sheets of rice paper, a thin, fragile paper readily available, and fed each page though a laser printer with 50 rows of "1," 40 rows deep, on each page: 2,000 lives on each page.

When a colleague suggested that he ought also to have a book that held the numbers for the rest of the world, Harris set to work on that book as well, working daily in his studio for three weeks.

> **"My dream became a project, became a dream again, this time of spiritual knowing."**



Photos/Jerry Hames

The Rev. Mark Harris stands with two books he created to mark the lives lost to COVID-19.

He superimposed on some pages images from prints he had created through the years, such as a crescent moon and a skeletal figure. He then sewed the pages together and glued them into the cover he had created.

The complete set, Volume 1 (U.S.) with about 115 pages and Volume 2 (World) with 450 pages was finished a week before All Saints Day and updated until its publication date — November 1 — during a service at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Lewes, Del., where Harris is an associate priest.

The volume tallying the worldwide dead holds more than 875,000 marks on 450 pages. The U.S. volume contains markings for more than 230,000 dead on 115 pages.

"Holding these books in my hands, I hold an outward and visible sign of the dead," he said in an interview before the service. "At the same time I remember that each "1" is a person made in the image of God."

He said that what began as a printmaker's way of making these large numbers "manifest and real" became a sacramental way to find an outward sign of an inward grace.

"My dream became a project, became a dream again, this time of spiritual knowing. And because spiritual knowing can lead to action, the book states 'the dead are remembered, the living held to account.'" ■

Jerry Hames is editor emeritus of Episcopal Journal.

Harris added block prints or relief prints, as he describes them, from his own collection, placing them at random in both volumes to elicit a range of emotion.

BOOK REVIEW

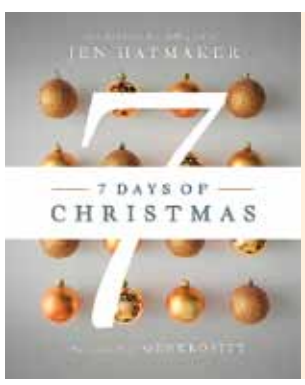
Keeping a simple Christmas in a time of anxiety

Review by Solange De Santis

Texas-based Christian author and blogger Jen Hatmaker could hardly have foreseen how the COVID-19 pandemic would upend many Christmas traditions this year, but her observations in "7 Days of Christmas" on leading a more thoughtful, authentic holiday certainly ring true in 2020.

Published in 2019, this graphically attractive book builds on Hatmaker's earlier book, "7: An Experimental Mutiny Against Excess."

In that book, her family launched "a seven-month experiment to tackle seven areas where we were spinning out of control: food, clothes, spending, waste, media and technology, possessions and stress."



7 Days of Christmas

By Jen Hatmaker

Abingdon Press, 2019, 200 pages, $21.99

They reduced their choices in each area to seven, one month at a time. Hatmaker also researched the influences on and effects of those choices in areas such as labor supply chains, local economics, stress-induced anxiety and sustainable farming.

However, she notes in the Christmas book, the "7" experiment stopped in November. "For a project focused on consumerism and excess, December now seems like a very strange season to leave out … the month in which Americans spent $721 billion [in 2018]."

The seven areas of Christmas are food, clothes, stuff, streaming, tossing, spending and stressing. The idea of reducing waste and consumption in all these areas takes on new resonance this year.

For example, take clothes. Give some away and don't buy more, says Hatmaker. You have what you need in your closet. One might add that in 2020, we're not going to parties, concerts, school plays, fancy restaurant dinners, so who needs new outfits?

Food? Did we ever really need five side dishes and three pies at Christmas dinner? We're having smaller (or no) gatherings this year, so perhaps we could prepare what we can actually consume and dial back the Christmas baking frenzy.

The story of Jesus, Hatmaker notes, begins in humility and ends in glory and "the weary world rejoices still." This year, we sure are weary and need a reason to rejoice. ■

FEATURE

The Black Church has been getting 'souls to the polls' for more than 60 years

By David D. Daniels III

Photo/AP/Bebeto Matthews

Volunteers outside the Christian Cultural Center in New York register new voters as part of the 'Souls to the Polls' initiative.

The Black Church has been getting 'souls to the polls' for more than 60 years

At Black churches up and down the U.S., religious slogans were supplanted with another message in the run up to Nov. 3: Vote!

The landscape of the 2020 general election was dotted with efforts by the Black church — churches that have traditionally had predominantly African American congregation — to encourage voter registration, mobilization and protect against efforts to suppress the vote.

Under slogans including "Souls to the Polls," "AME Voter Alert" and "COGIC Counts," Black denominations and national bodies such as the Conference of National Black Churches have partnered with civil rights organizations including the NAACP in a concerted effort to increase voter turnout among African Americans.

The push comes amid deliberate tactics to make it harder for Black and Latino Americans to vote, including purges of voter rolls in communities of color, strict voter ID rules and restrictions on polling places. As a historian, I know these tactics are nothing new — nor is the role of Black churches in countering these moves.

Black church-led campaigns to expand and protect voting among African American reaches back to the years following the Civil War. At political forums held in churches, clergy educated congregants on political issues, regularly running for elected office themselves.

'Give us the ballot'

Modern efforts picked up momentum during the years after World War II, especially during the era of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Most African Americans were denied the right to vote prior to the 1965 Voting Rights Act being signed into law. As a result, Black Americans were grossly underrepresented in the political system while simultaneously marginalized within the economy and social order through racial segregation laws.

In 1957, churches and civil rights organizations got together to sponsor the "Prayer Pilgrimage of Freedom" demonstration in Washington D.C. Organized to celebrate the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision, which ruled school segregation unconstitutional, the event became a rallying cry for voting rights.

Speaking at the Lincoln Memorial, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. framed the issue of voting, racial progress, and democracy in these terms:

"Give us the ballot and we shall no longer have to worry the Federal government about our basic rights.

"Give us the ballot and we will by the power of our vote write the laws on…the statute books of the southern states and bring to an end the dastardly acts of the hooded perpetrators of violence.

"Give us the ballot and we will fill our legislative halls with men of goodwill.

"Give us the ballot and we will place judges on the benches of the South who will do justly and have mercy."

The speech came at a time when barriers to Black voting ranged from poll taxes, literacy tests to the use of voter intimidation.

To King and other civil rights leaders, the Black church was a key institution within the pro-democracy movement. They believed its reach could be harnessed to eradicate the barriers to voting and expand accessibility of voting and enlarge the number of voters.

Bettmann/Getty Images

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. votes as his wife, Coretta Scott King, waits her turn. He saw the Black church as a key player in encouraging voter registration.

Rise of the PACs

A lot of Black church-based voter registration efforts in the following decades took place under the Voter Education Project, which lasted from 1962 to 1992. The project sponsored citizenship education, voter registration and mobilization, as well as research on voting among African Americans.

Black denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church also worked alongside black sororities and fraternities, civil rights agencies, masonic lodges and labor unions in voter projects such as "Operation Big Vote" and "Wake Up, Black America" to encourage voter turnout.

Meanwhile churches often served as locations for voter registration strategy meeting and forums.

In addition to the Voter Education Project, churches and civil rights organizations worked together to set up political action committees to push for voting rights. Political scientist Ronald E. Brown has described how in cities like Detroit, The Black Slate Political Action Committee and The Fannie Lou Hamer Political Action Committee were established as "church-based political action committees" advocating "on behalf of the poor and powerless during electoral campaigns."

These PACs emerged during the 1970s and 1980s. They led voter registration and turn-out campaigns, provided education on political issues and endorsed candidates. Both remained active even into the 2020 general election cycle.

The "Souls to the Polls" movement began in Florida during the 1990s. The concept was to organize caravans after church service on the Sunday prior to Election Day to transport Black congregants to early voting locations. By the early 2000s, the NAACP, Black denominations and other organizations had transformed "Souls to the Polls" into a national movement.

Record turnout

Such initiatives along with the passing of the Civil Rights Act helped increase national Black voter turnout from 40% in 1960 to 60% in 1984, according to political scientist Zulema Blair.

President Obama's re-election garnered the highest percentage of Black voter turnout, reaching 66.6% of eligible Black voters in 2012. This was 1 percentage point higher than the actual white voter turnout — a new threshold for Black voter mobilization.

But with the U.S. Supreme Court eliminating part of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, Black church-based voter registration and "turnout the votes" campaigns have been hampered by voter suppression efforts that have included new voter ID requirements, the reducing of early voting days, the ending of same-day registration, the disenfranchisement of citizens with felony records , and the closing of over 1,600 polling sites across the nation.

The voter suppression has kick-started a renewed focus on protecting the right to vote in addition to voter registration and mobilization spearheaded by organizations such as the Black Church PAC and Black denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal, Full Gospel Baptist, Church of God in Christ, and Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the

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FEATURE

First survey of race, sexuality and gender identity of Episcopal clergy is underway

By Egan Millard
Episcopal News Service

At the 2018 General Convention, a series of resolutions directed the church to gather demographic data about clergy as part of the Becoming Beloved Community initiative on racial equality and justice. As that topic takes on increasing importance in church life, the Church Pension Group's effort to learn more about the diversity of the clergy is underway.

The Church Pension Group, the financial services organization that also serves as the recorder of ordinations for the Episcopal Church, is encouraging all active and retired clergy to log on to their profile on CPG's website and add their race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Demographic information like this has never been collected by CPG before, though CPG does analyze clergy compensation by gender, and those reports have consistently shown a pay gap between male and female clergy. (Other gender expressions have not yet been included.)

The new data could reveal whether similar pay gaps — including disparities in deployment and stipendiary status — exist along other demographic lines, as well as the prevalence of various demographic groups within the clergy.

Photo collage/courtesy of the Church Pension Group

The Church Pension Group is measuring diversity among clergy by encouraging clergy to share their demographic information.

"There's an image of who and what the Episcopal Church is that may not conform to the actual reality of who and what we are today," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in a statement to CPG. "Having data helps to inform us in terms of both who we are and who we want to be. Data has a way of dispelling myths."

Having demographic data on clergy will help the church assess how well it reflects both its congregants and the wider communities it serves. The most recent demographic study of American Episcopalians, done by the Pew Research Center in 2014, indicates that the church in the U.S. is 90% white, making it far less diverse than the U.S. population. That has prompted broader efforts to understand the role of race in the church, which is a key component of the Becoming Beloved Community initiative.

"If we seek reconciliation, healing, and new life, it begins with telling the truth about the Episcopal Church's racial composition, especially given the church's relationship to the complex history of race in the 17 nations our church calls home," the Becoming Beloved Community framework says. Although a full census of church members is not planned, a racial audit of church leadership is underway and is expected to be presented to General Convention in 2021.

In the meantime, CPG is relying on clergy to voluntarily input their demographic information, which will be analyzed in aggregate form; individual demographic classifications are confidential and will not be made public in any form. So far, about 1,100 clergy have participated — about 10% of active clergy, according to CPG.

"We are delighted to support the Episcopal Church's Becoming Beloved Community initiative," said Mary Kate Wold, CEO of CPG. "As a more fulsome demographic picture emerges, the church will be in a better position to examine trends and respond to inequalities."

"This part of Becoming Beloved Community is creating a wider road towards that place where all are counted as people on the way," the Rev. Clayton Crawley, CPG's executive vice president and chief church relations officer, said in a statement. "Black, white, gay, straight, male, female, non-binary — any of those labels and the multitude of others can be isolating on their own, but taken together, bound together, we form the Body of Christ in the world and it is marvelous to behold."

The new demographic data is expected to be included in the 2020 clergy compensation report, although the amount of data depends on how many priests, deacons and bishops choose to share their information. Curry and other church leaders like the Rev. Stephanie Spellers, the presiding bishop's canon for evangelism, reconciliation and creation care, are encouraging clergy to participate so the church can have a clearer idea of where it stands and what work needs to be done.

"As a woman of color, I am so grateful that my church is now asking about the racial identity and the gender identity of clergy," Spellers said. "By sharing this information, we are taking part in a greater process that's going to help us to become more just, to become more whole, to better reflect the dream of God."

"If our vision is to reflect the vision of Jesus, we need to know how close we are to it. Having a picture will help us understand how we are doing on the journey to looking like God's Beloved Community," Curry said. ■

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Conference of National Black Churches along with advocacy groups the National Action Network and The Collective have launched "Black Church 75" — which aims to get 75% of all Black church members registered to vote.

With a dual approach of concentrating on the 2020 general election and future planning for the 2022 and 2024 elections, the Black church continues to work to expand and strengthen democracy in the United States, tapping into its rich history of securing voting rights for all U.S. citizens. ■

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BOOK REVIEWS

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symbolic elements. Later in this section, the mosaic of "Christ Enthroned Among the Apostles" leads into discussion of other symbols of Christ, including references to icons of the Pantokrator.

The second section moves its focus toward "themes." An exhaustive catalogue of objects and motifs follows. Picking up the personal thread from the first section, biblical and apocryphal figures ("personages" as she categorizes them) are gathered before moving on to the subject of places, including biblical locations and other biblical motifs. Thereafter follows discussion of images of saints, celestial figures and symbols.

Both a St. Bartholomew altarpiece and "Adam Naming the Animals" are illustrations used here. The final subsection moves the focus to more abstract signs and symbols, with animals, botanicals, the human body, colors (and letters, words, and phrases), musical instruments and the "visual church," including architecture. Hans Memling's "Angel Musicians" and a chi rho and alpha and omega feature here.

The author is to be congratulated on the sheer scope of her survey, and all in such a relatively concise volume. The descriptions are clear and will enlighten just those groups intended as readers in her introduction.

Perhaps the one regret is the relative paucity of illustrations in a book introducing the "reading" of a seminal strand within visual art. This leads to a certain sense of prolixity. Taken with Harries' book, however, the two are an imaginative and complementary initiation into the remarkable treasury of Christian art throughout the ages. ■

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Photo/Wikimedia Commons

Workshop of Quentin Massys, detail from "St. Luke Painting the Virgin and Child"

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these powerful nobles and half a dozen others sympathetic to nonconformists were gone to their reward by 1590.

The episcopal bench during these years — even the strong Protestant Matthew Parker at the beginning of the reign and, later, Whitgift, Bancroft, and Laud — were called "antichrists" and "monsters" by the independent believers.

Tompkins does not depict the episcopate during the Elizabethan and Stuart reigns in flattering ways. Whitgift's ecclesiastical statesmanship is not mentioned. But this scholar does not want us to overlook the fact that scores of dissenters were arrested at their homes and carried off to jail, often tortured on Whitgift's and other bishops' orders, and put before high courts to confess their sedition.

Tompkins writes, "if God were to judge England for its religious sins, to Whitgift's mind they would be sins of diversity." I believe that on balance Tompkins's picture of the Elizabethan church incorporates most of the latest scholarship, including the view that the queen was a vain, vacillating, and self-serving monarch.

When it comes to our American Pilgrims, Tompkins notes that the separatists who founded the Plymouth Plantation were not actually trying to escape persecution; most of them already enjoyed religious freedom in the Netherlands. They came to New England for two main reasons. First, the elders wanted to get the younger generation away from the temptations of Amsterdam, Leiden and Emden.

Second, when the opportunity was proposed to them by officials of the Virginia Company, the Pilgrims jumped at the chance to create in America an English village where God could be worshiped simply and purely by english farmers and artisans. They valued freedom as a way to open themselves to what God might do in the future.

In "Journey to the Mayflower," Tompkins gives us an opportunity to recall the sacrifices made to give the Anglophone world religious freedom. That the perspective is non-Anglican is a good thing. The author has written admirable biographies of John Wesley (2003) and William Wilberforce (2007).

His study of the Clapham sect (2010) deepens our understanding of the way evangelicals renewed the English Church in the early 19th century, opening the way — surprisingly — for the Oxford Movement and church revival. I can think of no better way to consider the 400th anniversary of Plymouth Plantation than to go back with Tompkins to consider the conditions and causes of separatist religion. ■

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